CHILDREN AS FULL HUMAN BEINGS: A RADICAL RETHINKING OF SOCIAL AND POLITICAL TRANSFORMATION BEYOND DOMINATION, OPPRESSION, AND CAPITALIST EXPLOITATION

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Abstract

This dissertation examines the general paternalist prejudice against children. It highlights the generational blind spot within critical theory and its failure to engage with the power dynamics between adults and children and how this contributes to a political culture based on domination and exploitation. The dissertation's main argument is that reclaiming children's full humanity must be the cornerstone of any emancipatory political agenda. The dissertation focuses on the conception of childhood that came with the transition to capitalism within liberal societies. The liberal conception of children is best exemplified by John Locke through its defence of paternalism and capitalist property relations. The dissertation demonstrates how parent–child relations in capitalist society are not rooted in "natural" inclinations or biology but rather are a political construction to reproduce the unequal property relations of a system based on domination, oppression, and exploitation. The dissertation stresses the dehumanizing aspects of the doctrine of socialization and of the mandatory schooling system that consolidates the liberal institution of children. By drawing on First Nations political thinking and the unschooling/self-directed learning movement, the dissertation offers a glimpse of the possibilities of a genuinely emancipating parenting and educative paradigm on which social justice can be built.

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Introduction

Children as full human beings

> *The adult's domination over the child appears so complete and so seamless—so a part of the obviousness of childhood—that for some even raising the issue of the child's subordination seems ridiculous. After all, parents love their children. End of the story. This, however, is not the end of my story; it is just the beginning. (Zornado, 2001, p. xviii)*

Capitalism might be blessed by some as the panacea that brought us progress, growth, innovation, and everything in between. This uniquely modern social relation also yields a profound inner contradiction. Despite waving the freedom flag high, capitalism, by controlling our time, bodies, and minds to an unprecedented extent, has constrained our life to a rat race trying to secure the highest bidder in exchange for our labour power. The reduction of human agency to a "thing" that needs to be exchanged on the labour market may be the source of the deepest contradiction of a system that proclaims individual freedom and equality in the abstract, yet legally protects property rights that sanctions dispossession, exploitation, and alienation in economic and social life. As McNally (2006) points out, commodification or the "selling parts of our life's labouring energies" (p. 43) has become so naturalized that we barely dare to question it.

> That people in "advanced" capitalist societies now experience these arrangements based upon the buying and selling of labour as normal and natural speaks to their cultural impoverishment, to the loss of rich systems of meaning that problematize capitalism's reduction of every aspect of life—most centrally human labour—to just another thing to be bought and sold. (McNally, 2006, p. 45)

The coexistence of the doctrine of political freedom alongside the blatant economic exploitation of capitalism turns liberal democracy's most precious claim—the importance of human

autonomy and freedom—into its derision. Is capitalism the most rational form of social organization, or have we merely become tacitly accustomed to the willed servitude of the wage-relation?

Capitalism's resilience seems to attest to some "natural superiority." The fight against capitalism has expanded from a narrow labour perspective to broader social and political struggles and environmental justice. We owe a great deal to the labour movement and other liberation movements. Amidst acts of resistance coming from different fronts, there is an area of the social and political world that has been fenced away from scrutiny: struggles against childism. According to Young-Bruehl (2012), childism is a "prejudicial political ideology" (p. 5) that serves to justify the inferior legal and social status of children in society. Childism can be defined as "a prejudice against children on the grounds of a belief that they are property and can (or even should) be controlled, enslaved, or removed to serve adult needs" (Young-Bruehl, 2012, p. 37).

What would be the conditions for a genuinely emancipatory society? Can it be possible that the problem of domination and exploitation is, to a significant extent, also a generational question? That is to say that parent–child relationships, and other institutions that act in *loco parentis*, are central to understanding the problem of domination.

Drawing connections between systemic oppression, structures of domination, capitalist exploitation and the politics of childhood is an uncomfortable thought that is at best unheeded, or at worst, totally dismissed. North American social and political discourse often idealizes childhood as an idyll period of play and innocence, free from responsibilities. Moreover, the limited critical scholarship that engages with the dynamics of power between children and adults has also limited our analytical capacity.

Despite a genuine improvement of children's welfare in recent history, the contemporary parenting political ideology is in continuity with the historical precedent: parent–children relationships are still marked by dynamics of dispossession, ownership, property, and control (Archard & MacLeod, 2002, p. 1; Lansdown, 1994, p. 33). As Godwin (2011) points out, "the legal status of minority under the dominion of a child's parents is one of custody, not liberty" (p. 250).

Society is prejudiced against children in different ways. To clarify, the focus here is not on extreme forms of adult domination that are already punished, such as abuse and neglect. The concept of childism allows us to go a step further by questioning the normalcy of adult domination over children. Put differently, it reveals "how the socially prescribed and state-enforced relationships between children and adults may contain constant, normalized harms" (Godwin, 2011, p. 249).

Childism means that decisions affecting children are being made without their informed consent; or that the child is kept in ignorance from important decisions, even if the outcome will impact the child. It also implies being punished for the sole reason of disagreeing with the adult in charge or being punished for something that an adult would never be punished for. It can mean being forced to do something against your will because an adult decided it was best for you this way. Childism means demanding permission for seeing other people or permission to have freedom of movement. It means that adults have absolute control over children's activities and time. It means economic dependence or the lack of proper resources to care for the child. Childism might also mean having no right to control one's own education (forced curriculum—either publicly funded, private or religious). It means that physical assault (spanking) is still legal in many jurisdictions. It means that constant yelling at, criticizing, or belittlement are not considered a form of domestic violence. Childism implies growing up in a cultural environment

where children are depicted in a negative way and caring for them is a necessary "adult burden." Childism also highlights the absence of responsible design. Homes and cities are designed neither for children's size nor to allow them to move freely. It can also mean that most institutions into which children are segregated are designed to facilitate adult supervision and control.

It is hard to appreciate children's systemic vulnerability and how it holds together the system of exploitation and oppression. Children are the most invisible of the oppressed groups in society. The politics of childhood barely have a legitimate place at the margins of modern social and political theory. This absence is symptomatic of how deeply children's oppression and domination has been naturalized and normalized.

The prejudices against children take different forms depending on the political and economic context of one's society. The focus of this dissertation is the conception of childhood that came with the transition to capitalism within liberal societies.[1] This conception will be referred to throughout this dissertation as the liberal conception of childhood. The transition of property relations and political authority that came with the transition toward capitalism radically altered parental authority and thus, the ways in which we interact with children to respond to capitalist imperatives. The specificity of capitalist exploitation is the necessity to control human labour and, in this sense, paternalism as the doctrine that defines parental authority, becomes central to understand inter-generational relationship of domination and exploitation.

[1] Within the dissertation, capitalism is understood as a social relation based on the alienation of labour—the wage-relation. Moreover, there is an explicit reductionist reading of liberalism and refers to its classical form. The meanings of the terms liberalism and capitalism do not coincide and are no easy substitute. However, since the current conception of childhood emerged within the early classical liberalist, most notoriously John Locke, where the defense of unequal property relations corresponds to the defense of the capitalist property relations, the use of a liberal conception of childhood seemed appropriate to describe the current capitalist reality. The argument of this dissertation reflects the reality of capitalist societies that emerged with the liberal tradition. All liberal societies are capitalist, but not all capitalist societies are liberal.

Within capitalism, paternalism is the central childist prejudice that supports the creation of capitalist property relations. With the transition to capitalism, paternalism became the main political argument that constructs children as inferior to adults by maintaining that the domination over children is necessary to ensure their protection and their proper development. The doctrine of paternalism is Orwellian in its logic as it claims that domination is necessary to teach emancipation. Thus, the persistence of structural domination and exploitation can be explained by the systematic dehumanization of children in liberal societies—children are treated *de jure* and *de facto* as temporary property of parents. There is an intricate link between the pretention to act in another person's best interest and property claims (Young-Bruehl, 2012, p. 28). Despite this apparent benevolent nature of paternalism, "it becomes nearly impossible to talk about the best interests of the child outside of conflicting ownership claims" (Young-Bruehl, 2012, p. 28). As Godwin (2011) stresses:

> The inferior legal status of children is often taken to be natural as it is assumed to be a direct and necessary result of their inferior mental capacities. Far from being demeaning or exploitative, children's lack of an equal right to liberty and equality under the law is said to protect them and enable proper development. (p. 250)

The lack of awareness of the childist prejudices that prevails in contemporary capitalist societies obscures any possible connections between the exploitative nature of economic life and educative practices, irremediably thwarting the transformative agent beyond capitalist exploitation and other forms of social oppression. The business of shaping, molding, and controlling children's minds and activities under the "need" to properly socialize them and provide them with the skills to increase capitalist economic growth is a great ideological tool that reproduces unequal property relations in capitalism. When children are constructed as object to be owned by adults, society inevitably normalize their social status as being inferior to adults.

When we teach our children to internalize this inferiority, we educate them to the principle that it is legitimate to use control and domination over others. These learned cultural and political values and expectations then become the foundation of all other forms of oppression. Children, as a prejudiced target group, are an archetype of oppressed groups. As Breggin (1980) points out:

> The oppression of children throughout the world is so thoroughly accepted that it is used as the model for justifying all other forms of oppression. Men who wish to oppress women attribute them traits that they ascribe to children, including helplessness and dependency. … These so-called childish qualities have little or nothing to do with anything inherent in children but reflect instead the child's response to chronic belittlement and oppression. This is why chronically oppressed groups develop similar traits. These traits are adopted by the victims to ensure survival at the hands of the oppressors, who demand helplessness, dependency, and even ridiculousness upon the part of their victims, whether these victims are slaves, mental patients, prisoners, women or children. When the full force of moral authority and social institutions reinforces this victimization, allegedly childish traits become commonplace. (p. 130)

The liberal institution of childhood has been so well integrated and associated with the requirement of the capitalist order that we have accepted paternalist childrearing practices as "naturalized," informed by a biological determinism and as the only way to secure our children's happiness, proper development, and their future success at competing on the capitalist labour market.

The main argument of this dissertation is that reclaiming children's full humanity must be the cornerstone of any emancipatory political agenda. Moving beyond domination, oppression,

and capitalist exploitation requires a parenting praxis and educative paradigm that recognizes children's full humanity *as children*. Challenging paternalism as the central childist prejudice that reduces children to the state of temporary property is fundamental because this political doctrine legitimizes and normalizes dispossessing someone else's control over their agency. Paternalism not only denies children's full humanity but also normalizes unequal property relations underlying systemic oppression, domination, and exploitation. If we want to have any chance to fully realize social freedom and economic justice, children must grow up in a society where they are treated equally with adults, where they are valued as full human beings while they are still children, and empowered with the capacity to self-direct their actions and consent to their interactions. This emancipatory agenda requires not only challenging the demeaning aspects of the liberal institution of childhood but also defining the basis of a democratic and feminist parenting paradigm.[2]

Before advocating for a radically different parenting paradigm, however, we must gain a historical perspective on how paternalism came to define the parent–child relationship. The failure to properly historicize the liberal conception of children and its parenting practices severely limits our understanding of the relations of domination in our most intimate relations as well as its place with organized means of violence that back any political and economic order. This dissertation considers childrearing practices not in a vacuum but rather as political and cultural practices that are directly related, and reflect different regimes of property relations, relations of production, and state forms. More specifically, current Western capitalist parenting practices cannot be understood outside the formation of the capitalist state and the wage-relation

[2] Chapter 5 defines more specifically the assumptions behind a democratic and feminist parenting and educative paradigm. Briefly, this paradigm borrows from the democratic traditions the notion of participation and equality, and from the idea of consent from the feminist tradition.

as exemplars of this system of production. As will be demonstrated in the next chapters, the liberal conception of childhood derives from economic and political imperatives of the emerging system.

The argument will be developed by historicizing the liberal paradigm of children that constructs them as temporarily dispossessed of the control over their agency for them to become properly integrated into "adult" society. The strategy to develop the argument is similar to the civil rights and women's liberation movements that challenged the equation between biological determinism and oppression. It argues that the *child-as-temporary-property* is not the consequence of the unchanging nature of the child nor the biological limits caused by the psycho-social development of children. On the contrary, the argument is turned upside down. This specific historical form of parenting and the dynamic between generations was dialectically elaborated with the emerging new capitalist order and to secure the systemic reproduction of unequal property relations. In other words, the liberal child was "invented" (Kessen, 1981) to secure the political legitimacy to socialize children to capitalist exploitation.

This dissertation aims to highlight the critical generational blind spot within critical theory. Most emancipatory politics are still hampered by their blindness to childism not only as the root of economic exploitation but also as the institution that legitimizes other forms of social oppression. By uncritically endorsing the paternalism of capitalist educative and parenting practices as normal, and even beneficial, for the child's own good, emancipatory politics forsake their capacity to fully overcome the social and political mechanisms that becomes the cornerstone of all other forms of oppression and domination.

Even the most radical perspectives on social transformation have accepted much of the liberal paradigm when it comes to the political meaning of childhood, the dynamics of

parent–child relations (and thus parental authority) and the functions of the institutions entrusted with the care of the younger generation. Parent–child relationships have been evacuated from most of their political content. The project of human emancipation can be realized by establishing as the norm of consensual relationships between adults and children where they are seen as equals.

Advocating for children's political self-determination and emancipation is a significant leap forward, especially when childism is so deeply embedded into Western traditions. Yet, in a period of unprecedented increase in inequalities worldwide, this critique is urgently needed. It seeks to raise our political consciousness to realize that challenging the deep-seated prejudices against children might well be the missing link to bringing about social justice.

Underlying assumptions

This dissertation relies on a few underlying assumptions. I must acknowledge my intellectual debt toward John Holt's writings for first sparking my interest in childhood as an institution. Discussing childhood as an institution provides a necessary distance from more anecdotal and individual accounts of this peculiar phase of the human life cycle. In Holt's (1974) words:

> In short, by the institution of childhood I mean all those attitudes and feelings, and also customs and laws, that put a great gulf or barrier between the young and their elders, and the world of their elders; that make it difficult or impossible for young people to make contact with the larger society around them, and, even more, to play any kind of active, responsible, useful part in it; that lock the young into eighteen years or more of subservience and dependency, and make of them, as I said before, a mixture of expensive nuisance, fragile treasure, slave, and super pet. (pp. 25–26)

Likewise, it positions children, including everyone born who is not culturally understood as adults (including newborns, infants, toddlers, children, tweens, teens), not as an object of study but as human beings filled with emotions, agency, consciousness, autonomy, and social competence.

Much of the scientific literature on children has been overwhelmingly focused on personal and individual narratives, overlooking the structural aspect of it. It is accurate to maintain that children do not belong easily to one fixed category; children's experiences are strongly affected by the intersectionality of cultural context—the class, gender, ethnic origins—in which young humans interact with grown-ups. Despite this diversity, children also share striking similarities. As Jens Qvortrup says, children "are all under the majority age, they are all institutionalised during this period, they are all schooled, they are all incarcerated in buildings, domesticated, and so on" (as cited in Smith & Greene, 2015, p. 184). The focus of this analysis is therefore on their commonality: the shared relations of domination and exploitation that structure the liberal institution of childhood.

In this regard, it is crucial also to draw the proper difference between objective and subjective oppression. By maintaining that the liberal institution of childhood is a structure of oppression, domination, and exploitation, it does not follow that childhood feels like a nightmarish experience. Being a child is a normalized condition and people, being as they are, usually manage to make the best of most situations. A happy childhood does not deny that the practices of the *child-as-temporary-property* is not a politically oppressive condition.

A focus on a structural analysis of childhood is not a matter of adding another angle to engage this complex debate but rather one of asserting the structure of childhood as central to the politics of emancipation and transformation. Because of its historical primacy (both individually

and collectively) and the universality of this experience, childism is a powerful concept to understand the systemic reproduction of capitalism as a social system of domination, oppression, and exploitation. The politics of childhood is a central aspect of cultural and political identity. The liberal institution of childhood ensures the perpetuation of economic exploitation through the wage-relation in its specific capitalist form. A structural analysis of childhood engages simultaneously at the level of unequal property relations based on labour yet acknowledges the intersectionality of aspects of a childhood defined along with social status, sex, gender, race, and ethnicity. It recognizes this diversity without sacrificing its structural basis.

This dissertation addresses childhood from a definitive westernized vantage point. It is often mentioned by those who work with childhood related public policies in international organizations about the difficulty to export the norms of the liberal institution of childhood. Although most countries have embraced the general ideas of the liberal institution of childhood along with the development of capitalism, its adoption around the world varies considerably. Perhaps, the most evident domain where there is great divergence is children's right to work versus children's economic exploitation. Although there is a strong sentiment in the Western world that children should remain in school for as long as possible, and that their well-being and development is more important than their immediate contribution to the immediate family unit, this view is not universal. This dissertation does not engage in those debates, as they would have to be framed in a very different manner. The critique of the liberal institution of childhood, as presented in the present dissertation, is relevant only within a cultural analysis where the basic tenets are widely agreed upon.

Finally, this dissertation places children's labour at the centre of the analysis. It deliberately ignores the dichotomies that prevent the parent–child relationship from being

analyzed as a political relation. In this regard, this theoretical and political preoccupation requires overlooking the traditional differences between "active labour" and "inactive labour," between labour, agency, work, and so forth. It refuses the dichotomy that adults act, and children (mis)behave. Consequently, it addresses children's mandatory activity—compulsory schooling—as central to fully understanding how the transition to capitalism modified the relation of children's labour and fundamental activity. Although the emergence of compulsive schooling is almost exclusively approached as an improvement and a necessary step toward progress and modernity, this transition from children as direct producers and forced labour to forced schooling has not been thoroughly problematized as an epiphenomenon of the transition to fully developed capitalism. Who should control children's fundamental activity/labour, and for what purpose, is a central preoccupation that structures the present argument.

Chapter 1 stresses the importance of engaging childhood from a structural perspective, mostly through the lens of the generational structure. It is only through a structural analysis that we can depoliticize childhood. It also presents the social property approach as an analytical tool to comprehend not only unequal property relations, but also the means of violence to enforce the property regime. Finally, it recasts children's agency within the structure of childhood. Chapter 2 focuses on John Locke because he is a central theorist and an early defender of capitalist property relations and paternalism. The defenders of emerging capitalist interests needed a new paradigm that transformed parental rights and obligation, parent–child relations, and brought to the fore a radically new conception of childhood—a comprehension that is still extremely contemporary. Chapter 3 provides a portrayal of the liberal conception of childhood. It highlights how the liberal institution of childhood has invented a specific view of children that normalizes structures of oppression, domination, and exploitation. Chapter 4 places the

emergence of the doctrine of socialization in its context of emergence. It contends that the doctrine of socialization should be understood as a political tool to build consent to the capitalist order. Chapter 5 presents a different narrative to understand the transition of children's fundamental activity from forced labour to forced schooling. This chapter discusses the political function behind compulsory schooling and also draws the central correspondence principle between the compulsory schooling system and the coercion of the labour market within capitalist societies. Chapter 6 argues that moving beyond capitalism and realizing emancipation requires advocating for the political emancipation of children. It also describes the basis for a democratic and feminist parenting paradigm.

A critical historical and political analysis of the liberal institution of childhood is critical to understanding how and why we came to think about children and thus, how to make the necessary changes to imagine the possibilities of a more egalitarian and peaceful society.

Chapter 1

The structure of childhood: The generational ordering of the means of violence

This chapter aims to explain where this research project fits within the broader field of interdisciplinary childhood studies. Just as importantly, it highlights the importance of childhood to the political analysis and as a crucial element for emancipatory politics. This chapter also stresses a crucial contribution that a greater perspective from political theory can bring to childhood studies. Anyone versed in classical political theory can hardly doubt the relevance of childhood to political analysis. Most classical political theorists had something to say about childhood. They wanted to justify the legitimacy of state power in paternal authority. Or they sought to raise future citizens to civic virtue, to point to some of the reasons that made children an object of interest in political theory. Jock Locke and Jean-Jacques Rousseau are the most famous examples, but scarcely the only ones. As David Oswell (2012) points out, the dynamic relationship between adulthood and childhood, as well as the freedom and limits to the child's autonomy that should regulate this relation, have been important preoccupations within the field of childhood studies (p. 7). Those questions are also important within political theory. Childhood studies and political theory seem to form an evident partnership.

Yet it is striking how little exchange there has been between the two disciplines in the last 150 years. The interest of childhood within political theory faded away in the background of sociology and developmental psychology, despite the insights it can bring to the understanding of the social and political reproduction of the structures of oppression and domination. The question of the proper control and freedom a child should enjoy, or the legitimacy of children's minority/subordinated status, has been engaged more extensively from the perspective of

philosophy (Archard, 2004; Schapiro, 1999), law (Fitzgerald, 1994; Minow, 1986, 1987), psychology (Farson, 1978; Young-Bruehl, 2012), and education (Holt, 1974) than from political theory. By re-politicizing childhood, this dissertation contributes to bridging the gap between political theory and childhood studies. It aims to offer insights from an analysis that places the political structure—that is, the coherence between property relations, parental authority, and political authority—at the heart of the analysis to better grasp the generational perspective of childhood as a potentially transformative force.

This chapter offers an overview of the methodological basis that allows us to approach the generational structure from the perspective of the liberal institution of childhood. The subsequent chapters are dedicated to its critique, yet it is crucial to define the concepts with which this dissertation engages. The term "liberal institution of childhood" is as much unfamiliar to those versed in child studies as it is for those versed in political theory to argue about the centrality of childhood to modern political life. In the contemporary period, children have not been the object of political theory because they were relegated to a pre-political condition and existence. This chapter argues that the failure to approach childhood from the perspective of structural oppression and domination can explain the reason it has been so difficult to advance the recognition of children's political agency within childhood studies. The failure to engage specifically in this power dynamic impoverished childhood studies, limiting its explanatory powers and its capacity to inform a transformative agenda. This chapter presents the methodological grounds to advance a structural analysis of childhood in ways in which we can define the political relations structuring contemporary adult–minor relationships as the liberal institution of childhood. Historicizing the structure of childhood from a political perspective offers a different angle from which to understand children's agency. Placing children's political

agency within an educational context, but outside of schooling, opens an avenue for a proper dialogue about the possibilities of a normative framework to discuss what children wish, as well as to open a range of possibilities, as opposed to a more functional approach of how to better adapt to, and perform, within the liberal institution of childhood.

This chapter proceeds by first stressing the importance of seeing childhood from a structural perspective through the concept of generation. It rehabilitates childhood as a relevant political analytical category. The intent is to move beyond childhood as merely individual transience and to fully grasp childhood as a structural permanence. It continues by drawing the proper connections between the concept of generation and childhood as an institution integrated into the political structure. More specifically, it introduces the social property relations approach, and how the concept of parental authority is central to the social reproduction of capitalist property relations. Finally, it reframes the debate between structure and agency by focusing on children's possibilities for active participation within an educative context.

1.1 Re-politicizing childhood: The contribution of political theory to interdisciplinary childhood studies

Paternalism towards children is so constitutive of political theory that it is not easy to challenge this core assumption. Even John Stuart Mill in *On Liberty* was quick to dismiss freedom for children and other "child-like'' societies (thus justifying European colonialism) because of their incapacity to be autonomous. There are many reasons why it is hard to engage politically with the subject of children's subordination and domination. It is a highly contentious, controversial, and emotionally loaded topic. Especially because even if not everyone has or will become a parent, at least everyone has been a child. Mary Bayall's research with British children reveals that they are well aware that they are under the control of adults (Smith & Greene, 2015, p. 154). This domination can be perceived by children as comforting,

natural, normal, or arbitrary. These findings are not surprising. Children cooperate with adults they depend on (Juul, 2001), yet talking about children's domination fits uneasily with political rhetoric that claims to prioritize children's higher needs as a national concern and priority. The subordinated status of children is seen at best as natural, at worst as unproblematic, reaffirming the childism that is present in contemporary society.

There is ambivalence as well as contradictory claims within the discursive rhetoric surrounding children. Children are said to be too valuable for the future and the central national priority, yet governments still fail to mobilize the resources to live up to those standards: children's poverty persists, institutions in which children grow up are underfunded (either early childcare or schools), and adults performing "childwork[3]" are undervalued and underpaid. As Jens Qvortrup (1987) notes:

> Our civilization, modern industrial society, is sometimes said to be friendly, sometimes hostile to children. On the one hand, it is claimed that children have never in history had better conditions and that the general attitude toward children is one of solicitous concern. On the other hand, it is asserted that modern industrial culture leaves no place for children, and that they are victims of the special interests of the adult world. There is some truth in both statements, and they need not conflict with one another. Marcuse's concept of "repressive tolerance" captures the ambiguity of a situation where a dominant group "shows concern" for the interests of others and cultivates its own interests at one and the same time. (p. 3)

The rise of neoliberalism and the increased drive for economic growth also transformed

[3] This term has been used by David Oldman. He has been particularly interested in understanding the adulthood–childhood dynamic, and children's activities from the perspective of economic relations. For him, "childwork" is "work in which children are the objects of adult labor" (Oldman, 1994, pp. 43–47).

the debates. Childhood studies have not been spared from these preoccupations. More control and domination do not seem to pose a problem if it allows children to compete and perform better in the labour market. Even the most radical critique of capitalism has accepted the liberal view that the dynamic of power between adults and children is inevitable and that this specific structural inequality is a natural condition of human childhood. As Harry Hendrick points out, "childhood studies, unlike other areas of politics of recognition politics, have never become an intrinsic part of the Liberal or Left political scenario" (as cited in Smith & Greene, 2015, p. 123). There are probably different reasons for the general endorsement of the liberal institution of childhood. The association of children and the family to the conservative agenda of the non-interference into the private realm (and the pretext to increase deregulation) offers a partial but important explanation of this omission in emancipatory political theory. Moreover, the feminist agenda entertains a complicated relation with childcare, adults performing childwork and motherhood, and it dedicates more effort to distancing women from traditional gendered labour than to approach parent–child relationships through the lens of domination and oppression.

1.1.1 From children to childhood: A generational ordering of social and political life

Before the turn in the 1990s, the interest around childhood was built around the understanding of the concept of socialization and development, with a very strong bias on functionalism. As Alanen (2003) points out, the study of the child until then was mainly confined within the limits of its own cultural construction: developmental psychology, educational theories, and socialization research (p. 27). Understanding childhood was a task best left to developmental psychologists, moralists, pedagogues (educational theorists), and the medical establishment. Even sociological investigations confined their understanding of children within the parameters of theories of socialization without questioning the origins and historical

specificity of this peculiar idea. A leading figure of functionalism of the mid-20th century, Kingsley Davis (1940) crudely reflects the hegemonic position of taking for granted the doctrine of "socialization"; in this perspective, children are reduced to workable raw material:

> An individual's most important functions for society are performed when he is fully adult, not when he is immature. Hence, society's treatment of the child is chiefly preparatory and the evaluation of him mainly anticipatory (like a savings account). Any doctrine which views the child's needs as paramount and those of organized society as secondary is a sociological anomaly. (p. 217)

Classical sociology is historically specific and emerged as a consequence of the deepening of capitalist property relations (and industrialization and proletarianization) as a tool to address the problems of the new social (dis)order created by the violent disruption of non-capitalist forms of organization and the resulting "social problem" and pauperism. In this sense, classical sociology is the science *par excellence* of capitalism.

> The rise of sociology is related to the decline of the concept of political science and the art of politics which took place in the nineteenth century (to be more accurate, in the second half of that century, with the success of evolutionary and positivist theories). Everything that is of real importance in sociology is nothing other than political science. "Politics" became synonymous with parliamentary politics and the politics of personal cliques. The conviction that to the constitutions and parliaments had initiated an epoch of "natural" "evolution," that society had discovered its definitive, because rational, foundations, etc. And, lo and behold, society can now be studied with the methods of the natural sciences! Impoverishment of the concept of the State ensued from such views. If political science means science of the State, and the State is the entire complex of

> practical and theoretical activities with which the ruling class not only justifies and maintains its dominance, but manages to win the active consent of those over whom it rules, then it is obvious that all the essential questions of sociology are nothing other than the questions of political sciences. (Gramsci, 1971, p. 243)

Thus, given the academic developments, it is not that surprising that powerful critiques emerged from the field of sociology in the late 20th century. Childhood studies are multidisciplinary by nature. Yet, they mostly come from the home disciplines of sociology, anthropology, child development studies, and education. Over the last 30 years, child studies have struggled significantly to gain proper status in academia despite the increased and sustained interest it has generated. Part of the reason can be explained by the fact that childhood studies remain essentially interdisciplinary in focus, where children as an object of study are brought into another discipline, making it difficult to make childhood the main social structure in the analysis. As Alanen (2011) maintains, "to take generational ordering seriously is to assume that children's lives and experiences are in addition to being gendered, classed, raced, and so on, also—and first of all—generationed" (p. 162).

Another reason for childhood studies' limited impact on broader social science can be explained by the fact that its focus has been to a significant extent vocational. The interest was driven by the professionals who would be working with children. Thus, the literature focuses on policies around early child-care, schooling, education, child culture/media, divorce cases, youth protection, et cetera. The insights remained self-enclosed within the actors already reproducing the institution of childhood. There are no doubts that children, as a group, have benefited from this academic research. However, the interest came mostly from the perspective of welfare paternalism rather than from the standpoint of social justice. Children came alive through the

publishing of thick descriptions of their lives and their particularities which allowed us to appreciate the diversity of the experience of children (differentiated by the gender, class, race, etc.). Few have focused on the structural position of children within a society based on class, exclusion, and inequality.

Jens Qvortrup was a key pioneer in stressing the importance of approaching childhood from a structural perspective when he launched his research project "Childhood as a Social Phenomenon" in 1987, encompassing 16 countries to study childhood from a macro-perspective in a broader scientific context. As Qvortrup et al. (2011) points out, "it is in retrospect clear that one significant feature of the new childhood paradigm was, negatively formulated, a reluctance to accept the socialization model understood as a functionalist understanding of child development" (p. 5). Qvortrup's (1987) understanding of childhood as a social status highlights the economic and political underpinning of his conception. A key concept to grasp the categories of childhood and adulthood has been through using the idea of generation. Trained originally as a Marxist, it is not surprising that Qvortrup's understanding of the generational structure parallels a class relation. Although it was not the first use of the concept of generation, it was used differently than how it is traditionally used in sociology. Adulthood and childhood are to be comprehended "as an internally related class" (Alanen, 2011, p. 163).

As stated, the concept of generation must be understood differently than most famously formulated by Karl Mannheim (1952) in the 1920s *The Problem of Generations*: *Essays in the Sociology of Knowledge*. For Mannheim and its subsequent use in the field of sociology, generation was to be understood as a group of individuals sharing the same age and place. This specific comprehension of the concept of sociology is relevant because those individuals who lived through similar historical events growing up will develop similar characteristics and

common consciousness. In this way, we can talk about the baby boomers as the post-war generation, or civil rights generation, or generation X, Y, and so forth. Accordingly, Mannheim's understanding of generation is closer to common sense understand as "age group" or "cohort" (Alanen, 2011, pp. 163–165)

The main conceptual difference when it comes to seeing childhood as a social category, and approaching it from a macro-perspective, is that the concept of generation must be understood as relational; childhood cannot exist without the concept of adulthood in this internal and necessary relation (Alanen, 2011, p. 163). The concept of generation is necessary to grasp the dynamic of cultural change. The purpose of relational thinking is to stress that the production and reproduction of the generational structure involve both the "child" and the "adult."

> Two generational categories of children and adults are recurrently produced through such practices; because of the ongoing generationing practices they then stand in relations of connection and interaction, and of interdependence. Neither category can exist without the other, and what each of them is (a child, an adult) is dependent on its relation to the other. Change in one is necessarily tied to change in the other. (Alanen, 2003, p. 41)

It was necessary to emphasize the particularism in everybody's historically contingent childhood to break through the apparent objective universality of the moral understanding of children. This move was essential to use childhood as a meaningful political category and analyze the asymmetric distribution of political power and the legitimation of domination and exploitation. The descriptive approaches tend to individualize the child and in this sense, they are much aligned with mainstream thinking about children: "the central issue in the development of the individual child's personality with a view to his gradual adaptation to the norms of adult society" (Qvortrup, 1987, p. 3). The focus on this individualized child has obscured the

analytical value of childhood. For the individual person, childhood is a temporality that is, ultimately and inevitably, overcome. As Thorne (1985) points out: "the twin framework of 'socialization' and 'development'—ahistorical, individualist, and teleological (defining children more by their becoming than by their being)—have largely eclipsed other sociological approaches to children and adulthood" (as cited in Qvortrup, 1987, p. 28).

If we want to reclaim from the margins the sociological and political relevance of childhood, the structural emphasis aims to bring to the fore the macrostructure to make sense of the "ordering of generation" or the "generational location" (Alanen, 2011, p. 17) and how this impacts culturally on one person. To comprehend "history as human relationship" (Zornado, 2001) it is essential to think relationally (not only teleologically, developmentally, paternalistically, or romantically) in conceiving the child–adult relation. This relational thinking is vested in a structural understanding of generation:

> A specific concern in exploring the generational structures within which childhood, as a social position is daily produced and lived, must be on securing children's agency. In relational thinking, agency need not be restricted to the micro-constructionist understanding of being a social actor (as in sociologies of children). Rather, it is inherently linked to the "powers" (or the lack of them), of those positioned as children, to influence, organize, coordinate and control events taking place in their everyday worlds. In researching such positional "powers," they are best approached as possibilities and limitations of action, "determined" by the specific structures (regimes, orders) within which persons are positioned as children. Therefore, to detect the range and nature of the agency of concrete, living children, the exploration needs to be oriented toward identifying the generational structure from which children's powers (or the lack of them)

> derive: the source of their agency in their capacity of children is to be found in the social organization of generational relations. This, finally, grounds the fundamental importance of "generation" in our work to develop a sociological understanding of childhood. (Alanen, 2001, p. 21)

Following Mayall and Zeiher (2003), it is essential to this project to "take account of both structure and agency—and their intersection and relative power" (p. 2). Childhood is not merely the precursor of the political community but also fully integrated into it even in its formal exclusion (in the same sense that slave labour was fully integrated into the division of labour even if slaves were politically excluded). Adulthood and childhood exist in relation to each other among a complex and dynamic network of relations. In this sense, it forces us to move beyond the reduction of childhood to children or the family. Understanding the generational order requires moving beyond the parent–child relation, but it must encompass a broader understanding of the adult-minor dynamic.[4]

1.1.2 The temporalities of childhood: Individual transience and permanence

The relevance of childhood can be downplayed through the rationale that it is a temporary phase that eventually everyone will outgrow, thus dismissing the structural permanence of childhood. Defining childhood resists any easy answers. What makes childhood fundamentally different from adulthood?

[4] In this chapter, and throughout this dissertation, preference will be given to the use of the expression "parent–child relations" as an archetype that encompass adult–minor relations. The main rationale to keep using the term "parent–child relation" as opposed maybe to adult–minor is its link to the concept generation to the one of parental authority and how it is related to state authority. The term adult–minor also carries important meaning as it refers to a legal minority status of a group who enjoy fewer rights than the dominant/privilege one. Both terms are encompassing and refer equally to all adults who work and act *in loco parentis*. Thus, given that within the liberal institution of childhood the outsourcing of parental responsibilities, especially in child-care and education, is the norm, parent–child relations must be understood as encompassing all those relations: parent–children, adult–minor, early care profession–child, teacher–pupil, et cetera.

> Many speak as if the distinction between childhood and adulthood is some eternal, fundamental distinction that arose from nature. One may even accept that the precise demarcating line, whether 21, 18, or 16, is essentially a political choice, while still assuming that there is a basic need for *some* line to be drawn to distinguish adults from children. Childhood, however, like race, is not a characteristic or classification that can be pinpointed in biology, rather it is a socially contingent category. Age, similar to skin color and other genetic clines used to attribute "race" to people, is a feature that requires a social context to take on significance for making legal, moral, and political distinctions. The concept of childhood is then, like the concept of race, a social invention that refers to biological traits, but it is not itself a fact inherent in biology. (Godwin, 2011, p. 265)

Although we can recognize who is a child by looking at distinctive physical differences (abilities, proportions, size), can we make any generalized claim about this peculiar minority? Children's experiences are strongly affected by the cultural, class, and gender context in which the young humans interact with grown-ups. Even age provides only poor guidelines for generalization as it reflects modern standards and falls short when "minors" have the responsibilities generally reserved for adults. And although age may, at first glance, be seen as an objective criterion, the complexity of human interactions and interconnections of real persons taken to courts reveals the arbitrariness of this divide: "our legal demarcation of majority as the age for recognition of full legal personhood appears more arbitrary than empirically or logically justified" (Fitzgerald, 1994, p. 14; see also Minow, 1986).

Breaking through existing ways of thinking about children is no simple task. As James and Prout (1990) point out:

> This is not simply a matter of habit, convenience, false consciousness or vested interest

> but of what Foucault refers to as "regimes of truth" (1977). He suggests that these operate rather like self-fulfilling prophecies: ways of thinking about childhood fuse with institutionalized practices to produce self-conscious subjects (teachers, parents, and children) who think (and feel) about themselves through the terms of those ways of thinking. The "truth" about themselves and their situation is thus self-validating. Breaking into this with another "truth" (produced by another way of thinking about childhood) may prove difficult. For example, the resilience of socialization as a dominant concept rests partly on how notions of childhood are embedded with a tightly structured matrix of significations binding childhood with, and positioning it in relation to, the family. (p. 11)

Thus, beyond the "bureaucratic fiction" (Brockliss & Montgomery, 2010, p. 6) that childhood ends at 18 years old (or 19 or 21), we still need to draw meaningful boundaries to be able to critically assess childhood as a social and political construction.

> The immaturity of children is a biological fact of life, but the ways in which this immaturity is understood and made meaningful is a fact of culture. It is these facts of culture which may vary and which can be said to make of childhood a social institution. (James & Prout, 1990, p. 7)

It is crucial here to differentiate biological immaturity, which is natural and universal, from childhood, which is cultural and historical. To understand how childhood is politically constructed, we must:

> Explore the ways in which the immaturity of children is conceived and articulated in particular societies into culturally specific sets of ideas and philosophies, attitudes and practices which combine to define the "nature of childhood." (James & Prout, 1990, p. 1)

To understand childhood as an analytical category, it is crucial to challenge the main assumptions of the liberal conception of childhood to resist reducing childhood to a biological process of unfolding; a process that ends with reaching adulthood. Nor should it be reduced to a scientific inquiry whose agenda is to discover the most certain stages of development so that the adult can steer children as they climb up the stairs toward a fully realized humanity. A more dialectical and historical view is privileged here. Children are whole human beings embedded in intergenerational cultural and political dynamics, not merely objects of parenting or objects of socialization. Parenting and the institution of childhood are highly historically contingent.

A much more productive way to grasp the reproduction of unequal property relations is to see "adulthood" and "childhood" as moral and political opposite statuses[5] that form the generational structure: "powerlessness on the one hand, and power on the other" (Qvortrup, 1987, p. 6). The mainstream argument is that children must be protected and excluded from society until they are mature and developed enough to properly integrate into "adult" society later.

> From the macro-sociological standpoint, the critical question is not the dynamic pattern of psychological development, but childhood as a structural element and a social status. As such, childhood *is* integrated into society, and by society is meant the entire society and not merely the adult society. The dynamic aspect then accordingly becomes not a

[5] Approaching childhood as a moral category instead of a stage of development determined by nature is not popular because it confronts us with the arbitrariness and demeaning tendencies of paternalism. As Schapiro (1999) stresses:

> But if the adult-child distinction lacks an obvious place in modern ethics, this is perhaps not surprising. Since that distinction is one of status, it necessarily chafes against the modern principle that all human beings have the same moral standing. The idea that children have a special status, one which is different from that of adults, is evident in our everyday attitudes. Our basic concept of a child is that of a person who in some fundamental way is not yet developed, but who is in the process of developing. It is in virtue of children's undeveloped condition that we feel we have special obligations to children including duties to protect, nurture, discipline, and educate them. They are paternalistic because we feel bound to fulfill them regardless of whether the children in question consent to be protected, nurtured, disciplined, and educated. Indeed, we think of children as people who have to be raised, whether they like it or not. (p. 716)

> question of development of the personality, but a historical and social development: a child population always exists, regardless of the social formation or the type of socialization, and a dynamic interaction always takes place between the child population and the adult population, the nature of which must be more closely defined and continually reformulated. (Qvortrup, 1987, p. 5)

To rehabilitate childhood as both a political and analytical category, the work done by critical sociologies of childhood, deconstructive sociology of childhood, and generational studies become relevant (Alanen, 1988, 2003; Alanen & Mayall, 2001; Christensen & Prout, 2003; Cleverly & Philips, 1986; Goddard & McNamee, 2005; Hutchby & Moran-Ellis, 1998; James & Prout, 1990; Kessel & Siegel, 1981; Kessen, 1979; Mayall, 1994; Mayall & Zeiher, 2003; Mintz, 2004; Pufall & Unsworth, 2004; Qvortrup, 1987, 1994, 2009; Qvortrup et al., 1994; White, 1981; Zornado, 2001). Two crucial contributions come out from this literature: the "child" is a meaningful social agent and children and childhood are social constructions that form a dialectical coherence with the type of environment in which the child interacts with the adult society. This later contribution is best captured in Kessen's (1979) seminal article "The American Child and Other Cultural Inventions" which can be summarized in four proposals: "Child psychologists have invented different children; Different human cultures have invented different children; Child psychology, like the child, is a cultural invention; The child, and child psychology, are defined by 'larger forces' in the culture" (White, 1981, p. 1).

Childhood seen as a generational relation is analyzed as a structural phenomenon. As Alanen (2003) points out, childhood is "(relatively) permanent" if approached from a macro perspective despite its transient aspect if seen from the perspective of the individual (p. 13).

> Contrary to the individual child, whom psychologists … define with reference to

> individual dispositions such as various measures of maturity (cognition, sexuality, motion), childhood as a structural force is defined in terms of economic, social, political, technological, cultural and other *parameters* at the societal level. As such, it does not disappear as each child's childhood disappears when s/he becomes an adult but remains a permanent form. (Qvortrup, 2009, p. 645)

A structural analysis of childhood is still dwelling in the margins of social and political sciences. Establishing childhood as a permanent factor of analysis authorizes us to appreciate the political function of the "making of" the next generation and the fundamental values our practices sanction. Thus, childhood should be understood as a permanent structure that constitutes the foundations and reproduction of the social order.

1.2 Historical turning point: Institutionalizing childhood

The permanence of the structure of childhood (as opposed to individually lived childhoods) allows us to see it as an institution. The generational structure has significantly changed in the last 200 years or so and it has been marked by an increased institutionalization. The term institution can be confusing because, in the common language, a school or a hospital can also be described as an institution. Consequently, it might be more accurate to refer to schools and hospitals as organizations. Institutionalization in this specific context of interest means the normalization of the specific societal needs and activities which are directly relevant to the lives of children. Thus, the institution of childhood is not a place, but a set of normalized social relations that children interact with, situating them in a specific way in society and through specific age-based roles to ensure its social reproduction. Looking from a macro perspective, Helga Zeiher (2011) emphasizes that:

> childhoods show up as a configuration of social processes, discourses and structures

> which relate to ways of living as a child at a particular time in a particular society, and which gain a certain permanency by being reproduced in social life. Focusing on the configuration as a whole, childhood may be regarded as a societal institution, and the term institutionalization then means the totality of processes of establishing and further developing childhood as a social institution. (p. 127)

The institutionalization of the liberal childhood has been marked by two major trends: "the care-specialized family and the learning-specialized educational system" (Zeiher, 2011, p. 128). Thus, the family, the early care system and schools are central to the process of the institutionalization of childhood. These two major trends, socialization, and scholarization, will be discussed respectively in Chapters 3 and 4.

At the end of the 17th century, at the time when John Locke is laying down his theory of property based in labour as the origins of civil government, he was also putting forward a genuinely new picture of children to justify a new form of parental authority and political authority. This moment is quite pivotal in the history of childhood, and no one highlights this historical shift better than Philippe Ariès. It would be hard to talk about structural change in the conception of childhood without mentioning the historian who prepared the ground to fully appreciate childhood as a social and historical category. Ariès's (1962) book *Centuries of Childhood* was probably the single text that sparked academic interest in childhood through his insights about "its recent invention." As Ariès (1962) argues:

> In medieval society the idea of childhood did not exist; this is not to suggest that children were neglected, forsaken or despised. The idea of childhood is not to be confused with affection for children: it corresponds to an awareness of the particular nature of childhood, that particular nature which distinguishes the child from the adult, even the young adult. In medieval society, this awareness was lacking. (p. 128)

Ariès's (1962) central thesis is that the concept of childhood is a modern invention. According to him, the categorization of children into a specific group defined mostly by age was characterized by the segregation of children from adult society. He also argues that the modern child was marked by an increase in harsh treatments and confined to institutions specially designed to closely monitor them. Thus, the discovery of childhood also meant its segregation from adult society (Qvortrup, 1987, p. 14). There are many interpretations of the modern discovery of childhood: deMause (1976) maintains that it is an improvement to the child's welfare; Ariès (1962) better sees this historical transition as the reduction of the child's liberties and exclusion from adult life by a "multitude of prescriptions and controls on the spatial and temporal parameters of a child's life" (Sgritta, 1987, p. 39). As Zuckerman (1993) points out, "Ariès revealed a repressive and surveillant side of bourgeois domesticity that exceeded anything the Middle Ages ever managed" (p. 233). Is the justification of the need to "socialize" the child another form of political domination, or an enlightened position to better the nature of the child—an oddly modern and progressive ethic of improvement?

> Interpretations of this phenomenon [the discovery of childhood] diverge widely. On the one hand, there is the view that there has been a progressive evolution of a more liberal attitude toward children, marked by a new respect for the child, an attitude that finds expression in a concern and caring effort to comprehend the needs qualitatively peculiar to childhood (Degler, 1980; deMause, 1976; Shorter, 1978; Stone, 1977). Then, to this view is counterposed a view of a process of liberation stressing just as emphatically the limitations that such an affirmation placed on the autonomy of childhood and on its expression within the family and publicly (Ariès, 1968; Donzelot, 1977; Hengst et al., 1981; Lasch, 1977; Rutschky, 1977). (Sgritta, 1987, pp. 38–39)

Wherever you stand in the ethical and moral considerations behind this historical transition of the Western conception of the child, childhood, and its functions, the undeniable contribution of Ariès has been the illustration that childhood is indeed, a historical phenomenon and a social construction (Corsaro, 2011, p. 67).

Ariès's bold claim has been heavily criticized. The medievalist scholars have been vocal against Ariès's thesis. The critics have been from the *sentiments school* arguing that parents have always cared for their offspring in children's best interests (Hendrick, 2011, p. 102) and that medieval parents were aware that children are different from adults. Among those, the best-known critic is probably Linda Pollock's (1984) *Forgotten Children*. She claims that "continuity was the principal characteristic of the parent-child relationship" (Hendrick, 2011, p. 102). According to Pollock, parent–child relation is a poor variable to understand societal transformation and it would be more interesting to research why it is so resistant to change.

It is not the place to discuss Ariès's argument's shortcomings specifically, but rather to stress its vital importance for childhood studies. Ariès has quite rightly been accused of presentism, "that is his predisposition to interpret the past in the light of present-day attitudes, assumptions and concerns" (Archard, 2004, p. 22). Although Pollock's (1984) claims hold true that parenting is more resistant to change and it is a conservative force, there is no doubt that the nature of the care has been transformed. Ariès's insights were right to inform the historical shift in ways in which we think about children. Ariès's contribution was to identify the emergence of a modern conception of childhood that radically transformed society over the course of several generations. In other words, Medieval times had a concept of childhood, although it was not the same conception as the modern one in the Western world.

The most notable difference between the present day and the medieval conception of children is the separation between the adult world and the children's world. There is no doubt

that Ariès's greatest contribution has been to raise a growing awareness of the historical nature of childhood, and how this increased valorization of the necessity of children from being excluded from the adult world started at this time in history. Separateness is a central feature of the modern conception of childhood (Archard, 2004). As Hendrick (2011) stresses, "children were segregated from adults, and 'childhood' became fixed as a preparatory stage in the life course" (p. 100). This separateness has been stretched to such an extent that it impacts on an idea of human development, sometimes resulting in the interpretation of a child as a completely different species.

Ariès's contribution was to identify the emergence of a specific conception of childhood that represented a radical paradigmatic change from the previous epochs. As Oswell (2012) stresses, Ariès's emphasis was on historical transitions. Yet, this focus has been overlooked and even induced the opposite effect. This oversight is especially true within the historical turn. Instead, childhood studies focused on historical particularities. Thus, paradoxically, the influence of Ariès has been marked by an increased interest in studying the diversity of children's lives in the "here and now" by the social constructivists who focus on the particularities of the present children and their lives at a specific place (Oswell, 2012, p. 14). The focus on historicity downplayed the importance of the paradigmatic transition which is the prime concern here.

What was the prime mover of this historical paradigmatic transition? The triggers that redefined our conception of childhood is a major area of contention. Ariès points to a graduated increase of "sentiment" toward children, which ultimately culminated in our contemporary awareness that children were different and too valuable so that it was in their best interest to be fenced away from the adult world. Because of children's different natures and needs, it was essential "to further 'quarantine' them from the public world" (Hendrick, 2011, p. 100). Ariès

does not hide his moral judgment that pre-modern parental care was a form of neglect. For him, this separation is a sign of increased care for children. In this sense, Ariès situates himself among those who see the transition toward modernity as an improvement of children's condition (Ariès, 1962; deMause, 1976). This view that separateness is a progressive improvement of children's condition, is not shared by all, especially by the defenders of children's liberation and non-Western conceptions of childhood. As Farson (1978) argues, the separation of childhood from adulthood led children to lose significant freedoms and capacity to act within a society that heavily invests in their surveillance, discipline, and control. The contention is not, however, to argue one side or the other on this moral debate but to stress the significance of this transition. On this account, Ariès's thesis is more descriptive than explanatory. According to him, the transition of our conception of childhood is situated in Braudel's conception of the *longue durée*, as an accumulation of contingencies over a long period (Oswell, 2012, p. 24). Although it is a definitive result, the increase in parental care cannot explain this historical transition. The increase of "sentiment" alone cannot trigger major societal transformation.

The "modernity thesis" retakes the same approach as Ariès to explain the transition. According to Hendrick (2011), the new conception of childhood is the result of different influences such as "the Renaissance, the scientific revolution, religious reformations, and the Enlightenment" (p. 101). As Gillis (2011) writes, modernity is a term hard to pinpoint (p. 114) and engages in a similar explanatory approach that privileges the accumulation of diverse influences. In this approach, there is no radical break but only a progressive "improvement" of factors. It is possible to draw a correlation between those events, and how they have mutually been influenced but it does not explain the driving force behind historical transformations.

Contrary to Ariès or the "modernist thesis," I do not claim that the modern conception of childhood emerged out of the accumulation of historical contingencies. By linking the

generational structure to the transition of a political system, it is possible to understand the reason behind the emergence of the specificity of a historical conception of childhood and its subsequent institutionalization. The change of property relations with the historical transition toward capitalism directly affected parental obligations and responsibilities, filial rights, the state structure and thus, the generational structure and childhood. A different generational political structure was needed to legitimize the novel political order.

From a political point of view, the separation between the economic and the political under capitalism explains the increased separateness between adulthood and childhood. Under this logic, children are afforded different restrictions, controls, and freedoms because of their developmental status, taking the full meaning of the liberal institution of childhood and its structural position within the generational political structure. Thus, by naming the liberal institution of childhood, it helps to appreciate how parental authority has been built and transformed over generations to respond to the needs of capitalist accumulation and exploitation.

By looking at the structure of childhood from the perspective of social property relations, it becomes apparent the extent to which the structure of childhood is aligned with the political structure where parental authority is not only a pre-political relational dynamic but constitutive of the political one, even with its apparent "separateness." It is not surprising then that John Locke felt compelled to redefine a novel conception of children and parental authority to justify the origins of a civil government (as opposed to the absolute monarchy and the *pater potesta* of the roman law giving absolute power of the father over his children). John Locke is so relevant to this premise that the next chapter is dedicated to this "father of English liberalism." The social property relation approach has the explanatory potential to make sense of what Ariès accurately highlighted.

1.3 Social property relations and the generational means of violence

This dissertation draws from critical sociologies of childhood, deconstructive sociologies of childhood, and generational studies together with political Marxism and the social property relations approach in a critique of both psychological development theory and liberalism. This dissertation is also a modest contribution to state theory by challenging the divide between parental authority and political authority. It aims to rehabilitate the category of parental authority as relevant to understanding state forms. It reappraises parental authority as central to understanding political authority and the state. The analytical separation of the economy (private realm) from the political (public realm) not only impoverished our understanding of the state but also significantly mystified it. In this sense, parenting and institutions that act in *loco parentis* are central pillars in the organization of political power. I am building on the social property relations approach. However, instead of drawing a direct link between property relations and state forms, I explicitly re-integrate the dynamic of parental authority within the "traditional" political structure. Thus, the centrality of the state will be through a re-politicization of the parent–child relation (as a middle ground between the property relation and political/state domination).

Parent–child relations have always been highly contentious politically, no politician or philosopher of the 18th and 19th century would have denied it. The "scientifization" of the parent–child relationship with the deepening of capitalism in the 19th century and the naturalizing of social forces and history have obscured the fundamentally political nature of this relation. The political relation that binds one generation to the other has been successfully emptied of any political content. Now, the centrality of parental authority conceals itself under the "social" as the perfect "neutral" hybrid between the private and the public and also behind

educational reforms and socially appropriate "developmental needs." Parenting is understood in the broad sense as most of children's care in Western society is marked by an early taking over of this function by state institutions (from early infant care to pre-school and schooling). In this sense, I am referring explicitly to all institutions, schooling predominantly, that act *in loco parentis* and the intergenerational dynamic of power within them.

While studying historically changing dynamics, especially in the minimally documented sources of the close relationships between parents and children, it is hard not to indulge in sweeping generalizations. Nevertheless, property relations are an important analytical tool because they constrain parenting decisions not only over marriage and reproduction, but they also imply relations of control over children's life-activities and labour. They also constrain the generational structure of the state as well as the intergenerational reproduction and normalization of legitimate political violence. As Wood (1995) emphasizes, "social property relations take the form of particular juridical and political relations—modes of domination and coercion, forms of property and social organization—which are not mere secondary reflexes, nor even just external supports, but *constituents* of these production relations" (p. 27).

Social property relations inform parenting dynamics which, in their turn, inform state forms and thus regimes of accumulation. Social property relations theory also allows us to debunk the false unity of the family and unearth the property relations that inform power relations. It also reveals the power relations within the family and challenges bourgeois sentimentality by questioning the apparent "unity" of the family. This argument heavily echoes authors who developed and worked out the social property relations theory in the understanding of the transition toward capitalism.[6] To talk about the separation of parental authority and

[6] See the works of Robert Brenner and Ellen Meiksins Wood, among others.

political authority is already to assume categories that need to be comprehended. Drawing upon social property relations allows us to see the state as a social system (where the family is the most basic unit of political analysis) and challenge the state's apparent autonomy from social forces. This alternative starting-point of seeing social property relations as power and domination offers the possibility to understand the formation of family forms—and consequently state forms—without assuming what needed to be explained. The social property relations approach helps to understand the transition of the child as property under feudalism to the child as temporary fiduciary property under capitalism, clarifying the ambiguity between the theoretical equality of grown generations while carrying into adulthood a normalized acceptance of unequal relations in the private and economical world. This transition sanctions a novel concept of the child who needs to become "habituated" to the commodity form and to accept capitalist discipline as part of both cultural and political identity.

The Marxian concept of "surplus labour" is an adequate theoretical foundation to the understanding of the social world—more precisely to understand that a given society is politically organized.

> The specific economic form, in which unpaid surplus is pumped out of direct producers, determines the relationship of ruler and ruled, as it grows directly out of production itself and, in turn, reacts upon it as determining element. Upon this, however, is founded the entire formation of the economic community which grows up out of the production relations themselves, thereby simultaneously its specific political form. It is always the direct producers—a relation always naturally corresponding to a definite stage in the development of the method of labor and thereby social productivity—which reveals the innermost secret, the hidden basis of the entire social structure, and with it the political

> form of the relation of sovereignty and dependence, in short, the corresponding specific form of the state. (Marx, 1867/1993, p. 371)

Marx's concept of surplus labour provides a method to theoretically understand every specific society by grasping all the social power. Social power is not transhistorical nor a given, but is transformed according to changes in a specific political structure. Following Marx's concept of "surplus labour," Robert Brenner locates his theoretical foundation in the only ground that can be abstracted from a social and historical agency—namely the social basis of development. The social basis of economic development offers an understanding of the specific "rationality" of the actions of historically specific economic actors; rendering intelligible patterns of social action and societal transformations. The basis of economic development is social property relations. For Brenner (1986), social property relations are:

> The relationship among the direct producers, among the class of exploiters (if any exists), and between the exploiters and producers, which specify and determine the regular and systematic access of the individual economic actors (or families) to the means of production and to the economic product. In every social economy, such property relations will exist, and make it possible for the direct producers and exploiters (if any) to continue to maintain themselves as they were—i.e. in the class position they already held, as producer and exploiters. But more to the point, these property relations, once established, will determine the economic course of action which is rational for the direct producers and the exploiters. (p. 26)

As Brenner argues, property relations "determine the pattern of economic development of any society; for that pattern is, to a very great extent, merely the aggregate result of carrying out the rules for the reproduction of the direct producers and exploiter" (p. 26). In this perspective,

transformations are not the result of the growth of the productive forces, as some protagonists of uncritical Marxism would claim. Change is the outcome of specific patterns of social reproduction where the actors—constrained by the social property relations of their society—are trying to reproduce themselves as they are (Brenner, 1986, p. 46).

Brenner's framework of analysis empowers the understanding of societal transformation beyond historical contingency and a planned march of history of the triumphalism of human rationality. Change is constrained by a contradictory structural logic of social reproduction of different social actors, but by no means determines the outcomes of social forces. As Brenner (1986) insightfully demonstrated with his analysis on the transition to capitalism, transformation is the result of "unintended consequences" of the logic of social reproduction. The social property relations approach empowers us to see different patterns of social action, as they are, simultaneously economic and political (despite their abstraction under the logic of capitalism). More importantly, Brenner's framework of analysis explains social forces that bring about change and transformation. This schema of analytical inquiry does not, however, provide a holistic perspective of social action. Other features must be considered while trying to make sense of a specific historical period. Nevertheless, it constitutes the most accurate starting point from which to root theoretical analysis. The social property relations approach provides analytical tools to grasp historical specificity and structural transformations.

Evidently, not every human phenomenon can be deduced from the social property relations approach. Given that not all human incentives for action are the result of economic motivation, some criticisms have been formulated regarding the theoretical limits of the social property relations approach. This is even more relevant when it comes to understanding motivations for parenting practices. Yet, it is shocking to realize how the conception of children

is transformed along with the requirements of the new regime of production and accumulation. This approach cannot completely explain social motivations as a social reality is extremely complex, it offers the great advantage of shedding light on the restraints of social action. Moreover, even if economic motivations are not the only ones, they are part of the underlying causes. It is not the purpose of this analysis to extensively elaborate on the contentious debate of base/superstructure in the Marxist tradition. Reacting to this contention about the false dichotomies between different "spheres" or "levels" of analysis, Robert Brenner (1986) insists on using the term "relation of reproduction" (p. 25). As Wood (1995) correctly pointed out, there is no such thing as the economy emptied from social and political content (p. 20). Therefore, social property relations allow us to transcend the false dichotomy between the political and the economic by not reducing the logic of historical movements to the abstractness of the production process seen as the division of labour but as an actor who is trying to reproduce themselves as they are.

The specific social property relations do not predetermine any outcomes of an action, yet these social structures constrain the political struggles. It would be intellectual naivety, however, to claim that ideas—without considering the changing structures of power—by themselves can break the logic of political and economic accumulation. Is it the limit to the social property relations approach or the limit of a historically sensitive theorization in itself? As Rosenberg (1994) argues, deducing more conclusions from an abstract model could result in misleading conclusions; it is at this intersection that the line should be drawn between theoretical questions and empirical/historical questions (pp. 57–58). In this sense, it is then crucial to historicize parenting practices and the changing forms of the use of violence deployed against children to

reproduce parental authority—or the "legitimate" uses of the generational means of violence in this cultural structure of the state, subjectivity and dominant consciousness.

The appropriation of surplus labour is backed-up by the means to enforce structural inequality. It is a question that links directly to political violence. Economic exploitation is inevitably backed with the monopoly of the means of violence. Within the classic Marxist framework of analysis, the divide between the family and the state leaves a blind spot that obscures how economic exploitation, and thus political violence, is not only between exploiting classes (between the owners of the means of production and propertyless wage-labour) but is also mediated through family forms. Put differently, economic exploitation is part of traditional European family relations, integral to the domination of parental authority which in turn, serves to legitimate political authority and thus requires a rethinking of class dynamic and especially the notion of class consciousness. Political violence is part of parenting, and despite the popularity of child-centered pedagogy, a critique of the liberal view of childhood should reveal the depth and the insidious justification of capitalist political domination and the commodity form.

In this sense, property relations are backed also by generational means of violence. The reproduction of systemic structures of inequality requires the complicity of overt or covert means of control, domination, and violence. It is important to specify that in this context, violence is not understood in the traditional form of armed conflict. Violence is often minimized. Violence, abuse, and power are loaded concepts that I wish to debunk mainly in their relation to the legitimate and illegitimate use of force toward our most vulnerable people. The boundaries between what is culturally accepted, and what constitutes a deviation from the norm are constantly changing, especially regarding children. For example, a generation still alive remembers when a physical assault was an expectation as a pedagogical tool. When the stick was used against the child to castigate left-handed students, for example, it was not because all

educators were cruel but they had complex rationalizations to justify why children deserved it and why it was judged necessary; it did not constitute an abuse of power or did not transgress the cultural norm. Until quite recently, the policing of inferiors—children, wives, and dependants—was commonplace and approved of as necessary to maintain the relations of domination of the social order (Brockliss & Montgomery, 2010, p. ix). Whipping at home and school was within the Western cultural norm of good parenting and pedagogical tools. Few adults would advocate these practices now, yet, it is hard to hypothesize what in years ahead will be condemned when looking retrospectively at contemporary childrearing practices. "Violence directed at a child who is owned may be considered a right rather than a questionable act. Discipline by physical force may be considered an obligation, a response to children that is expected of 'responsible' parents" (Saunders & Goddard, 2005, p. 114). The same can be applied to more benevolent forms of violence.

As Saunders and Goddard (2005) point out, "the child's inferior status permits and condones violence and hurtful responses to the child that are neither legally nor socially tolerated as a response to adults" (p. 113). Under absolute traditional patriarchy, the use of overt violence was legitimized as a necessary tool to maintain the political order. With capitalism in the Western world, paternalism replaced the absolute power of *pater potesta*. Under the paternalistic doctrine, children are only the temporary property of parents, acting as fiduciaries to the child's interest. Thus, the forms of violence are different, with an emphasis on education and discipline to internalize norms that maintain a specific political order. It does not result however that they are not a benign form of coercion and violence.

Under capitalism, the moment of appropriation (the appropriation of surplus labour) happens during production which requires the major disciplining of the labour force during the process of production. Even though the commodification of labour has become a *modus vivendi*

of the so-called "free world," it remains that labour discipline sacrifices human autonomy and thus, human freedom to the imperative of accumulation. And although the contemporary political culture normalizes, naturalizes, and universalizes this relation of domination (of the control of someone else's (mind and) activity) as necessary and even desirable, this dependence on the market as well as the inevitable disciplinary power required to keep a docile labour force that is willingly sold on the labour market is a historical oddity and linked with the emergence of capitalism.

Hence, by its very nature, capitalism is defined as the commodification of labour power: the political relation of domination of an owner that can buy it, and of another human being that has no other choice but to sell his or her autonomy and freedom to meet the basic requirements of life. This kind of political domination is not reducible to the wage-relation, its existence is much more endemic and can be found in other human relationships that normalize, "naturalize" and thus universalize the commodity form as a legitimate human practice.

The alienating effect of capitalism is reflected in the violence of the logic of commodification of human labour power. And like all forms of organized and structural violence, its modalities and effects have been banalized. The "capitalist market for labor-power" despite its historical oddity and novelty, remains a radically new "form of coercion" (Wood, 1990, p. 71). David McNally (2006) is most critical of the modern institution of wage-labour. Building on the German philosophical tradition, and most specifically the interpretation of Kant, Hegel, and ultimately Marx, McNally maintains that there is a long European philosophical tradition that ascribes radically different meanings between "things" and "person" (McNally, 2006, p. 42). As he points out, to reduce human life activity to a commodity to be sold and exchanged or "to treat persons and their bodies as things is to violate human freedom and, in so doing, to deprive people the fundamental component of this humanity. This claim is powerful—

and sits uneasily with the dominant institution of modern capitalist society, the labor market" (McNally, 2006, p. 42).

The reduction of human autonomy to a "thing" that needs to be exchanged on the labour market may be the source of the deepest contradiction of a system that proclaims freedom in the abstract yet legally protects property right over others' activities. To sustain this, children must be objectified by denying them humanity's most distinctive feature—free will and autonomy. This dissertation is not so much interested in the wage-relation in itself but in the cultural practices and social relations that normalize and legitimate this uniquely capitalist form of political domination. The habituation to this normative power is most obvious through the "socialization" of children to the commodity form.

Once you approach class analysis as a human relationship based on property relations and try to read through it childhood as crucial in the movement of history, it becomes harder to stress the traditional class antagonism too far. By that, I do not mean that class antagonism ceased to exist but to stress that the working class (and middle-class) have been more willing to cooperate with the structure of domination than the Marxist tradition is willing to admit. This dissertation exposes the age-blindness in class analysis and most other critical theories. Most of the critical theory literature accepts the liberal claim that parenting was a human activity emptied of any political relevance and thus, leading to the failure to recognize the intergenerational means of violence.

There is an intricate relationship between parents, children, and violence which is intimately tied to the state structure as a historical relationship. In a sense, there is an intimate relationship between parenting practices, childhood, and the legitimation and reproduction of the political order. The word "intimate" is purposefully chosen not to mean primarily of the

"private" character but essentially referring to the state (and political authority) as the innermost part situated farthest within—alluding to the concept of subjectivity and consciousness. By placing the notion of alienated labour at the core of the social basis of political domination, class consciousness is intimately linked with the subjective experience, and thus, cultural legitimation, of political domination.

Because the relationship between political authority and property is mediated by parental authority, there is a uniformity of the means of violence that maintain the overall structures of political domination and exploitation. The standardization of the parent–child relationship in the 19th century testifies to the cutting across the generational means of violence when the parenting practices of the ruling class were imposed unto the working class. As Lasch (1979) argues regarding the modern transformation of the family, "the socialization of production—under the control of private industry—proletarianized the labor force in the same way that the socialization of reproduction proletarianized parenthood, by making people unable to provide for their own needs without the supervision of trained experts" (p. 19).

Although the contradiction between the government under parental authority and political authority can resolve itself analytically through the conception of children in development and thus as a pre-political being that would fit this abstract dichotomy, the material and historical experience of every living childhood may present a different reality, especially when basic human relationships are carried into adulthood and "active life." It is necessary to justify economic exploitation under capitalism. The control and discipline necessary during the proper development of the child is essential to the naturalization of the commodity form. It ensures that the necessary capitalist discipline has been well programmed and assimilated to safeguard the logic of domination and exploitation once the individual reaches political emancipation.

The separation of the political structure is not the consequence of a more complex (and advanced) social reality but was historically necessary to sustain theoretically a form of government that would challenge the claims of absolute monarchy without endangering the conditions of capitalist accumulation in the family economy. To ensure the reproduction of capitalist exploitation, parental authority has been reinvented as pre-political (and now even as non-political) and the relations of domination, dynamics of subordination, control, and necessary coercion to reproduce organized forms of violence are not imposed by nature but by political relations resulting from property relations.

This implies that although political power is based on consent among equals at the political level, the "natural" inequality that prevails in the family/private government is normalized as a legitimate and necessary human relationship based on control, command, and domination. Thus, the cornerstone of the "naturalized" pre-political child is that children's subordinated status cannot constitute a political problem, the childhood question is to be settled outside of the political realm, mostly, as far as child politics are concerned, in the bourgeois science of child developmental studies. By aligning child developmental psychology to capitalist requirements, a highly political question was turned into the "neutrality" of bourgeois scientific inquiry. Oppression ceased to be political and became the consequence of "natural inequalities" assessed through the objectivity of the science of development. And although a simplistic analysis can proclaim the end of political domination in a representative government as such, a more critical approach to the political structure sees a shifting of form and content with the same systemic logic of political domination.[7]

[7] Political domination is a loaded term and some clarifications are in order. The intergenerational means of violence reflect the historical specificities of property relations that inform state forms. The way political domination is expressed is reflected in the requirement of social property relations. Before the transition toward capitalism, political domination relied on physical coercion to appropriate surplus labour. Consequently, most of the social

If children were considered political beings, and power struggle and resistance (commonly referred to as misbehaviours) as real political struggles and coercion and violence used as political violence instead of the euphemism of benevolent disciplining or "normal developmental stages," it would make a real basis to seriously engage in an alternative political order. This would set the stage for a genuine transformation of a cultural paradigm and democratic revolution.

The generational blindness of Marxism made it oblivious of the human relations of domination among the working class and population at large which severely limits the possibilities to create a counter-hegemonic political culture that would genuinely embrace the principles of genuine democracy. This is even truer under capitalism than any other mode of production because of the politics of childhood. The taking in charge by the state of the education of children from both classes to serve the dominant interest of the economy is a historical precedent. Its logic is truly totalizing. The state-led process of socialization of children in liberal society homogenized childrearing practices to the extent that it normalized and "universalized" the liberal ways of being, thinking and doing.

The homogenization of childrearing practices around state-led and national guidelines instead of class lines severely transformed class subjectivity. The state-led control of the process of cultural homogenization around standardized lines, especially through the anti-democratic

control of population, and the pedagogical tools were tainted by physical violence as the best way to enforce obedience to the structure of power. The forms of political domination under capitalism are radically different. Capitalism requires strict control of labour power as the surplus labour is appropriated at the moment of production itself. Thus, the political domination need not be invested predominantly in coercive violence (although it is necessary if other forms of control fail) but through a behavioural approach to control future labour power. Within this perspective, it becomes crucial that children develop an emotional attachment to the commodity form and wage-relation. To achieve that, we witness in the 19th century an over-investment in controlling children's activities and labour, monitoring, and psychological control to prepare them so that the wage-relation appears as a continuation of their education. They must be socialized to accept the commodification of labour power as "natural" and mandatory schooling its most efficient political weapon.

nature of compulsive schooling, severely undermined the capacity of the working class to create a democratic political culture.

1.4 The scope of children's agency within the structure of childhood

A structural perspective might seem at odds with a concern for social transformation. Any structural analysis tends to be more totalizing in its effects. Structures constrain the possibilities of actions, yet without determining them. Additionally, the dependence of children on adults' resources further exacerbates this tendency. The institutionalization of children's lives, by islanding them within a specially designed child culture limits their capacity for agency. The increased interest in children is the result of the work of the pioneers of childhood studies in the 1990s. A central element of this research agenda was to put forward a "new paradigm" of "seeing children as social actors in their immediate environment" (Alana, as cited in Smith & Greene, p. x). Those efforts have been important to recognizing children as legitimate actors and an important lens through which to study children's lives. Yet, as Allison James regrets that despite enormous efforts of the first generation of the "new paradigm" to make children's agency visible, children are still not seriously taken as participants in society (Smith & Greene, 2015, p. 135).

A significant contribution coming from the new paradigm in childhood studies has been to stress the child as an agent. The necessity to consider children as agents resulted in an increased individualization of children's experience. This was urgently needed, especially to counter-balance the mechanical view of the developmental paradigm that tends to see children as an unfolding organism, following growth chart and biologically determined developmental stages. Focusing on childhood's particularities was essential to appreciate the cultural relativism in childrearing practices. It became evident that developmental milestones for Western societies

such as the terrible twos, or the teenage crisis, are not universal and thus not rooted in changing hormones or other biological factors, but embedded in cultural practices. The first decade of the 21st century in childhood studies has generated a lot of historiographies and descriptive accounts of children's experience in diverse areas. Stated briefly, with a few exceptions, the bulk of the research has been significantly more on children than on childhood. It was also focused on children's lives within the childhood culture rather than an analysis of the institution of childhood more specifically. The focus has been at the micro-level of analysis, often confounding children's experience with children's agency (Oswell, 2012). This data is essential to better grasp children's reality, which was essential given the invisibility of children's perspective within social science before the paradigmatic change in the 1990s. Yet, it also limited the analytical contribution to this research in transforming children's reality and social and political position. This is a major reason why children have not been taken seriously despite the development of childhood studies. Although it served to reassert the importance of the new paradigm, it also impoverished its analytical capacities.

It seems increasingly hard to keep a proper balance between the macro/micro perspective, especially when researching with children. The extensive research on the here and now of the life of children has given us a better understanding of their realities. Yet, they have now to yield toward a strong understating of how we can transform the structure of childhood toward more equal property relations. To be fair, as said previously, the emancipation of children as a way toward human emancipation was not the driving motivation behind those initiatives but rather to improve, and reinforce, the liberal institution of childhood. The failure to approach the structure of childhood from the perspective of power and domination severely limits our understanding of children's capacity to affect change.

Coming from a political perspective, it is crucial to redefine the understanding of the children's agency. As Oswell (2012) puts it, the agency of children and youth should be understood as their capacity to make a difference, rather than being constructed as a difference (p. 8). It implies children's capacity to make a decision and to act on it. Thus, children's agency should not be simply equated with children's behaviour. Thus, a return to more structural analysis, with careful considerations of approaching childhood as an institution situated in time and space, helps us to understand the real limits that have prevented children from being real actors in their lives. By doing so, it highlights also how the liberal institution of childhood limits their capacity to act. Children's perspectives and particularism have undermined the struggle for political recognition. As Hendrick emphasizes, "agency and participation, however, are fundamentally about power and justice" (as cited in Smith & Greene, 2015, p. 123). As Hendrick says, this aspect in childhood studies has been under-researched whereas the importance of building forms of solidarities and allies has been central to recognition politics (as cited in Smith & Greene, 2015, p. 123).

There is a great tension between the discourse that values children's autonomy on one hand and the limits imposed on children's agency through the intensification of the institutionalization of children. Zeiher (2011) points to this contradiction that modernity pretends to realize greater individualism and autonomy, yet:

> On the level of daily life as well as on the mental level, children's position in relation to school and the family may be said to be becoming more "individualized" and the relations between childhood institutions and the children's perception of these are becoming more relaxed. However, while a multitude of small freedoms and blurring borderlines occur on the front stage of institutional frameworks, strong societal forces,

> not least economic ones, in the end, restrict children's autonomy in relation to childhood institutions. On the social structure level, institutionalization is still increasing; scholarization is still progressing due to the developments in knowledge and the economy, and the "social investment state" is augmenting investment in children and thereby the institutionalization of childhood. (p. 137)

There are few signs of capitalist societies moving significantly away from the strengthening power of the institutionalization of children's lives. If anything, economic pressures and austerity measures tend to reinforce the institutional controls and discipline around children's learning.

Moreover, children's agentic capacity is not equally distributed. Some children are given more autonomy than others and have access to more resources to act than others. This dissertation seeks, in part, to remediate the failure to engage and discuss children's agentic capacity from the vantage point of power relations grounded in real institutional trends of the liberal institution of childhood such as scholarization. Otherwise, our understanding of the transformative power from one generation to another within society will inevitably be limited. Thus, to fully grasp the potentiality of children's agentic power, the research agenda should seek relational situations where children have more capacity to act, studying explicit attempts toward the de-institutionalization of children's lives. More specifically, it should seek out research possibilities happening at the margins, outside the paternalism that defines the liberal institution of childhood, and explore a novel path toward an emergent, experimental initiative in ways which to relate to the younger generation.

With these preoccupations in mind, the question of children's emancipation (see Chapter 6) can be presented differently from a vantage point of the unschooling movement and a

democratic parenting paradigm. Education, outside the institutional trend of scholarization, offers such a vantage point to rethink children's rights and childhood's politics toward more egalitarian property relations.

Thus, to fully grasp the systemic logic within the generational structure, we must dwell more specifically on capitalist property relations. Only with a better understanding of how property relations based in labour, in the context of its emergence during the early development of capitalism, can we understand how it affected parental authority and political authority. To proceed to define the liberal institution of childhood, and its specific institutionalization around this logic, John Locke's theory of property and civil government is the starting point.

Chapter 2

John Locke's theory of property: Legitimating capitalism through the defense of paternalism

> *We have laws that pertain only to adults, and other laws pertaining only to children. Consequently, quite a number of activities cannot be done by children without running the risk of committing a status offence (and vice versa). Indeed, Postman (1982)—in his famous book—even sees the danger of letting children utilize the new electronic codes of modern society, because it may undermine the (natural) authority of adults. In the end, the crucial question related to "status offence" concerns what is at stake? Are we protecting those who are denied access to certain rights or are we instead protecting an otherwise vulnerable social order?*
> *(Jens Qvortrup, 1994, p. 2)*

Locke went down in history as one of the fathers of classical liberal theory through his challenge to patriarchy. Locke's intellectual and political ambitions in his masterpiece *Two Treatises on Government* were to challenge the "False Principles and Foundation of Sir Robert Filmer's *Patriarchat* and his followers." Namely, Locke intended to develop a refutation of the claim: "that all Government is absolute Monarchy and that no Man is Born free" (Locke, 1988, §2, 10–15). As a way to justify absolute authority, Filmer's main position was derived from the patriarchal founding that "Men are born in subjection to their parents, and therefore cannot be free" (Locke, 1988, §6, 10). Locke refutes patriarchy by locating the "true original, extent and end of civil government" in the preservation of property (Locke, 1988, §§44).

By placing the protection of property as the basis of political society, Locke genuinely transformed how we think about the origins of political authority. Locke accomplished this theoretical *tour de force* by arguing that the origin of property lies in labour. Locke used a novel understanding of property and labour to argue in favour of the natural right and individual freedom against the prerogatives of the crown, the rejection of passive obedience (the right of

resistance) and the doctrine of consent to political authority. In doing so, Locke was promoting a forceful defense of paternalism as the proper and only legitimate form of government against absolute monarchies.

Locke's intellectual endeavour carried specific class interest. He was also responding to the historical conjuncture where the rising landed gentry needed to defend themselves against both the people and the crown. Although Locke's argument is a theoretical defense of political equality in the "public" realm of the state (to challenge the crown and absolute patriarchal claims), it also provides the legitimacy to control and exploit the dependants' labour without their formal consent—to simultaneously sanction exploitation and domination in the private government of the family and thus, the economy.

In order to do so, it was essential to draw sharp theoretical boundaries between the government of the family and the government of the state. We can trace back the theoretical separation of the family and the state to Locke. The contradiction is not the result of Locke's lack of consistency as it is often assumed. It reflects beautifully the theoretical masterpiece to justify emancipation through domination.

The defense of capitalist property relations required a new paradigm that transformed parental rights and obligations, parent–children relationships, and brought to the fore a radically new conception of childhood. In this sense, Locke's accomplishments as a defense of the early Whigs' interests are many. He gave us a theory of property that rationalizes the logic of capitalist appropriation and exploitation in the private realm while promoting political freedom in the abstract. To accomplish that, Locke reified the divide between the family and the state, between the economic and the political, between parental authority and political authority. Moreover, to defend this form of political authority, Locke offered us a theory of childhood that

binds generations into the political structure of capitalist domination and exploitation—a liberal paradigm of childhood that sanctions paternalism as a "natural" dynamic between parent and children. This modern paternalism is generally viewed as an enlightened position of the "natural evolution" of greater concerns for children, and in this sense, Locke's insights are surprisingly contemporary. However, this ahistorical perspective fails to see how this transformation of the childhood paradigm is bound to the historical transformation of property relations, the political justification of paternalism and the transition to capitalist political authority.

This chapter argues that Locke's defense of paternalism serves as a justification of unequal property relations—to socialize children to the "law of reason" of capitalist property relations more than it pretends to be a theory of political freedom. It maintains that the temporary ownership of children is not the consequence of the unchanging nature of the child (or the obviousness of children's imm'turity) but is historically contingent to the change of social property relations with the transition toward capitalism. As political domination and economic exploitation ceased to rely directly on force and coercion and more on consent, the socialization of the following generation to the laws of property and reason took a central priority. As Carrig (2006) points out:

> The theory of freedom that is the centerpiece of the *Second Treatise*, together with the principles of consent and resistance, is undermined by a philosophy of education, the most salient feature of which is its emphasis on parental control. The *Education* gives the father an almost absolute power to regulate the behavior of the child. It also makes clear how much greater paternal power is than the mere power to make laws with the punishment of death (the political power of the *Second Treatise*). The fear of a "Hobbesian" sovereign power is trivial when juxtaposed with the immeasurably greater

> threat to individual liberty that arises when the force of the community lies, not in the hands of the legislative body, but in the power of the father to control the child. It is the father's power that genuinely binds the child to the public will. (p. 374)

This central contradiction, of sometimes being emancipated and sometimes subdued, will be analytically solved by Locke by arguing for the apparent separation between parental authority and political authority. The liberal conception of children is based on the doctrine of immaturity which acts as the biological linchpin to justify the ownership of children under the private government of the family/parental authority. It revolves around the "natural necessity" to turn the apolitical, asocial and acultural child into a future citizen that will consent to the liberal order. It is no coincidence that the Locke vision of children has been so powerful in conceptualizing our current understanding of the modern institution of childhood and parenting and important assumptions underlying modern bourgeois pedagogy whose method is the science of producing citizens.

The tendency to naturalize parent–child relations is a powerful strategy to overshadow the centrality of the structure of childhood in the overall political system. It is crucial to understand how the political freedom in the political realm is grounded into the proper socialization of the next generation to the law of property and the fashioning of consent in the private realm of the family—the liberal civilizing mission to socialize the following generation to accept and internalise capitalist property relations. Put differently:

> To the extent that, today, there is a general acceptance of the first principles of Locke's liberal political theory, with little consideration of how those principles are grounded in the first principle of his epistemology, it is essential that the connection between these two aspects of Lockean liberalism be thoroughly understood. (Carrig, 2006, p. 375)

Without this critical awareness of how the educative paradigm and parenting is constitutive of the political system, and how it constitutes, as a direct consequence, the legitimacy of the unequal property relations it sanctions, you otherwise unintentionally risk becoming the "apostle of the liberal faith" (Carrig, 2006).

This chapter proceeds by retracing Locke's argument that divides the government of the family from the government of the state. This separation between parental authority (economic) and political authority (politics) reflects the central contradiction that structures capitalism's unequal property relations. It then focuses on the justification of the separation through the defense of paternalism. Paternalism serves to justify the ownership of children to ensure their proper socialisation. Finally, it argues that liberal education is not education to emancipation, but quite the contrary, it is socialization to the submission to parental will (or the private government where the temporary ownership is a legitimate social relation, the socialization to the submission to alienating property relations in the economy) while exploiting the feeling of wanting to be emancipated.

2.1 The separation between the political and the economy/family

John Locke's theoretical writings provide the definitive theoretical divorce between the political and the family (Nicholson, 1986, p. 1). As Nicholson (1986) points out:

> While within the period in which Locke was writing, the family served as a central issue for political theory, later this ceased to be so. This transformation in political theory is a consequence of Locke's writing. It is not because Locke did not spend much time discussing the family and the relation of the family to the political authority; on the contrary, he spent much time on both. Rather, it follows from his conclusion on the necessary distinctiveness of political and familiar authority that further political theorists

> should not continue to conceive of the family as relevant to the political analysis. So thoroughly has post-seventeenth-century political theory accepted his conclusion that little attention has ever been given to this component of Locke's work. (p. 134)

Under the monarchical government and absolutism, as expressed in Filmer's *Patriarchia*, political authority (the power of the King over his subject) had always been justified by the power fathers have over their children in commanding obedience and deference to authority. However, there is here an apparent theoretical difficulty: How to challenge the absolutist claims of the crown without undermining the capacity to exert this absolutist power in the economy? Under an absolute patriarchal system, parental authority and political authority (the economic and the political) have the same logical coherence. Locke shook this long-lasting patriarchal tradition by successfully arguing that: "these two Powers, Political and Paternal, are so perfectly distinct and separate; are built upon so different Foundations, and given to so different Ends" (Locke, *Second Treatise of Government*, §§71: 7–10). So well was the claim that paternal authority was irrelevant for the political analysis argued, or so well did it meet the requirements of capitalism, that modern liberal political theory (and to a great extent most of political theory) disregarded the relevance of the family (and most especially the parent–child relationship) as a predominant factor in political analysis.[8]

> The belief in the family as a quasi-natural institution and as necessarily distinct in purpose and origins from the state has, since the nineteenth century, become associated with a corollary assumption: that home and family are necessarily distinct from the sphere of the "economy." (Nicholson, 1986, p. 121)

[8] Moreover, although critical feminist theory challenged the "naturalness" of family forms as well as gendered relations of domination, it has only made shy attempts in challenging intergenerational relations of domination between parents and children as constitutive of the political system (Oakley, 1994, p. 18).

As Nicholson (1986) points out, even Marxism in its critique of "political economy" failed to address the proper relationship between "political economy" and the family (p. 2). As she said, one consequence of classical Marxism's acceptance of liberal paradigms has been to "ignore the historically contingent nature of the separation of the family and the economy" (Nicholson, 1986, p. 3). The significance of this separation between the family and the economy is crucial because, at the time of this epistemological break of the political structure, the "family government" (paternal/parental authority) also constituted the basis of the economy.[9]

Although Locke's (1988) seminal chapter V "On property" received considerable attention, the originality of Locke's rewriting of parent–child relations has somehow been overlooked. The focus has been on Locke's reinvention of the child as an abstract non-adult in his famous *tabula rasa* more than the ground-breaking redefinition of parental authority and state power. By placing property is labour as the basis of political society, Locke's paradigm inevitably led to the reorganization of the generational means of violence. Locke's position of parental authority is still so hegemonic that it predisposes modern theorists to overlook, or even dismiss, its originality as a 17th-century doctrine. Locke's vision triumphed to such an extent in the contemporary period that it is seen as obvious—it is the "natural order" (Laslett, 1988, p. 95). Laslett presents Locke's position on children's subjection to parents (which is not subjection because children have no will for them yet, and the parental responsibility is to will for them until their majority) as evident (Laslett, 1988, p. 95). Laslett justifies the lengthy chapter VI "On

[9] As Nicholson (1986) argues:

> At the start of this period, the family/private sphere is a sphere of economic production, in the context of a growing nonfamilial sphere of economic exchange. This heritage of economic production within the familial is marked even in the twentieth century by its description by many as "private" activity. With the onset of industrialization, production moves outside the home and becomes itself a nonfamilial activity. In consequence, there emerges a sphere of social life, the economy, which is viewed as distinct from both the family and the state. (pp. 106–107)

The subsequent chapters engage more specifically with this separation.

paternal power" as an unproblematic response to Filmer. If Locke's position on the distinction between parental (paternal) power and political power was so trivial, how can you justify that Locke dedicated to it as lengthy an explanation as for his famous chapter V on property? From a 17th century perspective, Locke's reinvention of the generational ordering of parent–child relationships was everything but common sense.

> Much of Locke's writings was also being articulated by other theorists of the century. However, as Locke is widely and rightly recognized to be one of the most forceful and consistent representatives of classical liberalism, understood as a theory of the state, so also is he one of the most forceful and consistent representatives of classical liberalism understood as a theory of the family. (Nicholson, 1986, p. 137)

As Laslett (1988) points out, Locke's relevance is contemporary in the way we still embrace a liberal epistemology when we take for granted the divide between "the social and political origins" (p. 107). Also, although asserting the divide between the family and the state was a highly contentious claim to make in the seventeenth century, the acceptance of the separation between the family and the state has become a quasi-foundational tenet of Western modern political theory.

This structural division is theoretically and historically specific to the emergence of capitalism, and might be, as Ellen M. Wood (1995) argues, "the most effective defence mechanism available to capital" (p. 20). Drawing on the insights of Marx's historical materialism, it then becomes much easier to argue along the same lines as Wood (1995) when she states that ultimately, "the secret of capitalism is a political one" (p. 21).

One of the political secrets of the reproduction of capitalist exploitation throughout generations might not, after all, be found exclusively in the economy, but to a significant extent

in the intimacy of family life or institutions that act in *loco parentis* as the family was the central economic unit. The analytical divide between the political and the family fenced away from scrutiny property relations as pre-political.[10] Locke's innovation was to obscure political domination and the apparent necessity of "socialization" in order to meet the requirement of a "civil society" not opposed to political domination itself, but as Wood (1995) argues, as a conflated term and synonymous to "political society" or the state itself (p. 240). As Wood (1995) puts it: "this conflation of state and 'society' represented the subordination of the state to the community of private-property holders (as against both monarch and 'multitude') which constituted the political nation" (p. 240).

Locke's challenge to patriarchy was a radical break with Western history. Because he could not dismiss it by appealing to history and traditions, he grounded his defense of paternalism into the law of nature. Locke's denial of history is most apparent in his use of the state of nature to defend his doctrine. Yet, as Locke wisely articulated it, the unequal property relations characteristic of the family/"economic" realm are based in the laws of nature, which appeal to the "natural" order of things and the biological determinism that defines the liberal institution of childhood. By appealing to the "natural" order of things, it reinforces seemingly unchanging structures and the *status quo* instead of being seen as a political decision. Paternalism secures property rights over a person based on their political immaturity. Locke is radical in his reinvention of the child as a *tabula rasa*—a pre-political animal that has the potentiality to be human by its education and socialization only.

[10] As Locke put it very clearly: slavery is a non-political relation, and the domination fathers have over wives, women, and children is "natural" and thus precedes the state. This pre-political relation defines the interaction between children and parent (Locke 1988, *Second Treatise*, Chap. XV).

2.2 The defense of paternalism: The liberal denial of children's autonomy and freedom

John Locke's genuine originality, after placing the origins of property in labour as the origins of political society was to successfully argue that the most political relation—the parent–child—as a pre-political one. Similarly, the split between parental authority and political authority might seem like a natural consequence of the "nature of the child" yet liberalism invented a "naturally unequal" child that would fit the requirements of the society of landed capitalists. Now, these relationships have become reciprocal. The formal political equality and the "natural thus inevitable" inequalities in the private world of the family/economy are harmonised into a normalized fundamental contradiction that has served liberalism and capitalism well ever since.

Thus, the only way Locke could reconcile the claim that Men are born free while simultaneously justifying a system of dispossession and exploitation was to weave it into the "natural" order of society. The first epistemological move to limit natural freedom, without falling into the pitfalls of justifying absolutist patriarchy, was to appeal to the doctrine of immaturity. Locke brilliantly depoliticized the temporary ownership of parent over children by reinventing them as "naturally" inferior[11] (Locke, *Two Treatises of Government*, §§ 170–20).

The great irony is that these apparently contradictory claims—natural freedom and submission to parental will—are rooted in the same principle (*Second Treatise*, §§61).

> A favored presumption of moral thinking is that paternalism is an odious tyranny. To deny an individual her freedom in the name of her own good is deeply wrong to her. It needs to be shown that adult humans deserve their freedom as much as children merit its

[11] Chidlren's subordination to parent is not novel to paternalism. The main difference is that under absolutism, the father maintained their right over the children until his death. The subordination was a political and did not pretend to be ground in biology.

> denial. Locke sketches a view that is now very influential, namely that denying a child his freedom must be done with the end of bringing him to the state of maturity wherein he can exercise his own freedom. (Archard, 2004, p. 13)

The coherence of Locke's theory of political power can only be sustained by reducing the child to a state of immaturity and incompleteness—a state in which the child is born into and delivered to the Age of reason. In other words, children are delivered to reason once they 'consent' to the norms of the adult society. Children remain in their natural defects of this imperfect state "till the Improvement of Growth and Age hath removed them" (Locke, *Second Treatise*, §§56: 8–11). This claim can be expressed even more boldly: that the natural freedom of children must be denied if we want them to be able to "own it" once they reach the Age of Majority. Locke's paternalism denies children's humanity. He did it beautifully, forcefully, and convincingly to such an extent that the appeal to children's rights can hardly undermine two centuries of paternalism that constructed children as "becoming human" via a discourse of needs and protection instead of rights.

> The suggestion, then, is that from a Kantian point of view childhood is to be regarded as a normative predicament. And if this is the nature of the inability, it goes some way toward explaining why paternalism toward children might be excusable. Paternalism is *prima facie* wrong because it involves bypassing the will of another person. In Kantian terms, paternalism prevents another from casting her vote as a legislating member for a possible kingdom of ends. But if the being whose will is bypassed does not really "have" a will yet, if she is still internally dependent upon alien forces to determine what she does and says, then the objection to paternalism loses its force. Because the nature of the inability is normative, because it consists in the agent's lack of effective authority over

herself, the excuse for paternalism follows without a further story. (Schapiro, 1999, p. 731)

The ability to govern oneself (or one's property) is granted by acquiring reason. Locke considers the submission to parental power as "natural" because although children are born to be rational, they do not have this faculty developed yet. Without the necessary liberal education, the child's potential is wasted since it will never master this faculty. Because of the condition of the imperfection of childhood, adults do not dispossess the child of anything. The child is deprived of will, and therefore it is the parental responsibility to will for them. According to Locke's political system, parents must protect children against their natural freedom (Locke, *Second Treatise*, §§63). It is hard not to see that the "natural freedom" is not much more than the "habituation" to parental submission.

2.3 Fashioning consent to liberalism

Locke's discovery of the importance of childhood is linked with the political necessity to build consent and legitimacy of human-made government. By discrediting patriarchy and the absolute power based on obedience and deference to authority, the necessity to ground political authority on consent became central. Because Locke's notion of legitimate government relies upon the notion of consent, childrearing was soon to become a political tool whose primary function was to manufacture consent to the "law of reason" (thus protection of property relations specific to capitalism).

Understanding the meaning of consent in relation to political authority is intertwined with understanding the predicament of a liberal education. Any reading of Locke's *Second Treatise* can only be partial without an understanding of Locke's doctrine of education where his idea of natural freedom is reduced to the "empire of habitus"—the submission to the will of the father

through the dominion of the invisible forces of habituation. A core element of Locke's philosophy of education is not toward self-directed learning, emancipation, and autonomy as liberal education is often ideologically promoted, but its denial: it is a treatise about the submission of the child to the will of the father while pretending that it is in the child's best interest. Under this benevolent paternalism lies a manipulative deception that hides not only the principle of absolute obedience to the father's will, but also a manipulative and non-consensual behavioural control. As Carrig (2006) points out:

> This conflict between liberal politics and "illiberal" education is not due to any incoherence in the writings of Locke, as is widely argued. Locke's theory of education does not fundamentally conflict with his political theory. In the Second Treatise, Locke separates paternal power from political power. Nevertheless, despite this fundamental "separation of powers," paternal power is central to Locke's political system. The primary purpose of Locke's education to virtue is the formation of "reasonable" men; and, to this extent, the power of the father to educate is a prerequisite of "reasonable" politics. The purpose of the Education is, therefore, both pedagogical and political. (p. 374)

Locke's argument was both moral and practical and its influence most pervasive in changing parenting practices. Locke believed that the nature of the relationship between parent and child must vary depending on the stage of development of the child—advocating for formal awe and strict obedience during the child's legal minority and a friendship-based relationship once the age of reason had come. As Stone (1982) points out, for Locke:

> At birth, the child is merely an animal, without ideas or morals and ready to receive any imprint, but later, as he develops both a will and a conscience, the treatment of him has to

> change accordingly. "Fear and awe ought to give you the first power over their minds, and love and friendship in riper years to hold it." The result would be that "you shall have him your obedient subject (as it fit) whilst he is a child, and your affectionate friend when he is a man." Locke was clearly not an apostle of childish autonomy and parental permissiveness, but he differed widely from the theorists earlier in the century who advised constant distance and coldness and the enforcement of deference and obedience by the use of force. (p. 256)

The function of this "pre-political" training and discipline functions to build the political consent for the necessary "habituation" to obey someone else's will as necessary for a regime of accumulation that functions around the "legitimate" control of someone else's labour. According to Carrig (2006), Locke argues that "education is primarily habituation to think and behave in a prescribed manner, then, as such, it must be seen as a kind of force which opposes the freedom that is, as we understand it, central to liberal political theory" (p. 375). Under the logic of development and improvement, the parent has the legitimate power to dispossess the child's own agency, and in return, they have the responsibility (and duty) to control, reinforce, suppress, and direct the child's actions according to the agenda of dominant interests. More to the point:

> Education is the power to shape and control, it is always in some sense paternal; and the question of who exercises that power is immaterial. It is in this sense that the relationship between father and son is paradigmatic. The student who is a child will be most effectively bound by the method and doctrine of the teacher who is the father. (Carrig, 2006, p. 376)

In this paternalist educative paradigm, the essence of proper training is to abide by the

law of reason where "the father's power is immeasurable, and the ability of the child to resist is almost not at all" (Carrig, 2006, p. 381). In Locke's political system, reason and obedience to parental authority are interchanged constantly.[12] In other words, the consent to political authority, despite their "natural freedom" is obedience and compliance to the parents.

> If this is done effectively, the child will never think to question the authority of his father even after he reaches the "age of reason." Perpetual respect for paternal authority is the principal goal of Locke's educational system—a system which "settles" this respect through the inculcation of "good" habits, the manipulation of the child's desire for freedom, and the control of the boundaries of his experience. (Carrig, 2006, p. 378)

The central point of Locke's paternalist political system is that the social order is maintained through the domination of paternal power well after the child legally emancipates himself or herself from the enclosure in the Minority Status "to ensure that he remains obedient and dutiful when he is 'past the Rod, and Correction' (*Education*, sec.42.146)" (Carrig, 2006, p. 377).

> Locke's education to virtue, however, is colored decisively by the great emphasis placed on the child's obedience. Obedience to the father frequently appears to usurp the role of virtue as the most important object in education; and, indeed, the description of the paternal relation suggests that virtue is reducible to obedience. Though Locke insists that obedience to the father will give away to obedience to reason, it is not at all clear that

[12] "He that is not used to submit his Will to the Reason of others, when he is young, will scarce hearken or submit to his own Reason, when he is of an Age to make use of it." (Locke, Some Thoughts concerning Education, §36-10). As he adds: "The greatest Mistake I have observed in People's breeding their children has been, that this not been taken care enough of in its due season; That the Mind has not been made obedient to Discipline, and pliant to Reason, when at first it was most tender, most easy to be bowed" (Locke, Some Thoughts concerning Education, §34).

> those "who are what they are by their education" will ever get beyond their childhood training and escape the "empire of habits." (Carrig, 2006, p. 383)

As Carrig (2006) points out, if one embraces liberal politics without being fully aware of what the discovery of the central role of the institution of childhood is to the overall political system—one unintentionally become an apostle of the liberal faith (pp. 394, 396). This paternalistic educative paradigm has become a powerful people shaping business (Holt, 2004, p. 3). Locke makes it clear: "an 'education to liberty' will be particularly successful in maintaining society because it exploits the human desire to *feel* free" (Carrig, 2006, p. 394).

In order not to discredit his whole critique of patriarchy, it was essential for Locke to root the rationale for children's exclusion from the political society and paternalism not as a political claim, but as a biological limit. The doctrine of immaturity became the biological linchpin to protect unequal property relation, against both the monarchy and democracy. Thus, the kernel of capitalism—understood as a system of unequal property relation—is rooted in the depoliticization of parenting, the legitimation of benevolent paternalism, and the reinvention of a liberal conception of children as a half-baked human in the process of becoming fully human.

Locke is making a strong case that the principle of political society is incompatible with children. His defense of children's segregation from the political society is so hegemonic that even the most radical social and political critiques today still dismiss the family realm—especially parent–child relation—as central to the political analysis. The parent–child dynamic is approached through a very "liberal" lens—as a pre-political relationship informed by nature. Dismissing the political nature of parenting is dramatic for a project of emancipation because parent–child relationships constitute the core to understand the basis of relations of property and the political system. In this sense, the divide between the political and the family might well be

the most fundamental divide to challenge the structural basis of capitalism. This divide transformed the institution of childhood into the central institution of social legitimation of unequal property relations of the commodity form. By depoliticizing it, it constitutes the perfect front to conceal the primary mechanism that reproduces the systematic structures of inequality, oppression, and exploitation. It was thus crucial to define childhood on a biological foundation to assert its unchanging nature. This parenting paradigm that places paternalism and biological determinism as its nucleus is the liberal institution of childhood.

Chapter 3

The pitfalls of the liberal institution of childhood

> *The only way we can fully protect someone against his own mistakes and the uncertainties of the world is to make him a slave. He is then defenseless before our whims and weaknesses. Most people would prefer to take their chances with the world. They have the right to that choice.*
> *(Holt, 1974, p. 86)*

Within the liberal institution of childhood, the paradigm of the child-as-temporary-property does not embody an ethical or political dimension, but is a question to be settled in the determinism of biology. Paternalism, as a central tenet of the liberal paradigm of parenting, is justified by the nature of the child, as an underdeveloped condition. Determined and limited by biology, childhood is essentially a developmental stage which is, at best, one of incompetence, at worst, of incompleteness relative to the adult. Children must be protected from both. As famously stated by Qvortrup (2009), in the current conception, children are generally seen as "human becoming" instead of "human beings." If the liberal paradigm of children places so much emphasis on the developmental nature of the child, it is because paternalism can only be justified politically as temporarily compensating for the incompleteness of children. The idea of development and the doctrine of immaturity become the biological linchpin that justifies the dispossession of children's agency and autonomy under the benevolent intentions to protect them.

This chapter argues that behind a veil of benevolence, paternalism accomplishes the opposite goal it claims to serve. Paternalism sanctions and reinforces the structural vulnerability of children in the hands of adults through a structure of oppression, domination, and exploitation. This critique of the liberal institution of childhood highlights the link between ownership claims and paternalism to reveal how this institution of social legitimation is constitutive of capitalism's

unequal property relations. The intent here is to question the ethics behind the instrumentalization of these differences to justify and endorse ownership claims and relations of domination, oppression, and exploitation that define childism in capitalist societies.

The present critique of the biological determinism and the logic of developmentalism that define the liberal institution of childhood is articulated around the claim that childhood is an evolved stage of human life, not rehearsal for adult life. The present critique of the liberal institution of childhood reveals how the doctrine of immaturity, and its logic of development inherent to it, has politically constructed children as naturally inferior. By doing so, it not only reproduces a culture of domination and oppression but gives ammunition to a system of property relations that sanctions and normalizes the exploitation of labour. Although biological determinism has been challenged and discredited when used to rationalize and justify classism, sexism, and racism, it remains a legitimate common-sense belief when it comes to childhood.

To begin, this chapter overviews the theoretical and historical influences that shaped the liberal institution of childhood during its emergence. This chapter proceeds by tracing the origins of the way we think about children and childhood. The pitfalls of the liberal conception of childhood will be addressed through a critique of the doctrine of protection, immaturity, as well as the child's inactive labour. The aim is to debunk the political, cultural, and scientific constructions of the liberal child. Moreover, this chapter explores the Janus-faced coin of protection/domination underlying the basic assumptions justifying ownership and propriety claims characteristic of the liberal institution of childhood. It shows how the discourses and practices of protection, immaturity, and incompetence legitimize childhood as a structure of domination, oppression, and exploitation.

3.1 The "natural history" of childhood: Depoliticizing childhood through biological determinism

Some ideas come to be so widely endorsed and accepted that it seems pointless to question them: the liberal institution of children is one of them. Few will question the now common-sense view of children as immature creatures moving progressively toward fully realized human rationality, not even the most articulated critiques of liberalism. The lack of awareness of the foundational ideas about the liberal institution of childhood hinders a critical analysis of how biological determinism plays into the scientific understanding of the formative years of childhood. Yet, despite the relatively recent critiques formulated through the "new paradigm" in childhood studies, the modern conception of childhood, inherited from the child study movement of the late 19th and early 20th century, cannot be dissociated from its historical context of production. How we think about children is still deeply invested in evolutionary thinking of the 19th-century and German idealism.

To understand thoroughly the depth of the criticisms formulated with the new paradigm in childhood studies, we must be acquainted with the biological ideas that impacted the early emergence of children's study. This section aims to retrace the theories and the system of ideas that served to cast the liberal institution of childhood. The 19th century not only constituted the cradle of most modern institutions (the emergence of nationalism and the national state, or the mandatory public schooling system, modern science epistemology, medicine, etc.) but the effervescence of the intellectual and scientific innovations of the 18th and 19th century still defines to some extent the modern subject and its relation to the world. It was a time of unexpected hope and exhilaration; the laws of the universe could be discovered through science, and happiness could be achieved for all though organizing society around those natural laws.

Science was instrumental in legitimating the modern scientific project of finding the laws that would apply to both nature and society.

Children as a group have not been excluded from this intellectual exuberance. Modern social science has not been marked by the absence of interest in children, quite the contrary. This liberal conception of childhood has been dramatically influenced by the child study movement at the end of the 19th century. Infants and children were drawn into laboratories to be studied. Certainly, the birth of a new scientist, the "child expert," has drawn attention to this particularly sensitive period of human kin and although it increased the welfare of the child in the west, it has done little to question the subordinated status of children. The child became an object to be scientifically studied, as it provides a unique opportunity to study the infancy of humanity in all "its naturalness."

The study of childhood represented an important window to understand abstractly the emergence of rationality—from infancy to adulthood, from primitive societies to Western civilization. It is not surprising that metaphors between children and societies to be colonized have been made and the logic of "development" still speaks to this state of mind. Scientifically speaking, children became interesting to study as pre-cultural and pre-social beings, giving clues to understand the process from irrationality to rationality, simplicity to complexity, from nature to culture, from primitive societies to civilization. Before the 1990s, the child has been constructed and valued by its "naturalness" as a being outside of cultural references (James & Prout, 1990). Within the mainstream liberal approach, childhood became a stage of development determined by biology. Within this developmental logic, childhood is situated at the lower end of this linear process, as an inferior stage that acts as a rehearsal stage to reach adulthood. Childhood remains an individualistic stage, understood as a gradual integration to society—

adulthood represents the ideal end-state. Childhood was understood as a progressive and teleological march toward perfectibility whose aim was to achieve a higher level of development and consciousness—adult rationality and human completeness.

3.1.1 The laws of universal development: Romantic evolutionary thought defines the liberal conception of children

Ever since materialistic views in the 19th century became a legitimate paradigm to comprehend organic change, children suddenly became objects of study as they embodied, so it was believed, a privileged window to understand the origin of both the individual and the species.[13] The scientific ideas of the 19th century are vibrant and varied, and it is beyond the scope of this chapter to do justice to all the details. This section focuses only on the most pervasive ideas that contributed to the formation of developmental psychology, the field of research that had a great impact in defining our liberal understanding of children. More specifically, it reviews the influence of Pre-Darwinian biology: Haeckel's biogenetic law, also known as the theory of recapitulation.

Darwin is undoubtedly the pioneer of a "scientific approach" of the study of children (Sulloway, 1979, p. 243). Like many other evolutionary theorists, Darwin's main interest in studying children was to understand the evolution of the whole species. "In his book *The Descent of Man*, first published in 1871, Darwin argued that the possibility of a gradual evolution of man's mental and moral faculties 'ought not to be denied, for we daily see these faculties developing in every infant'" (Darwin, as cited in Costall, 1985, p. 32). Children were

[13] Our developmentalist conception is still strongly influenced by the 19th century thought of the theory of recapitulation, evolutionary theory, and social Darwinism (see Davidson, 1914; Egan, 2004; Gould, 1977; Morss, 1990; Sulloway, 1979). Our contemporary abstract conceptions of children have also been greatly influenced by the 18th and 19th thought of romantic biology, *Naturphilosophie*, and ultimately German Idealism (Richards, 1987, 1992, 2002).

seen through an evolutionary perspective—as a process of human becoming, not as "evolved" individuals. The emphasis on gradualism inherent in the materialism of the 19th century (to counter the dualism in rationalism and creationist doctrine) meant that children's unique characteristics and differences from adults were stressed as empirical proof of the "evolution" of human rationality—from animal behaviour to human agency and self-consciousness.

Both Darwinism and non-Darwin evolutionary thinking influenced developmental psychology. Both schools of thought drew a causal link between evolution and development. Despite the apparent empiricism and positivism of both Darwinism and non-Darwinist evolutionary thinking, the foundations on which those observations were based ultimately lay in romantic biology, Naturphilosophie, and ultimately German Idealism. (Richards, 1987, 1992, 2002).

The essence of this new developmentalism cannot be grasped without being introduced to the philosophical and theoretical background of Naturphilosophen and transcendental morphology (Gould, 1977). Within this view, all living organisms are part of one united whole, belong to different categories and are placed in a strict hierarchical order. The metaphor that better grasps this image was the tree of life, with the lower creatures at the bottom and the higher at the top. The developmental view of life was shared by different scientific approaches. Yet, their origins lay in the search for a philosophy of nature, as a critique of the Enlightenment, pure reason and unresolved dualism. The ambition of the Naturphilosophen was to understand the "universal direction of development" (Gould, 1977, p. 59).

> Romantic Naturphilosophie had one idea which was to be of monumental importance later on in the century—the idea of evolution and development. For the romantics, nature was in a continual process of becoming. This was expressed at times in the form of a

> belief in the existence of a Chain of Being in nature. From inanimate matter, all the way up to man and God, there was a unity and interconnectedness. In the course of development, nature realized itself in all of its manifold forms. … Also, German romanticism saw an organic link between one age to another. All nations and all ages were, they believed, united in one historical process of development and becoming, from lower to higher cultural forms. Fichte, for example, developed his cultural romanticism into a form of nationalism. For him, the Germans had certain distinctive qualities which gave them the potential to develop into the highest form of a nation –a nation in which full human freedom would finally be realized. (Gasman, 1972, p. xviii)

The basic premises of the Naturphilosophen and the scientific ideas they influenced is that since self-consciousness is the ultimate goal and direction of evolution (the realization of progress as defined by Western civilization), the logical consequence of this way of thinking is that the law of development implicitly refers to the notion of progress. The order of the universe, of the law of progress, moves from unicellular life to human self-consciousness.

As Gould (1977) points out, since the Naturphilosophen insisted on the interconnection of all beings, and saw life as a process of development as progressing toward one final destination (the adult Western European man and its centralized state), it is only logical that they came up with the metaphor of the tree of life, and placed the white European man as the creature most advanced in its phylogenetic past. As Gould explains, for the Naturphilosophen, the animal kingdom can be comprehended as one organism. Since all forms of life embark upon the same developmental journey toward greater consciousness and rationality, culminating in man, all other animals (or "lower animals") represent intermediate stages in development that failed to achieve ultimate self-consciousness and manhood (Gould, 1977, p. 37).

Early evolutionary thinking translated German romanticism into biological transcendental biology. Recapitulation theory, most beautifully exposed and publicized by Haeckel, is the offspring of this peculiar combination of the progressive and teleological view of nature combined with German romanticism in philosophy. The most influential idea is Haeckel's biogenetic law—also known as the recapitulation theory. Recapitulation theory has also been used in other areas, notably by Herbert Spencer, as the consecration of the 'scientific proof' of the idea of progress. Since most of the evolutionary thinking at first has been either speculative philosophy or based on embryology (not until the end of the 19th century will fossils come to supply some foundations for validation of different theories), children have been used as empirical evidence for evolutionary theories. The impact of those correlations has been most salient to the conceptualization of the nature of childhood, as they always placed lower than the male or female of their kind.

At the pinnacle of the evolutionary triumph of the 19th century, the idea of children became central to the new scientific cult of progress, and the study of the child became instrumental to the quest for the universal laws of development. The ranking of humans into fixed "stages" of development was typical of the end of the 19th century.

Modern science, through the theory of recapitulation, rationalized children's objective subordination by ranking them lower (and providing the scientific defense of children's inferiority to adults) in stages of development on the phylogenetic history of hominid evolution. Stated briefly, recapitulation is an evolutionary theory that states that every individual during its growth, will pass in accelerated form through all the stages of the species (phylogenetic past) before fully maturing to the adult version of its contemporary kin. In short, according to Haeckel's biogenetic law, ontogeny recapitulates phylogeny. In other words, the individual must

pass through all the stages of his phylogenetic past: "the repetition of ancestral adult stages in embryonic or juvenile stages of descendants" (Gould, 1977, p. 485). For Haeckel, the human embryo is recapitulating its evolutionary ancestry. The adult forms of "lower" animals are expressed and transcended as the human climbs up its ancestral tree. Recapitulation has been the theoretical basis for the most influential developmentalists and thinkers of the modern institution of childhood such as Stanley Hall, J.M. Baldwin, John Dewey, Sigmund Freud, and Jean Piaget, among others.

Drawing parallels between the biological growth of the individual and the evolution of the species is not a contemporary curiosity. Although the seeds of the analogy between ontogeny and phylogeny were already present with the pre-Socratic thinkers, it is only in the 19th century that the parallel between individual ontogeny and the phylogeny of the species became a central scientific concern.

The interests in childhood sparked at the time when recapitulation was the main materialistic paradigm to understand the transformation of the human phylogenetic history, and children embodied a window to comprehend human evolution, from simplicity to complexity, from nature to culture, from animal behaviour to human consciousness. Most disciplines that used children as the object of study approached childhood from a strong recapitulation bias. Among the main ones, we can mention child development study, developmental psychology, Freudian psychoanalysis, and modern theories of education.[14]

[14] It is interesting to point out how the main intellectual figures of the 19th and 20th centuries in social science were trained in biology and natural science. It is therefore not at all surprising to acknowledge the influence of biological ideas in social thought. We can name among the main, although not exclusive, personalities responsible for exporting biological ideas: Herbert Spencer, Stanley Hall, John Dewey, Sigmund Freud, and Jean Piaget to name some of those responsible for the exportation of biological ideas in social science and humanities. Spencer was an influential figure of early American sociology who tried to synthesize the law of universal development of biology with society. Despite him falling from grace in the 20th century (mostly for promoting drastic scientific racism and elitism), he was probably the most read intellectual of the 19th century and his ideas made their way to other significant thinkers, notably John Dewey in education. Spencer was the main intellectual influence of the

3.1.2 The political consequences of biological determinism in thinking about children

A critique of the logic of immaturity is so crucial because development—or lack thereof—is the biological linchpin that rationalizes the paternalism within the liberal institution of childhood. The political contradiction of capitalism is expressed by a temporary dimension that uses biological determinism (and immaturity) to draw a sharp distinction between adulthood and childhood and the specificities of property relations. The "biologizing" of children persists because it perfectly matches capitalist needs. The "scientific" assumptions that defined how we think about children and childhood are not only arcane and outdated but socially dangerous when rhetorically used to justify unequal property relations. The political justification of capitalist unequal property relations and the consequential legitimacy of temporary ownership can be outsourced into the apparent objectivity of science. The main consequence of these views on children are that: (a) children have been constructed as pre-conscious humans; (b) as a logical consequence, children are conceived as mechanically unfolding along with an ascending developing pattern (stages of development) toward higher levels of abilities and complexity; (c) the biological differences (expressed in "Ages") have been instrumental in ranking them along a hierarchy of values; and (d) it established by the same token a pseudo-scientific justification for age discrimination and expressed as a profound contempt for infants' and children's intelligence.

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industrialist Carnegie (and close friend Rockefeller), and his foundation was instrumental in thinking and establishing the modern educational system in America. Dewey shared most of Spencer's educational ideas (Egan, 2004). G. Stanley Hall was the authority figure in individual development. Hall's genetic psychology is based on the recapitulation theory. Hall led the child study movement at the end of the 19th century, contributing to the American educational reforms. He is famous for having coined the term and concept of adolescence. He is credited for having brought Freud and Jung to America (Ross, 1972). Sigmund Freud was a biologist, trained during the dominance of Haeckel's biological theories. Freud combined and exported into social science two major biological ideas: Lamarckism and Recapitulation (Gould, 2006). Jean Piaget, an influential child development theorist, was formed as a paleontologist during the acme of recapitulation. His interest in child development emerged from the frustration of paleontology's incapacity to comprehend the evolution of consciousness. He turned to children's intellectual development, although he challenged the mechanisms in Haeckel's biogenetic law, the basis of his "genetic epistemology" asserts the parallels between individual mental and intellectual development (ontogeny) and the development of the human species (phylogeny).

As Gould points out, recapitulation theory, which was predominantly a theory in biology, has been exported into social sciences with severe consequences. The logic of recapitulation fueled the logical basis (although based on flawed premises) for the emergence of developmental psychology (Morss, 1990, p. 26) and scientific racism (Gasman, 1971) which had a singular impact on education and social reforms of the 19th century and 20th century. Here Gould (1977) summarizes the logic of the basis of "scientific" racism:

> For anyone who wishes to affirm the innate inequality of races, few biological arguments can have more appeal than recapitulation, with its insistence that children of higher races (inevitably one's own) are passing through and beyond permanent conditions of adults in lower races. If adults of lower races are like white children, then they may be treated as such—subdued, disciplined, and managed (or, in the paternalistic tradition, educated but equally subdued). The "primitive-as-child" argument stood second to none in the arsenal of racist arguments supplied by science to justify slavery and imperialism. (p. 126)

The logical consequence of this romantic biology has not only been politically used toward others, but the prejudices remain deeply seated in our conception of childhood. To illustrate how the recapitulation theory has been used, the quote from the respected anthropologist of the time, Havelock Ellis in *Man and Women* (1894) is revealing by claiming that the straighter we are, the "higher" we are in the evolutionary ladder of our phylogenic past:

> The apes are but imperfect bipeds, with tendencies towards the quadrupedal attitude; the human infant is as imperfect a biped as the ape; savage races do not stand as erect as civilized races. Country people … tend to bend forward, and the aristocrat is more erect than the plebeian. In this respect, women appear to be nearer to the infantile condition than men. (As cited in Gould, 1977, p. 118)

To put it in context, the quadrupedal stage some rare children pass through (as different from crawling) or walking with knees bent (as the recapitulation of Homo erectus bipedal glide), constituted for the protagonists of recapitulation proof that children recapitulate our animal past. More contemporary to us, Dr. Benjamin Spock, a figure that greatly impacted the popular view of childrearing in America, based his childrearing recommendation on science with a strong recapitulation bias. Spock's allegiance to recapitulation cannot be more clearly stated:

> Each child as he develops is retracing the whole history of mankind, physically and spiritually, step by step. A baby starts in the womb as a single tiny cell, just as the way the first living thing appeared in the ocean. Weeks later, as he lies in the amniotic fluid in the womb, he has gills like a fish. Towards the end of his first year, when he learns to clamber his feet, he is celebrating that period millions of years ago when man's ancestors got up off all fours. … The child in the years after six gives up part of his dependence on his parents. He makes it his business to find out how to fit into the world outside his family. He takes seriously the rules of the game. He is probably reliving that stage of humanity when our wild ancestors found it was better not to roam the forest in independent family groups but to form larger communities. (As cited in Gould, 1977, p. 119)

The influences are also important in primary education and the establishment of the modern curriculum. The pedagogical offspring of recapitulation is the culture-epoch theory. Ziller's (1817–1883) recapitulatory curriculum states that:

> The mental development of the child corresponds in general to the chief phases in the development of his people or mankind. The mind-development of the child, therefore, cannot be better furthered than when he receives his mental nourishment from the general development of culture as it is laid down in literature and history. Every pupil should,

> accordingly, pass successively through each of the chief epochs of the general mental development of mankind suitable to his stage of advancement. (As cited in Gould, 1977, p. 150)

John Dewey started his career as a protagonist of the culture epoch theory. Although he would revisit his position later in the 20th century, recapitulation is still present in our view of both the appropriate curriculum and the idea of mental age and its correspondence with our phylogenetic past. Recapitulation had a great influence and the list of illustrating quotes could be endless. Yet, an enumeration of the quotes that reveal the centrality of recapitulation in a discipline outside of biology is pointless without understanding how the logic of the argument still pervades and serves as a justification for the inferiority of children and the rhetorical justification for the need and desirability of parental control, domination, and force toward them. On the positive side, Gould remarks, recapitulation theory was the inspiration for the naturalistic doctrine that granted more individual freedom to children, especially in the child-centered based pedagogy of the 20th century. In this regard, recapitulation theory eased the burden of the child from harsh discipline and corporal punishment. After all, the child does not embody evil as proposed by Christian dogmas, but only recapitulates its animal ancestry.

Significant pioneers in the movement of the study of childhood, from G.S. Hall, J.M. Baldwin, Sigmund Freud to Jean Piaget, approached their object of study with strong recapitulation biases. Since these stages of development can be known by the methods of science, thus children have been turned into precious objects of study. Subordination was implicit in the categories to qualify children and have been ever since, resulting in our collective incapacity to see the infant and child as a self-regulated, self-governing, and autonomous subject. Haeckel's and Darwin's insistence on gradualism—childhood as the evolutionary step from

animal to human—had significant detrimental effects on the condition of modern childhood. Children were not only pre-conscious animals but embodied the bonus that they can be studied to understand the transition from nature to culture, from pre-conscious to consciousness, from animal behaviour to human agency. Recapitulation did not only represent an insult to human children's intelligence but provides the most powerful argument for human enslavement under the cover of biological determinism and the logic of the maturation model.

Since self-consciousness is the characteristic of mature and rational European men, children were conceived as pre-conscious individuals, closer to animals than humans. Recapitulation provides the theoretical basis that gave rise to the argument that children lack consciousness, and the inevitability of using force instead of reason in their upbringing because at the equivalent phylogenetic past, our common ancestor did not have any. This view is reflected in G. Stanley Hall, an influential American developmentalist and founding father of child studies. In his major work *Adolescence* (1904), Hall not only coined the term adolescence (Ross, 1972) but also provided the elaboration of the argument that consciousness in humans beings develops around 12 years of age:

> Hall entitled his massive treatise "Adolescence" (1904). It is still widely read and studied, but few modern scholars appreciate the central role of recapitulation in defining both title and subject. Adolescence is not just an existing and stressful time of rapid change; it represents the phyletic transition from preconscious animality to conscious humanity. (Gould, 1977, p. 143)

Understanding childhood through the lens of recapitulation theory mirrors a view of children as passive and lacking agency. The child's biological immaturity prevents it from being a free agent; it is biologically determined to mechanically move through the stages of

development until it reaches mental and social maturity. Within the logic of recapitulation, children cannot be agentic. The child is still in the process of evolution—evolution understood as creationists used it, as a process of unfolding. Thus, by scientifically knowing the specific "stage" the newborn, infant, et cetera evolves through, the adult can stimulate, steer, and influence the child to attain human betterment. Although the impacts of outdated scientific methods still affect mentalities, the Neo-Darwinian synthesis challenged this view. Still, recognizing the still felt impact of those early conceptions nonetheless shaped subsequent research agendas, and the changes are slowly altering how we approach children and childhood. According to the Neo-Darwinian synthesis, the locus of change is vested in the organism. As Gould points out, the standard refutation of recapitulation theory is that the organism is dynamic, and changes throughout the lifespan. In this sense, "all stages are altered; no principle of terminal addition may be maintained" (Gould, 1977, p. 143). This means that infancy probably had its evolution as circumstances required. Similarly, there is no empirical evidence that infants are less complex than adults. If anything, the research in neuroscience points to the opposite: babies are more conscious and complex neurologically, and that growth is the process of the pruning of the exuberance of synaptic connections the infant and child's brain possesses (Cozolino, 1996; Gopnik, 1999). The understanding of development as a process of increased complexity can only be sustained on flawed biological principles. This way of conceiving the stages of development presented as a universal path of development testifies to strong European ethnocentrism. The attempt to universalize characteristics of the European child (such as the tendency for selfishness, aggression, crying for attention, manipulation, or lying) also reflects deep-seated ethnocentrism.

The most important misconception that the logic of child development understood from a recapitulation bias is the claim that: "if a behavior is phylogenetically widespread, it must be a

'fixed action pattern' or 'instinct' and thus genetically based; in this event, there is no sense trying to change it" (Konner, 2010, p. 23). Nowadays this position is untenable. Children's actions cannot be explained as mechanical but must be understood as a complex reaction of culturally embedded subjectivities. The child, as an object of study, can only be understood within a specific cultural setting. Even what are seen as the most natural reactions (such as crying, patterns of sleep, feeding, elimination, etc.) vary tremendously across cultures (Small, 1998).

As Morss (1990) points out, the other legacy of this scientific approach to children is that: "the interrelated assumptions of progressive change, and the ascent of a hierarchy, are of course fundamental to the concept of recapitulation" (p. 176).

> Perhaps the most fundamental assumption concerning an overall picture of individual development is that of progress. Derived from, or at least legitimized by biological sources, the notion that the individual gets better and better as time passes has been central to most developmental thinking. Such an assumption is in many ways an inheritance from the evolutionism of the last century, although of course general notion of human progress has deeper roots. Stages theories of individual development generally constitute concrete realizations of the doctrine of progress. That is, stages are usually defined as stages toward an endpoint, normally the adult state. More generally, therefore, stages theories assume the presence of an in-built directionality in development: This assumption is sometimes explicitly formulated, sometimes not. Stage theories, of various kinds, have probably been the most enduring and most influential of the developmentalists' overall models of their subject matter. (Morss, 1990, p. 173)

In this perspective, adults are social, cultural, political, and active beings and children are asocial, natural, pre-political, and inactive beings and more recently, mere consumers. Adults

are developed; children are in development—their physical and cognitive skills are progressing along steps inscribed in the child's biology and thus, are deemed universal. Finally, because rationality is the mark of adulthood, by logical inference (more than empirical evidence) children cannot be rational and thus are constructed as being inherently incompetent and consequently in need of control and direction. The child is thus enclosed in a "double regimen of protection and control" (Sgritta, 1987). The influence of these founding assumptions regarding children, especially when childhood is conceptualized as an intermediary stage, instrumental in the ascension toward higher forms of mental development (and consciousness) vested in adulthood, still pervades research methods about children (Morss, 1990, p. 197).

The major impact of historicizing childhood in the last 30 years has been to challenge legitimate claims over the monopoly in defining children and the meaning of childhood more generally. The research to historicize childhood studies revealed that "childhood, as an identifiable and distinct stage of a person's life, has always been a social construct that changes as society changes, reflecting the influence of current social and economic dominant forces" (Jamrozik & Sweeney, 1996, p. 2). Once "childhood" and "adulthood" are understood as different in political and legal status more than clearly delineated "natural" boundaries or developmental stages, it is easier to provide a critique of current unequal property relations that inform the capitalist specificity of the parent–child relation.

And although we embraced a new line of thinking when it comes to childhood, we have not turned the concept upside down. By this, I mean that we went from treating the immature child as an inconsequential and deficient organism to the opposite view in the 20th century where childhood is thought to shape the destiny of the person and society. We have intensified our care toward human offspring and limited forms of physical violence directed toward them,

yet without fundamentally altering the dynamic of the relation; we still objectify children in this subordinated status.

3.2 Institutionalizing benevolent violence: A critique of the liberal institution of childhood

3.2.1 The doctrine of protection and the making of structural domination

Children's need for protection is probably the greatest rational to justify paternalism. A critical approach reveals how these benevolent intentions constitute a slippery slope. Children are disabled in part because of their natural vulnerability and in this point, there is no arguing. Children have less experience and skills, are smaller and weaker, and usually, have less access to resources or the proper information on how to get those resources. This natural vulnerability fuels the rhetoric of protection. But yet, reducing children to objects of protection highlights the underlying question: protection from who? Why should vulnerability and differences in and of themselves constitute a target of abuse, except perhaps in a society that exploits those vulnerabilities? This question is most relevant since the quasi-totality of children's assaults have been perpetrated by adults. Parental rights over children have been so absolute throughout European history that even a more liberal approach with children in the last 150 years can hardly untangle the adverse consequences of a benevolent paternalism. During most of Western history, children were treated as a property of the household, as an extension of parental will, as "commodified chattel" (Lancy, 2008, p. 3). As deMause (1974) stresses, "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" (p. 1).

The legal definition is important here because it provides a legal definition of "the child" and "childhood" by "defining and regulating the boundaries between adulthood and childhood" (McNamee et al., 2005, p. 233). The law is based on the developmental paradigm, where the

minor is a subject in need of protection, not rights, where the need for adult-led socialization not only legitimizes unequal property relations but outlaws any possibilities for expression of children's competences and autonomy. In British law for example,

> "Childhood" is defined as an age-bounded part of the life course during which, until the appropriate legally-defined chronological threshold is passed, children are regarded, for many legal purposes, and especially in family law, as subjects requiring protection. Viewed this way, the child simply cannot be seen as a competent actor, a person capable of independent thought and of exercising judgement (although there is, of course, an important and anomalous exception to this in terms of the criminal law and the recent *de facto* change to the age of criminal responsibility). (McNamee et al., 2005, p. 233)

The rhetoric of protection is a smokescreen. It fails to draw the proper differentiation between "inherent vulnerability" and "structural vulnerability" (Lansdown, 1994). It then contributes to naturalized politically constructed vulnerabilities. As Mason (2005) points out, the construction of children as "lesser" than adults has reinforced the structural vulnerability of children by legitimizing the "natural right" of parents over children as necessary to maintain the social order (p. 95). The paternalistic rhetorical use of "children's best interests" has not "protected" children but quite the contrary has reinforced the structural vulnerability of children in front of adult domination.[15] The paternalist rhetoric of protection ensures that adults retain final authority over the child. By reinforcing the children's powerlessness and dependency in the

[15] As Mason (2005) points out, this paradox is best exemplified by the sequence of paternalistic interventions. Firstly, the rhetoric of "best intentions" reflects adult agendas and thus subjectivities. Secondly, the children's welfare interventions only substitute one form of power with another; they rarely empower children in the process. By doing so, they legitimize the asymmetrical relations of power which constitutes the root of children's structural vulnerability. Finally, by ignoring the connection between dependency and abuse, the result of intervention often further limits the freedom of children and confines them to the space where most abuses happen: at school and at the home (pp. 95–96).

hands of adults, and by legitimizing control and coercion of children's actions, it reinforces the structure of vulnerability characteristic of childhood. As Mayall (1994) points out,

> The concern for the natural vulnerabilities of children is displaced or augmented by concern for socially constructed vulnerabilities. The legal and social dependencies of childhood, combined with the power of developmental psychological frameworks, which are based on suspicion of children's competence, mean that, in most spheres, modern childhood in Western European countries is characterized by protection and exclusion. (p. 4)

In other words, "their presumed inherent vulnerability was the excuse for failing to tackle their structural vulnerability" (Lansdown, 1994, p. 35). As Archard and Macleod (2002) point out, a dominant view in moral and philosophical theory has been not only to maintain that children are parental property but crucially here, that they are "proto or incomplete adults" (pp. 1–2). The child has the potential to become fully human, and therefore we must bear with its deficiency until it reaches maturity and adulthood. This regimen of exclusion has become the central impediment to the full recognition of children as whole persons. As Woodhouse (2004) points out, children are not recognized as legitimate individuals: "The principle requires government to treat all persons as individuals with claims to human dignity and not as objects or mere means to some political ends. This principle has been systematically violated when it comes to children" (p. 236).

The problem with the paternalistic claim of the need for protection for the "child's own good" is that it pretends to serve children's needs in an objective way. "To do" something to someone against the other person's consent not only can be a form of violation of personal integrity, but it is a normalization and legal endorsement of a non-consensual relationship and

the legitimacy to dispossess someone of their agency. The rhetoric of the "child's best interest" overrides any other claims—even if it deprives the person of any control over what is happening to their body and mind.

The rhetoric of protection is central of the liberal institution of childhood. It expresses itself as a structural form of domination. It is a political condition and not one imposed by the nature of the child.

Children are also vulnerable because of their complete lack of political and economic power and their lack of civil rights in our society. This aspect of childhood derives from historical attitudes and presumptions about the nature of childhood. It is a social and political construct and not an inherent or inevitable consequence of childhood itself (Lansdown, 1994, p. 35).

The most "benevolent" forms of paternalism are tyranny in denial because they deny children's rights to human freedom and autonomy. The deprivation of children's freedom and autonomy is said to be necessary to protect children and to ensure that they reach their full human potential. This enclosure in a regime of protection serves as powerful exclusion from political life yet serves as a perfect justification not only in justifying the temporary ownership of another person, but also the necessary uses of the means of violence and coercion to maintain these unequal property relations.

There are no uncontroversial principles to pinpoint the kinds of competencies crucial to accord to individual independent decision-making power and to relinquish paternalist control. Granting someone independence is a political and moral choice made by each society to fulfill its own purposes—not a rational decision gauged by psychological or other scientific measures (Minow, 1986, p. 5).

3.2.2 The doctrine of immaturity and the making of structural oppression and exclusion

Despite the fact that children are more often than not the victims of adult domination, it seems that the heart of the problem is to protect children from themselves. As Ross (1982) stresses, in the wave of the child study movement "in the late nineteenth-century social reformers sought to make Mill's admonition that children 'must be protected against their own actions' a building block of the modern state" (p. 472). Children are also disabled in the liberal institution of childhood because "their irrationality or lack of adult competence (or childishness) prevents them from exerting informed consent and mature decision making" (Fitzgerald, 1994, p. 1985). The doctrine of immaturity, therefore, separates children from any claims of autonomy. The appeal to immaturity presents itself as an objective, rational and self-evident claim, especially with regard to a group politically constructed as "naturally" subservient. This demeaning view is justified through the biological determinism of childhood immaturity.

Being a minor—as described in developmental psychology—is perfectly correlated with immaturity, incomplete cognitive development, incompetence, lack of responsibility. However, these individual characteristics can be defended as a motive for the exercise or claim to power only if adult characteristics are taken as standards of competence, cognitive development, maturity, responsibility, et cetera. In itself, age is biological, not a social, variable (Qvortrup, 1987, pp. 7–8).

We are here in a familiar territory. The claim of immaturity has been used for centuries towards "the people," other "races" and women to deny them personhood, to limit their access to the "public" realm and to deny them control over their own minds and bodies. Children's subordinate status is justified by their association with the realm of nature, a "lower stage" of development, in the same way "sex," "gender," "race," have been constructed to objectify

persons and fix them into unequal dynamics of oppression. The difference here is that the oppression of a specific group was justified by associating them with the archetype of oppressed group—children. The doctrine of immaturity, either used against slaves or women, has always been about control (either of their reproduction or labour) which was justified by the 'childishness' of those groups.

As Fitzgerald (1994) stresses, the divide between childhood/adulthood and around the arbitrariness of immaturity/maturity reveals not only society's hostility against children, but a powerful illustration that maturity is a façade for claims of adult power over children:

> The issues themselves indicate that children's constitutional status depends on alignment with adult power. The contradiction has been well grasped by Fitzgerald's (1994) analysis of the incapacity of the law to provide an objective criterion against which to "measure" maturity. … Children's advocates prevail, then, when their causes coincide with other politically powerful adult interests. (p. 89)

As Fitzgerald (1994) points out regarding decisions of the high court of the United States, the rulings were not substantiated with clear criteria for determining maturity, especially when *ad hoc* judgements treat minors as adults (p. 86). Fitzgerald (1994), studying U.S. Supreme Court decisions concluded that in front of the present incapacity to provide a clear and objective definition of what constitutes "maturity," society's dominant interests prevail as criteria:

> Children's advocates prevail then when their causes coincide with other politically powerful adult interests. … To observe that the fate of children under the law waxes and wanes with their alignment with adult political power evidences the law's singularly adult perspective. In disabling children at times and empowering them at others, the law has not responded to children's variable "maturity." Instead, the law responds to adult political pressures and to adult utility. (pp. 89–90)

In other words, maturity is a politically and scientifically "neutral" and "objective" synonym for power (Fitzgerald, 1994, p. 85). When the child's perspective fails to align with the adult point of view, children are not entertained in front of the law because the child is deemed immature and lacking the proper competence to make an informed choice.

Put somewhat more contentiously, let me suggest that the inconsistent legal treatment of children stems in some measure from societal neglect of children. The needs and interests of children, difficult enough to address when highlighted, are too often submerged below other societal interests. The dominance of these other interests helps to explain the inconsistent treatment of children (Minow, 1986, p. 6).

There are obviously real differences between adults and children. Children's biological immaturity and lack of experience is undeniable. However, a closer analysis of social competence forces us to reconsider many assumptions about children's so-called backwardness and primitiveness. Although it is impossible to use "maturity" as an objective criterion, competence and capabilities come to the rescue. As Minow (1986) stresses, the other theoretical drawback of the attempt to precisely delineate childhood from adulthood is that: "it pretends that competency is the only issue, and that there are knowable boundaries between competence and incompetence for any given societal task" (p. 5).

Thus, a more efficient way to understand children's competence is to focus on the nature of the relationship. Children's competence cannot be defined in the abstract nor as a severance from human bonds but instead must be seen as a human dynamic that is socially mediated. It is therefore essential to understand autonomy in relational terms, insisting on the mutual interdependence of human beings through socially mediated activities.

Explication of the nature and uses of those competencies reveals to us a picture of

> childhood as a dynamic arena of social activity involving struggles for power, contested meanings, and negotiated relationships, rather than the linear picture of developmental psychology. The latter picture, the genesis of which can be traced back to the early years of the twentieth century, has infiltrated common-sense in numerous ways in contemporary capitalist societies. (Hutchby & Moran-Ellis, 1998, p. 9)

In this sense, children's competence can better be understood and defined by

> *situating* children's social competence empirically in the areas in which children act, and of bringing into play the material and cultural resources with which children are required to engage in order to operate within those areas. This, in turn, leads to a particular perspective on social competence." (Hutchby & Moran-Ellis, 1998, p. 15)

In the traditional liberal approach, the child must "earn" the right of self-determination—a right with is granted with aging once the individual reaches legal majority. As Lansdown (1994) points out, there is an alternative approach that would fit the requirements of an emancipatory parenting agenda:

> That we begin with the assumption of self-determination and only where it is clearly not in the child's best interest or when it would impinge on another's right would it be justifiable to override or deny the child that civil right? Such an approach places the onus on the adult to justify the intervention rather than on the child to fight the case for a right to participate in decisions concerning her own life. (pp. 43–44)

However, as Lansdown (1994) reminds us, there is evidence of very young children capable of exercising their decision-making competence. The greatest paradigmatic shift thus is to start from the presumption of children's competence and override any claim of "children's best interest" that goes against children's will (Lansdown, 1994, pp. 43–44).

The doctrine of immaturity condones practices of oppression which are expressed systematically through the practice of formal exclusion. Because of their alleged immaturity, children cannot formally fulfill an active part in society. They have to "mature" in isolation until they are fit to integrate within (adult) society. Children must thus be institutionalized in places designed for children exclusively until they are deemed capable of integrating into society. The doctrine of immaturity is concerned with integrating the child into society.

The notion of "children's integration into society" is, however, a *contradiction in adjecto*, since their total integration coincides in time with their ceasing to be children. Formulated as a question of integration or nonintegration of the individual child, the interpretation comes to rest on the paradigm of developmental psychology which says that children only become human beings after they have become socialized and domesticated (Rafky, 1973, p. 62). This interpretation therefore by definition excludes children from society, which consists of integrated individuals, and children are thus reduced to being "human becomings" (Qvortrup, 1985). To be human being is reserved for those who are integrated in society" (Qvortrup, 1987, p. 5).

Children are integrated in society even in their formal structural exclusion. This systemic exclusion of children authorizes the normalization of the exploitation of children's labour. Within capitalist societies, schools are the institutions that control children's labour. Although Chapter 4 focuses on schooling, there are some preliminary remarks necessary to explain how the liberal institution of childhood is oppressive and exploitative.

3.2.3 The "worthless but priceless" child and the making of structural exploitation

Children still perform socially necessary labour, although its form has significantly changed with the transition to capitalism. Despite the fact that children are no longer the direct

producers, they nonetheless perform socially necessary labour. Similar to the "active labour" performed by adults, it is coerced.

The radical transformation of the social value of children's labour coincides with the transition toward capitalism. Already in the 17th century, starting with the writings of John Locke, we can appreciate a paradigmatic shift in thinking about the economic value of children. However, it is mostly in the 19th and early 20th century that the first defenders of the modern "capitalist" institution of childhood will further articulate their view. As Robert Epstein (2007) points out, some historians (e.g., Ariès, 1962; Shorter, 1975; Stone, 1982) noted a change in the significance young people had in society:

> They were no longer seen as reasonably capable members of society; rather they became "sentimentalized." Children were increasingly seen as helpless and incompetent beings requiring adult protection, and the age at which young people were defined as children steadily increased over the decades. (p. 25)

Zelizer (1985) illustrated this historical transformation of the social value of children. Between the 1870s and 1930s, the transition from economically "worthless" but emotionally "priceless" child was created as an essential condition of contemporary childhood (Zelizer, 1985, p. 3). The loss of economic value for the family has been compensated for by an increased emotional involvement, which historically has been introduced with the bourgeois domestication of women's role under capitalism, as well as the domestication of children by reducing them to objects of education. In order to understand children's position in society, we must define society's needs for children (Qvortrup, 1987, p. 6).

From a macro-sociological perspective, children have not lost their material value. The struggle of interests over child labour during the industrial revolution (struggles that *mutatis*

mutantis are again discernible in the underdeveloped countries of our day) demonstrated precisely that children did indeed have a material worth, and not that they had lost their value. What had happened was that it gradually became a matter of common interest to place children in school. This was an acknowledgement that a new social order had triumphed, and a sign that the new social order could make best use of children in this way (Qvortrup, 1987, p. 15).

With a full transition toward capitalism, the control of the "developmental" process and children's labour became a central aspect to the production process by "producing persons" that will cooperate with the logic of capitalist appropriation (and production). The control and surveillance of children's activity and labour is essential so that everyone in the system is accustomed to the managerial logic and discipline. Not only will it reduce the need for coercion and discipline once children grow older—making the process of production and appropriation possible in the first place without resorting to overt forms of coercion and violence—but children's labour and activity become raw material for the educative industry and provide adult employment. Until we see the value of children's activity and their functions as socially necessary labour, it is impossible to see how they are integrated into the division of labour and children's exploitation.

As Qvortrup (1987) stresses, it could even be argued that children's labour was never fully abolished. The transition from children as direct producers to their "segregation" in schools with the advent of advanced industrial division of labour is just how society integrated them as socially necessary labour (p. 15). The romanticized mainstream narrative depicts this transition of the conditions of modern childhood from a regime of exploitation to a regime of protection. This shift toward the benevolent narrative of mandatory schooling certainly improved the objective conditions of childhood. However, it also obscured its exploitative nature. More

specifically, it conceals the coercive nature behind children's daily activities. Their efforts not only reinforce their dependence toward adults, but lock them in an authoritarian structure where they still have to produce and their work is unpaid. The value of their labour is rarely recognized as such, seen as a burden to society with a promise to increase the possibilities to improve their condition only many years later once they find a wage-labour.

Maintaining the concept of children's labour is crucial to stressing the productive side of children's daily activity within the educative industry. There are two critical factors, which need to be highlighted in connection with children's labour whether in terms of classical child labour or modern school labour: firstly, that children are active, and that adult society counts on children's activities, and secondly, that their labour has worth. While children's manual labour in the 19th century Europe and in our days is recognized as a constructive activity that has value, it is much harder for adults today to acknowledge that school labour is a valuable activity. It has in this project been argued that children's school labour actually belongs to modern society's socio-economic activity, and that it—in terms of equivalence of meaning—corresponds to necessary and obligatory activities of children in previous eras; only its forms and contents have changed (Qvortrup, 1994, p. 12).

The present focus on children's labour is not an argument in favour for a return to the miserable state of affairs before the Child Protection laws of the 19th century. Far from that, it aims to historicize the transition of children's labour from being direct producers into the raw human capital—of "being produced" through proper and standardized process of socialization. None of the paternalistic claims to act for the child's own good and protection make sense without an understanding of how these dynamics take on a life of their own with the totalizing logic of the doctrine of socialization and capitalism.

The necessity to control labour power in its minute detail in the name of social efficiency and improvement enacted a process of standardization of human behaviour that passed through the political control of the process of socialization.

> The institutionalization of childhood, and the extension of guidelines and evaluative criteria taken from science, has brought about the "professionalization" of the figures traditionally in charged with socialization; and it has brought about their progressive subjugation to a multitude of behavioral rules and models for utilizing social resources and social opportunities to optimize the social success of the "socialized product." (Sgritta, 1987, p. 47)

The "rise of the social" defines a new form of social dominance as the principal source of social control in the contemporary period. The massification of society or the generalization of bourgeois society into a standardized labour control makes applied behaviourism its *modus vivendi*. None of the paternalistic claims to act for the child's good and protection make sense without an understanding of how these dynamics take on a life of their own with the totalizing logic of the doctrine of socialization as a central political force to normalize the capitalist order.

Chapter 4

Socializing children to capitalist exploitation: A critique

> *Eventually, as society becomes more civilised, as we prefer to believe, it has become more common not to slap children as a mean of socialisation. The advice of psychologists and pedagogues, among others, is that one should not do so, partly because it is disrespectful to the child, and partly because it is counterproductive as to the worthy ends mentioned above. The question that needs to be raised in the wake of an emerging change of practice is which motive is taking the upper hand: respect for children or conduciveness to future benefits? It can at least be maintained that psychologists' insights about abolishing the corporal punishment of children are supposed to coincide with our society's need for physically and mentally healthy citizen-workers: we have been lucky that what seems good for a social order is said to be good for children as well. But what if it had been the other way round? What if a good citizen-worker of the future (Lister, 2003) in a productive economy required the rod to be used on children? What if we had to choose between children or the economy suffering? If a happy childhood was proved to be harmful to a prosperous economy, which one would we chose?*
>
> *(Qvortrup, 2009, p. 633)*

This chapter shifts the focus of the analysis from parental authority to a broader form of social control that corresponds to the rise of the capitalist society. With the full emergence of capitalist economy, the collectivisation of social control will gradually happen outside the family. The family ceases to be the primary means to control children and with the rise of the new economic/social realm, most disciplinary functions will happen through institutions that act in *loco parentis*. The outsourcing of the care of children corresponds to the emergence of the doctrine of socialization that is central to the legitimation of the reproduction of capitalism.

Within the liberal perspective, the doctrine of socialization is still perceived as a neutral and natural process of personal growth and development, wherein the adult prescription and direction serves to emancipate children from their pre-social condition, giving them the tools to graduate into productive citizens. The reliance on “socialization techniques” to mold children

into proper norms and standards of civility is not seen as insidious to genuine individuality, but the gauge of good parenting (and guidelines for institutions that act in *Loco parentis*) to maintain the *status quo*. We have embraced the doctrine of socialization without a critical perspective of its origins and political implications.

> It has to be recognized that the still-dominant concepts of "development" and "socialization" are extraordinarily resistant to criticism. They persist despite all that has been said against them. Richards (1986, p. 3), for example, laments that despite widespread discussion of the need for cognitive and developmental psychology to locate itself within a social and cultural context, only a minority of recently published empirical research even faintly considers this possibility. Similarly, in sociology, the concept of socialization continues to dominate theory and research about children. The lack of change here stands out particularly sharply in, for example, the sociology of the family. Whilst thinking about women and the family has been revolutionized by feminist critiques, thinking about childhood remains relatively static, like the still point at the centre of the storm. (James & Prout, 1990, p. 22)

This chapter argues that the doctrine of socialization must be understood as the central political tool to build consent to the bourgeois order—to reveal the hidden political content to legitimize the dispossession of children's agency and the temporary ownership of their labour. The critique of the doctrine of socialization will be done through a critical reinterpretation of the "rise of the social." The analytical divide between political authority and parental authority within the political system led to the rise of a "hybrid milieu"—the social (Donzelot, 1979). The rise of the "social" and its reproduction through the doctrine of socialization became a political tool to legitimize capitalism in which the family is "both the queen and the prisoner" (Donzelot, 1979, p. 7). As Ariès (1962) stresses, the increasing interest in children in the modern period has

also meant its segregation from "adult" society. Children's segregation and institutionalization are necessary to ensure their full and proper socialization to capitalist discipline.

4.1 The rise of the social: Governing through the family

Ever since political theory accepted Locke's argument of the theoretical divide between the political and the economy, and the profound economic transformation from agrarian capitalism to industrial capitalism, the coercion of the political system seems to have moved even further from the family realm. This divide is related to the impoverishment of political science by reducing it to parliamentary politics. The economy became a different entity, responding to its specific "natural" laws of capital accumulation. This divide between the political and the economic and the resulting impoverishment of political theory is also related to the rise of the social.

The decline of "traditional" paternal authority typical of patriarchal societies was celebrated as "the symbolic destruction *par excellence* of family arbitrariness in its collusion with royal sovereignty" (Donzelot, 1979, p. 51). However, at the heart of the problem, it was not the destruction or preservation of traditional paternal authority that was at stake, but its transformation (Donzelot, 1979, p. 53). The demise of the old patriarchy will lead the way to paternalism whose vested faith in the doctrine of socialization as the new cultural and ideological arsenal that "reflects changing modes of domination" (Lasch, 1979, pp. 24–25). The state has always relied on the family to ensure order (Donzelot, 1979, p. 50). With the transition to capitalism, the state would rely less on the Church and more heavily on schooling. Since the appropriation of surplus labour under capitalism ceased to rely directly on direct coercion and direct domination such as with traditional patriarchy, new political dynamics were necessary not only to enforce political control, but to fashion consent to the new system of capitalist exploitation. The shift from the paradigm of "repression" toward "socialization" can hardly be

dissociated from the emergence of the "social" domain. The authority of social norms replaced the old parental authority. As Lukes (2005) points out, "power is most effective when it is least observable" (p. 1). The greatest strength is that by reducing socialization to the "natural laws" of society, it ensures its invisibility.

The social reforms of the 19th century can hardly make sense without the restructuration of the parent–child relationship—from "the government of family toward the government through the family" (Donzelot, 1979). "The family was cast in the center of the most political debate, since the very definition of the state was at issue" (Donzelot, 1979, p. 52). This led to a political power diffused into the social realm. The state would redefine itself to govern through the family and not over the family. This transition of the mode of governing is nothing more than the redefinition of family forms and parental authority to better accommodate the new laws of accumulation. Not until the 19th century, with the deepening of unequal capitalist property relations will the apparently "neutral" social sphere embark on a civilizing mission and act as the main agent in *loco parentis* to safeguard the liberal society from excessive social and political upheavals. The generational debate was not only one of the main debates of the mid-19th century, but was *the* political question. As Donzelot (1979) notes:

> The family will thus be seen to fade into the background, overshadowed by another, the social, in relation to which the family is both queen and prisoner. By and large, the procedures of transformation of the family are also those which implant the forms of modern integration that give our societies their particularly well-policed[16] character. And

[16] Policing must be understood in the sense of Michel Foucault's understanding of the biopolitical dimension:

> the proliferation political technologies that invested the body, health, modes of subsistence and lodging—the entire space of existence in European countries from the eighteenth century onward. All the techniques that found their unifying pole in what, at the outset, was called *policing*: not understood in the limiting, repressive sense we give to the term today, but according to a much broader meaning that encompassed all the methods for developing the quality of the population and the strength of the nation. (As cited in Donzelot, 1979, p. 6)

As Johann von Justi points out:

> the celebrated crisis of the family, setting the stage for its liberation, would appear then not so much inherently contrary to the present order as a condition of possibility of that order's emergence. (p. 7)

Commenting on the method of Donzelot, Deleuze (1979) points out, "the rise of the social and the crisis of the family are the twofold political effect of these same elementary causes" (p. xi). The social must be understood as a historically contingent *milieu* that neither merges the public sector nor the private sector "since on the contrary it leads to a new hybrid form of the public and the private, and itself produces a repartition, a novel interlacing of interventions and withdrawals of the state, of its charges and discharges" (Deleuze, 1979, p. x).

There is a gap between Locke's farsightedness in the theoretical justification of paternalism and capitalist generational relations and the historical transformation of property relations that are reflected in the dramatic paradigm shift in the change of the value of children in the nineteenth century. It is a process that took several generations. From the moment of the decline of traditional pre-capitalist parental authority, to the moment in the 19th and 20th century when "the protection of children's life and health emerged as a national priority" (Zelizer, 1985, p. 12), we witness the radical transformation of parental authority under capitalism and, simultaneously, the transformation of the disciplining functions of the state.

Thus, the imperative of "socialization" became capitalism's ideological arsenal to ensure discipline and standardization for the requirement of capital accumulation. Children's labour became requested for the social reproduction of the capitalist norm under the dominion of the

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> the purpose of policing is to ensure the good fortune of the state through the wisdom of its regulations, and to augment its forces and its power to the limits of its capacity. The science of policing consists, therefore, in regulating everything that relates to the present condition of society, in strengthening and improving it, in seeing that all things contribute to the welfare of the members that compose it. The aim of policing is to make everything that composes the state to serve to strengthen and increase its power, and likewise, serve the public welfare. (As cited in Donzelot, 1979, p. 7)

"social." As Donzelot (1979) points out, the state arsenal of social workers operated through two principal channels of "normalization" and "moralization." "At their point of intersection on childhood, the two strategic lines sketched out a general plan whereby effective procedures would be exchanged, resulting in what I shall call 'the social sector' [*le social*]." (p. 88)

4.2 Socializing political conflicts

With the transition to capitalism, the newly founded political authority needed to reinvent forms of social control and a new form of social dominance in this long structural adjustment from the mid-19th century to the 20th. With the exacerbation of worker resistance to factory discipline, it became apparent that the battle for disciplined labour could not only be gained from repression in the factories but also through the educative process—on school benches and with new technocrats and professionals gathered under the banner of "social work" and child-savers. By 1884, "at the time when the agitation of the philanthropic class on the theme of safeguarding and social control of children was at its peak" (Donzelot, 1979, p. 80), politicians, social reformers, and philanthropists were the central figures for the paternalist redefinition of parental authority. As Bowles and Gintis (1976) stress, "the basic strategy of progressive liberalism is to treat troublesome social problems originating in the economy as aberrations which may be alleviated by means of enlightened social programs" (p. 19). Crucial political questions ceased to be seen as a real power struggle but, instead, were settled as responding to abstract social process that could be better addressed by researching the natural laws of society. Put differently, confronted with pauperism and the mass upheaval of the mid-19th century contesting capitalist property relations, the proper socialization of the children of the poor became a national priority to safeguard capitalism from its demise.

The unprecedented interest in the development of the child and the eugenic hygienist around childrearing and schooling, and the intensification of the control of women were at their

peak to install the new liberal norms of domesticity and good health (Donzelot, 1979, p. 77; Shorter, 1978). With the rise of the social sciences, the norms of social control were to be grounded into "reality" itself—trying to root the norm into "nature" and "biology." The political content of domination and obedience was evacuated, and the many forms of resistance to the new social reality were addressed as problems of adjustment and socialization. The area of predilection for intervention was the rearing and education of children.

In the 19th century, children's labour and activity was not becoming a problem but was the social problem itself (Donzelot, 1979; Zelizer, 1985, p. 175). As Donzelot (1979) emphasizes, the political question of the time was twofold: how to solve the instability incurred by pauperism without endangering the logic of capital accumulation, and how to discipline the working class that no longer was tied to the political order of the ancient regime (p. 54). As Donzelot (1979) maintains, both pauperism and the clash between working-class family mores and the bourgeoisie was threatening the liberal definition of the state. The working class, struggling over the loss of traditional parental authority of the *ancient régime*, were inviting the state's intervention to ensure their basic right to welfare, work, and education (p. 53). Similarly, the bourgeoisie was terrified by the rising number of unruly working-class children that haunted the industrial cities—either because parents left them on their own or exploited their labour power (Donzelot, 1979, p. 72). As Donzelot (1979) writes, "whatever aspect of the problem of the working class was taken up, and irrespective of the region considered, the key question was always that of the parent-child relationship" (p. 72).

Capitalism is characterized by an unprecedented need to control human labour power due to the specificity of capitalism to appropriate surplus labour at the moment of production itself through the wage-relation. The capitalist imperative to control labour power (and not only to extract surplus labour through coercion) during the production process itself stressed the specific

need to control the individual through intervention in the formation of character. The liberal world was to embark on the bourgeois journey of standardization and conformism of human behaviour through the definition and "scientification" of normalcy and deviance. This agenda will historically define itself through the channel of the emergence of the social and the state-led process of "socialization" of children. Here we have a double aim to the process of moral education. The control of children was motivated both by a process of legitimacy as well as the molding of human agency (habitus, expectations, and values) according to the requirements of the liberal and capitalist order. The emergence of social sciences and the science of child development reinforced this tendency to mask the political nature of the debates into the neutrality and naturalness of the scientific one. As Zelizer (1985) stresses, a crucial change occurred in the "economic and sentimental value of children—fourteen years of age or younger—between the 1870s and the 1930s. The emergence of this economically "worthless" but emotionally "priceless" child has created an essential condition of contemporary childhood" (Zelizer, 1985, p. 3). This condition is the paradigmatic shift in the material and cultural value of children, as well as their political construction as an object of education.

Children got caught in the crossfire. Infants and children were thus drawn into laboratories to be studied. Certainly, the birth of a new scientist—the "Children's expert"—has drawn attention to this particularly sensitive period of human development. The child was an object to be scientifically studied, as it provides a unique opportunity to study the infancy of humanity in all "its naturalness." The scientific study of children presented an incredible window into understanding the evolution of the human species. For the enthusiast of natural history and evolutionary biology in the 19th century, the child represented the phylogenetic history of the human species. It was an extraordinary opportunity to study the emergence of rationality from animal to consciousness, from childish behaviour to adult agency, from

primitive societies to Western civilization. The enthusiasm for evolutionary theory, Lamarckism and social Darwinism entertained the hopes to affect human evolution through the control of human reproduction and childrearing. But just as importantly, the study of childhood was instrumental in organizing society on rational and liberal grounds, and with the eugenic enthusiasm of the epoch, to improve human nature itself through the betterment of children. Although there is an important impetus in eugenic policy to control reproduction (or uncontrolled breeding of the masses) there is a less noted aspect of eugenics—its emphasis on education (Selden, 1999) and how they colluded to make "better citizens." These were used to frame the liberal consensus. The waves of immigration, as well as the political and economical turmoil of the time urging the ruling classes to find solutions to create a homogenous working force that would leave behind their previous allegiances and radical labour traditions and not challenge the *status quo*. There was a consensus that free education was one solution to subdue the resistance of the working class and ensure their acceptance of the discipline of the wage-relation.

This process of homogenization through uniform socialization was also critical to foster a sense of national unity. The promotion of nationalism and the narrative of state-building were central to the state-led process of socialization and education of the children of the nation. Public education would be the perfect breeding ground for patriotism and the securing of loyalties to the state's dominant interests——the "We" national. Similar concerns emerged throughout the Western world. Gustave de Molinari reflected the position in the Congress of Benevolence in Brussel:

> Molinari had to demonstrate that the educational obligation was indeed a debt, hence a phenomenon that was integral to the laws of the economy, and that this obligation was

not a preliminary to socialism, but on the contrary a means of averting it. (As cited in Donzelot, 1979, p. 74)

The liberal state was to enact a series of legislation where the rule of law was not to be applied through repressive violence, but through the norm as a way to enforce proper behaviour on the "morally unfit families" and old customs that made traditional parental authority unsuitable to the requirement of the liberal society and the logic of accumulation. Most importantly, the state also passed legislation with the intent of repealing parental authority if parents did not abide by the new criteria of behaviours. The transformation worked both ways. The new liberal state would give means to the working class to control their offspring, but with the obligation of the family "to retain and supervise its children if it did not wish to become the object of surveillance and disciplinary measures in its own right" (Donzelot, 1979, p. 85).

The significant point is that the emergence of the social marks the "depoliticization" of parental authority. The philanthropy around children became central in the process of legitimation of the capitalist order. Children became pristine "natural child-objects" that needed to be saved and protected for society's good and to be moulded and socialized according to dominant (capitalist) interests.

> Philanthropy, in this case, is not to be understood as a naïvely apolitical term signifying a private intervention in the sphere of the so-called social problems but must be considered as a deliberately depoliticizing strategy for establishing public services and facilities at a sensitive point midway between private initiative and the state. (Donzelot, 1979, p. 55)

The ruling class found in the philanthropist initiative an efficient means to achieve a crucial goal to preserve the liberal order without compromising its theoretical tenet of non-intervention in the

private life—to avoid confrontation and risking destruction while channelling as a non-political initiation and thus merely a "social" one (Donzelot, 1979, p. 55).

The liberal state was to reinvent itself as a benevolent care provider, and its means of action were through "effective advice rather than humiliating charity, the preserving norm rather than destructive repression" (Donzelot, 1979, pp. 57–58). The transformation of the generational means of violence is marked by a paradigmatic change from a repressive function (overt violence) to a function of legitimacy and "socialization" (benign violence) to build the consent of the governed and to foster an emotional attachment to the capitalist state and the unequal property relation in order to, to borrow Sgritta's (1987) words, "optimize the social success of the socialized product" (p. 47).

The genesis of the "social" can best be comprehended through its analytical and historical implications—the "socialization" of children to the capitalist discipline and the reproduction of the liberal order. The "social" was to increasingly act as *Loco Parentis*, giving "civil society" the means to intervene as educator and disciplining agent to create the capitalist form of parental power, with the political power to threaten to take away parental authority (or their legal rights over children) if parents were judged "morally unfit." The targets were predominantly the working classes and immigrant families and marginal groups that posed a threat to the hegemony of the liberal order.

The policing of the family and the restructuration of parental authority are two sides of the same coin marking the emergence of the social. As Sgritta (1987) points out:

> The institutionalization of childhood and the socializing stratagem necessary to it involved the imposition of a whole new set of rules. Childhood and socialization, therefore, should be examined as they relate to the general needs of a modern economic

> society: namely, as part of an overall strategy for restructuring society in ways capable of making it more systematic, more effective, more constant, and more predictable in its functioning. (p. 41)

The political function of childhood slowly changed to meet the requirements of the market economy, to culminate in the major paradigmatic shift in the 19th century. This transition was from the top-down. That was not an uncontested process: "at every step, working-class and middle-class advocates of a useful childhood battled the social construction of the economically useless child" (Zelizer, 1985, p. 12). In the historical process of legitimation of the liberal order, the legitimate activities of the child changed from direct producer to object of education to the liberal/capitalist consensus. As Zelizer (1985) remarks, "child work shifted from instrumental to instructional" (p. 98).

An awareness of the historical perspective of the context of the emergence of the doctrine of socialization, as a consequence of the rise of the liberal order, helps to bring a more accurate perspective to its coercive nature. It is unprecedented in history the extent to which a doctrine explicitly acts as a standardizing and homogenizing power with its capacities to shape expectations, as well as ways of being and thinking. Its totalizing logic invades the lives of children. It colonizes every aspect of childhood experience. As such, the doctrine of socialization is central to the rise of civil society.

> Even when the market is not, as it commonly is in advanced capitalist societies, merely an instrument of power for giant conglomerates and multinational corporations, it is still a coercive force, capable of subjecting all human values, activities, and relationships to its imperatives. No ancient despot could have hoped to penetrate the personal lives of his subjects—their choices, preferences, and relationships—in the same comprehensive and

> minute detail, not only in the workplace but every comer of their lives. Coercion, in other words, has been not just a *disorder* of "civil society" but one of its constitutive principles. (Wood, 1990, p. 74)

This is especially true for the control of children's labour. Bourgeois society consolidated itself through the rise of the social. The full "socialization" of children has been realized through the introduction of compulsory and universal schooling. Historically then, the necessary "socialization" to the commodity form and the temporary ownership of someone else's labour, thus to actively manufacture and secure consent to a capitalist social organization was made possible through the greatest project of social and political engineering—compulsory schooling.

Chapter 5

Rethinking forced schooling

Pedagogy is a form of cultural politics, not a science of knowledge transmission. (B. Goldfarb)

Since we are the product of several generations of schooled subjectivities, it is all too natural to assume that schooling is the institution *par excellence* of childhood. No other modern institution carries such an emotional load of hopes and promises. The celebration of schooling as the most important democratic institution in capitalist society demonstrates how liberal ideology pervades even the most articulated critique of the liberal order. It is crucial to differentiate schooling from education and learning.

> *Schooling*, as generally understood and as the term is used here, refers to a set of procedures employed by specialists, called teachers, to induce children to acquire a certain set of skills, knowledge, values, and ideas, referred to as a curriculum, chosen by the teacher or by a schooling hierarchy above the teacher. (Gray, 2017, p. 1)

It is important to note that schooling refers to the state doctrine that enacted that most of children socialization should happen in state schools. With mandatory schooling, schools ceased to be a place where children would only learn basic arithmetic, reading and writing skills (such as small schools run by the community) but became a formal institution of moral regulation socializing the next generation to the imperative of liberal/capitalist society. Schooling refers to the doctrine that the only legitimate place for children is in schools and that the state should approve most of the moral training. In this sense, schooling should not be confused with schools or education. The term schooling in the present context refers to all schools that are meant to ensure the moral regulation of capitalism and that they are part of the system of coercion.

Schooling, through its compulsory attendance policy, ensures that by law all children attend from age 6 until 17 (depending on the regulation). Compulsory schooling includes the primary level and high school. Even though attendance at colleges and universities is not mandatory, they could still be included in this regime of coercion since they are intimately bonded to the coercion of the labour market. Moreover, the system of compulsory schooling includes also under this umbrella the public and private schools or other elite schools, as well as progressive or alternative schools. As long as these schools do not challenge the property relations by recognizing children's right to self-determination and self-directed learning (and compulsory attendance) these schools are considered part of the system of coercion. All the schools are not necessarily part of the system of coercion of capitalism. These schools are usually meant to teach a specific skill or trade (although few have kept their independence over the years). Education, on the other hand, is much more encompassing:

> It can be defined as cultural transmission, that is, as the entire set of processes by which each new human being acquires some portion of the skills, knowledge, values, and ideas of the culture in which he or she develops. (Gray, 2017, p. 1)

It is crucial to note that neither education nor learning can be reduced to schooling.

The enthusiasm of liberal theory about the possibilities of schooling as a tool to promote equality of opportunity and as a form of social justice (and to some extent even the most thorough critiques of liberalism), reflects the hegemony of the economic and political values assigned to children in the liberal paradigm.

After more than 150 years of mandatory schooling, the state of democratic deficit and social and economic austerity of the contemporary period forces us to have a less romantic understanding of the social and political functions of compulsory schooling. It is crucial to

debunk the liberal schooling mythology. Schooling has become such a central feature of children's "normal development" that it is often confused with civic education or even learning. Challenging schooling does not mean abandoning children to themselves nor to ignorance. Nor should civic education be reduced to schooling. Civic education refers more broadly to the moral regulation of any political system. Schooling is the form of civic education which, in the forms and the relations of domination that it sanctions, is necessary to reproduce unequal property relations of capitalism.

This chapter approaches schooling not as a pedagogical question but as a crucial political institution in charge of the moral regulation of capitalism—it is the greatest technology of social engineering. This chapter focuses on the "colonizing aspect of schooling" (Carnoy, 1974, p. 18) through the habituation to the commodity form and the wage-relation. The central purpose of the introduction of mass education within capitalist societies was to build the political consensus around the legitimacy of the "temporary ownership" of some else's labour.

Put differently, schools compel children to relinquish control over their labour and time in exchange for credentials that empower them to compete in the labour market once they are legally considered "active" upon securing credentials. One important aspect of the state's exploiting power, acting in *loco parentis*, is diffused into the anonymity of schooling whose main political function is to assure the smooth transition to the wage-relation and the coercion of the labour market. In this sense, schooling is not an epiphenomenon to capitalism but integral to the production process of "producing persons" as well as binding them to the market's dependence on the labour force.

First, this chapter relates the making of the capitalist state by controlling the following generation through forced schooling. Then, the chapter reasserts how schooling was mainly a

form of moral regulation and a political tool—the concern for actual learning and curriculum were minimal compared to the stress laid upon "improving" the morality of population and ensuring the systemic maintenance of the accumulation of capital. Finally, this chapter questions the structure and processes of schooling mostly through the analysis of the "hidden curriculum."

5.1 Governing through schools: The making of a capitalist nation

The faith in the magic of schooling is best reflected in the "triumphalist" history of education in the USA.[17] There is a drastic change in children's political and economic roles in the 19th century, and the conception of the liberal child will intensify in the 20th century (Zelizer, 1985, p. 66). Although this change in the conception of children from forced workers to enforced schooled subjects may seem like a global enlightenment to improve children's welfare, others quite rightfully draw the proper connections with the moral need to justify a new liberal order through radical intervention in family life (Larsch, 1977).

[17] As Fuller and Rubinson (1992) point out, the spreading of state-led mandatory schooling marks a definite homogenization from how children used to grow-up and learn in Western countries. Despite regional variations the schools can accommodate, all Western countries display a similar development that led to the implementation of a similar mass-educational system, starting in Europe and the United States and spreading to the whole world (p. 2). In this chapter, the national variant might be highlighted but that should not impede the full appreciation of the commonality of the modern mass schooling system. In this present case, the American experience is interesting for two main reasons. Firstly, the Whigs and modernizer articulated a compelling political rationale for universal and free schooling, more especially Horace Mann (also known as the "father of the common schools' movement"). Secondly, the USA has been the Western country that most "educationalized" political and economic problems. More than other Western countries, the USA tried to solve many problems of capitalist accumulation through reforms of the education system instead of developing more "economically-based" forms of social policies and social welfare policies. By "educationalizing" economic problems, the USA's example reveals a more fundamental way the "corresponding principles" (Gintis & Bowles, 1972) between schooling and capitalism as well as the tendency to solve major social problems created by the economy through the agency of schools—a condition that Labaree (2010) identifies as the "school syndrome." As Labaree (2010) points out, "unlike Europeans, who in the nineteenth century chose to promote social *equality* by constructing an elaborate *welfare* system, Americans chose to provide social *opportunity* by constructing an elaborate *school* system" (p. 7). The USA is also interesting not only because it is trying more than any other country to solve the economic aberrations of capitalism through school reforms, but also because the most radical critique of schooling emerged in this context. The USA's experience is revealing since the current period of austerity under neoliberalism involves a return in force of the "school syndrome" (Labaree, 2010). Governments massively cut welfare programs and public services with the naïve faith that schools can come to term with social problems. As an example, the conservative government in Canada was proposing to address the problem of unemployment—an economic problem caused by the structural logic of capitalism—through a better match between the economies' needs and training.

For the first time in history, the child became a matter of national interest and importance, shifting the value of children as cheap workers to the main subject of the educational gaze establishing its main political function: the imperative to build consent to the capitalist order by producing a specific type of individuals. In other words, to borrow Luke's (2005) words, the question of securing the "willing compliance" (p. 12) of the subordinated will become an essential problem, outsourced into the social world and especially to the most important "socialization" agents under industrial capitalism—schooling. This transition roughly lasted from the 1870s to the 1930s in the USA.

State-led forced schooling constitutes the primary means through which the political legitimacy of the unequal property relations is manufactured and reproduced. Within the liberal understanding of childhood, civic education is central to the liberal political system of "protecting property relations" and "producing citizens." Locke is unequivocally straightforward: "education was, after all, the art of government" (Fliegelman, 1982, p. 5). In the 17th and 18th centuries, with the major historical reorganization of the relations between political authority, parental authority and obligations, filial rights, civic duties that accompanied the deepening of capitalist property relations, the seeds of the theories of the "need" for socializing the next generation were planted. "In the new political world in which government exists for the governed, the educational paradigm would provide a new model for the exercising of political authority" (Fliegelman, 1982, p. 13).

The liberal capitalist state built itself against the necessity to transform the political and economic value of children. As Corrigan and Sayer (1985) stress, the formation of the liberal/bourgeois state in "itself is a cultural revolution" (p. 3) which will predominantly happen through mandatory schooling. State-led mandatory schooling has the mission to socialize the

population most threatening to the capitalist order. It is not a conscious process, but as Foley (1990) stresses, it is an unsaid and invisible ideological process so that the capitalist mode of appropriation seems necessary and natural (pp. 168–169).

> State schooling, in conjunction with more general political-economic transformations, was influential in the remaking of young people into "children." State schooling became a place for the systematic administration and reproduction of "childhood" and the social institutions needed to sustain it, like the "family." (Curtis, 1988, p. 16)

In the 19th century, "schooling became a fundamental feature of the state" (Green, 1990, p. 1). Horace Mann—the "father" of the common school movement in the USA—like the other Whig "modernizers" and moralists of the 19th century, was aware of the dangers inherent in democracy and desired to transcend politics through education (Taylor, 2010, p. xi). As the proponent of the reformists of the 19th century maintained, education should act as a form of political salvation. Through proper education, we could create proper citizens and politics would no longer be necessary. Education was a way to transcend political conflict by training everyone to think in similar ways. The political aim of the moral regulation of liberal society was to make society manageable and shape the population's loyalties, expectations, and mentalities. Civic education—especially under its historical form of compulsory schooling—was believed to have the power to supersede politics.

> Education was seen as a means for the remaking of popular culture and character, for the transformation of tastes, for the solidification of genial habits, for the creation of a popular intelligence capable of appreciating the "rational merits" of bourgeois society. Educational practices were centrally concerned with political self-making, subjectification and subordination; with anchoring the conditions of political governance

in the selves of the governed; with the transformation of rule into a popular psychology. (Curtis, 1988, p. 15)

The idealists of the 19th century, troubled by too much democracy and the loosening of morality aspired to organize society according to scientific and rational principles. The governing classes worried that the democratic fever would undermine political authority, property relations, and the Christian religion (Crutis, 1988, p. 14). Education had the mandate to reorder society according to liberal and capitalist values. The science of psychological development became an invaluable tool to regulate and improve human character. Education was enlisted as the most rational and effective means of controlling minds and bodies. Although the school institution is capable of adapting to local differences across the world, "the Western school's basic organizational form … looks remarkably similar as it creeps around the globe, papering over enormous differences in how children once were raised" (Fuller & Rubinson, 1992, p. 2). The consolidation of the modern nation-state, starting in the late 18th century and culminating in the 20th century cannot be separated from the history of schooling. The two political global phenomena were not only mutually reinforcing, but also complementary (Tröhler et al., 2011, p. 1). Schools have been the tool par excellence for nation-building and its concomitant ideology: nationalism. The political function of schooling was to act as a project of normalization of the new moral regulation necessary to ensure the smooth functioning of the capitalist order. Put differently, "as the state shakes itself loose from the church, it reaches out for the school" (Ross, 1919, p. 175). Schooling the world proved to be a powerful form of cultural imperialism to the empire of the commodity forms. The crusade for public education[18]

[18] As Nasaw (1979) points out:

> The common schools were designed to control and maintain this poor, white, Protestant, male population. But the school model constructed in their behalf was suited to other new-comers to the city: the Irish in the later 1840s, the Eastern and Southern European towards the turn of the century. Once the common schools

was a high priority in all capitalist state agendas in the nineteenth century as a powerful tool of social reform and social control. "Once the transition from feudalism to capitalism is made, therefore, the school system becomes less an agent of change and more and more an agent in *maintaining* the social structure" (Carnoy, 1974, p. 15). Curtis (1988) made it clear in his analysis of educational reform in Canada that the project was brought about to preserve the interests of the ruling class (p. 14). As he argues, the ruling class was not always united regarding the process, but the project was coherent enough to maintain that it was an explicit political endeavour of social engineering that placed the interests of the ruling class at the heart of mandatory schooling (Curtis, 1988, p. 14).

5.2 The most ambitious project of social engineering

As Green (1990) points out, Ellwood Cubberly's influential history of American education has produced the extremely powerful and comforting myth that pictures "public education as an expression of victorious democratic and humanitarian ideals" (pp. 34).[19] As Green (1990) argues, we have to be careful to see the balance between schooling as a democratic achievement on the one hand, and as a form of social control on the other hand. The normalization of the commodification of children's labour as a "natural part of their development" became such a total social and moral institution that many historians subsequently maintained that public schooling "was desired by the population as a whole" (Curtis, 1988, p. 17). Yet, it was a highly contested project of social engineering.

> have been defined as institutions of social control, as agencies through which the prosperous and propertied would socialize the poor and working people, it mattered not what color, ethnicity, religion, or geographical area the latter came from. Once political control had been established, the form and content of schooling could be adjusted to the specific characteristics of the lower-class population. (p. 82)

[19] A position that has been severely challenged by the "revisionist school" of the educational history (see Greer, 1972; Katz, 1971).

As Taylor (2010) argues, "the American common school, as explained and championed by Horace Mann, was thus developed to serve political ends" (p. ix). Horace Mann, through his advocacy for public, free and universal schooling, made it clear that the purpose of public education was to subordinate intellectual skills to moral aims (Gleen, 1998; Taylor, 2010). Civic education is essentially a moral education: "moral training consists in forming habits of action in conformity with these rules and standards" (Dewey, 1938, p. 17). The historical review of nineteenth-century educational history is crucial because it is the only really "successful reform of the educative system where the shapes, structures and purposes of schooling were fixed" (Labaree, 2010, p. xx). Despite all the criticism and calls for reforms of the school system that occurred from the beginning of the 20th century, the overall educational system remains little changed since its inception: its emphasis on grading and measuring, its division by grades/ages, its competition among peers, its authoritarian chain of command and learning on command, its compartmentalized knowledge, its uniform curriculum and its compulsive nature, to name only a few aspects, still define the organizational experience of school students.

Schooling was enlisted to repair all social ills. As Bowles and Gintis (1976) stress, "the basic strategy of progressive liberalism is to treat troublesome social problems originating in the economy as aberrations which may be alleviated by means of enlightened social programs" (p. 19). The social policy par excellence to tackle this political and economic problem will be through "school discipline as moral regulation" (Rousmaniere et al., 1997, p. 5).

> From their inception, traditional schools in Western capitalist societies have been designed to discipline bodies as well as to regulate minds. A key purpose of modern state schooling has been the formation of conduct and beliefs, as well as the acquisition of prescribed knowledge. School discipline has frequently been overt and physically

> violent, with students most often the targets of teacher-administered punishment. But modern school discipline also encompasses conditions and practices that promote the self-regulation of adults and children, and the cultural repertoires or discourses within which we come to see ourselves as certain kinds of persons. Such forms of discipline have as their object the production of self-disciplined individuals who adhere to explicit and implicit rules of conduct and norms of conscience as if they were their own. (Rousmaniere et al., 1997, p. 3)

This political strategy was efficient since it remediated the immediate threat to the liberal society without addressing the real economic causes and thus endangering capital accumulation. In the refusal to address the structural problems of capitalism, the moralists and educators of the time individualized political problems. Liberalism championed the educationalizing of social problems into what Labaree (2010) calls the school syndrome –the tendency to believe that political problems can be resolved by changing individual agency and to mobilize schools for that purpose. As Labaree (2010) argues, given this liberal tendency to see social ills such as poverty or criminality as personal problems and not collective issues, it is not surprising that schools were seen as the best remedy (p. 224). Instead of addressing poverty as a political problem with an appropriate collective response, it is ideologically safer to attempt to solve it through individual motivation and character shaping as if it was merely a question of personal will. Schools became the "natural technology" (Labaree, 2010, p.78) to address those issues as well as the favourite scapegoat in case of failure to deliver promised social improvements.

The socialization of children was central to this project of "individualizing" and "totalizing" liberal society as it authorizes both the shaping and control of individuals and the population simultaneously. The contradiction can be expressed through the words of Foucault's

political double-bind "which is the simultaneous individuation and totalization" (Bonner, 1998, p. 18).

5.3 The hidden curriculum of forced schooling

When schooling is approached as a tool for social control rather than a learning one, tinkering with the content of the curriculum is trivial compared to the structure and process of schooling that reinforces property relations. As Labaree (2010) points out, the discussion about the curriculum was marginal to the whole discussion about public education; the most important thing was conformity to the shared experience of schooling more than what specific knowledge should be imparted through schooling (p. 73).

> Major aspects of the educational organization replicate the relationships of dominance and subordinacy in the economic sphere. The correspondence between the social relation of schooling and work account for the ability of the educational system to produce an amenable and fragmented labor force. The experience of schooling, and not merely the content of formal learning, is central to this process. (Bowles & Gintis, 1976, p. 125)

This section focuses on the school praxis that authorizes the alienation and commodification of children's labour. More specifically, it focuses on how schooling as a structure of domination reinforces the temporary ownership of children's fundamental activity and labour—it trains children to the normalcy of being temporarily owned by someone else.

The first element specific to capitalist exploitation is the commodification of labour—to make individuals relinquish control over their time and activity. The novel political and economic functions of children were to learn to accept labour discipline and more specifically, the alienation of their activity and labour as part of the natural order of liberal society. In this sense, Bowles and Gintis's (1976) "correspondence principle" between the educative relation

and the wage-relation is revealing. As they claim, there is a "structural correspondence" between the school structure and the labour market. Thus, most of the new economic value of children under capitalism is to produce themselves in a way that not only makes them accept mere obedience and labour discipline but also to accept a form of consciousness, self-perception, expectations, and habits that make their integration in the economic system possible.

> Hierarchical relations are reflected in the vertical authority lines from administrators to teachers to students reflect hierarchical relations. Alienated labor is reflected in the student's lack of control over his or her education, the alienation of student from the curriculum content, and the motivation of school work through a system of grades and other external rewards rather than the student's integration with either the process (learning) or the outcome (knowledge) of the educational "production process." Fragmentation in work is reflected in the institutionalized and often destructive competition among students through continual and ostensibly meritocratic ranking and evaluation. By attuning young people to a set of social relationships similar to those of the workplace, schooling attempts to gear the development of personal needs to its requirements. (Bowles & Gintis, 1976, p. 131)

The relationships of power and domination within the schooling structure accustom individuals to relinquishing control over their time and labour. During the time spent on school benches, children have no control over their activity and labour—they are at the mercy of the authorities who have power over them. Children learn on command. They are under constant surveillance, subject to constant evaluation, judgements, ranking and grades, dividing them between losers and winners. The positive reinforcement—through gold stars, praising and shaming, honours and prizes—fosters emotional and intellectual dependency. Educators control

what is legitimate and initiate disciplinary sanctions with those who challenge the authority of the chain of command. The teacher-student relationship is modeled in a way that habituates children to working for someone else and simultaneously suppressing their initiatives. Children have no control over their time, and schooling also structures their time when they are not confined to schools. The social order of the school prioritizes adult control. Indeed, in the UK, "educational policy-making adults do not recognise children's participation rights" (Alanen, 2003, p. 10). This situation could be generalized. As Farson (1978) concludes, "school has made the concept of participation in the decisions that affect them so remote to students that the real lesson in compulsory education is that one cannot be trusted to govern oneself" (p. 98).

Since educational credentials are tied to entrance tickets to employment, schooling's most important function is to create the labour market which is both competitive and meritocratic. The political task of creating the labour market through schooling followed two main political aims[20]: social efficiency and social mobility.

The explicit goal of the reformers of the 19th century was social efficiency—to ensure social harmony and a sorting out mechanism to allocate jobs according to the performance and merit of every individual. "They have sought to make schools a mechanism for adapting students to the requirements of a hierarchical social structure and the demands of the occupational marketplace" (Labaree, 1997, p. 22). "The social efficiency goal has shaped U.S. schools by bending them to the practical constraints that are embedded in the market-based

[20] As Labaree (1997) points out, there are many other goals that as a society we invest in schools:

> Among other things, we ask schools to deliver medical and psychological services, to act as babysitter for children and warehouses for surplus adolescent workers, to promote esthetic awareness and physical conditioning, to serve as community centers and municipal symbols, to foster personal empowerment and healthy social development, and to pursue many other goals. (p. 264)

Schools have also been enlisted to protect the environment, to fight sexism and racism, to create a democratic culture and so forth. Social efficiency and social mobility are singled out not only because they illustrate the fundamental political contradiction within capitalism but also because they represent the central element of class conflict.

structuration of economic and social life" (Labaree, 1997, p. 22). The sorting out of individuals into jobs is paramount for the social efficiency perspective.

Not only do schools function as a sorting out mechanism in a highly competitive market, they also act as a form of educational currency that acts in a contradictory double-aim: to ensure less privileged children get ahead of others while also assuring the transfer of privileges for those higher in the social hierarchy. That social mobility may also be a central political goal of schooling reflects the class compromise. State-led compulsory education did not emerge as a result of popular or democratic demands (Green, 1990, p. 32). The idea of free and universal schooling was not popular at first and associated with the stigma of the poor. "For an institution to play an important role in society, it must be 'legitimate': people who use it must believe that it serves their interests and needs" (Carnoy, 1974, p. 1). If they were to surrender their children to the state (instead of the Church) parents needed something in return. The consolidation of the labour market on meritocratic principles lead to the credential race that offers the possibility for the family to move upward economically. The schooling structure has certainly been responsive to the pressure of the working-class. In this sense, the schooling structure embodies the fundamental contradiction of capitalist competition—the working class wanted a chance to compete in the labour market while the upper and middle-class also wanted to maintain their privileges.

The consequence of these two political goals of schooling is joined in their compromise to "legitimate the technocratic-meritocratic perspective" (Bowles & Gintis, 1976, p. 56).

> The key determinant of student engagement in schooling is the exchange value of education rather than its use-value, because the primary goal of pursuing an education has become the acquisition of educational credentials—symbolic goods, such as grade,

credits, and degrees—rather than the acquisition of useful skills and knowledge. (Labaree, 1997, p. 251)

As a result, those who have been schooled longer have a greater exchange value and their labour deemed with greater purchasing power. Moreover, the consequence of using schools as tools for social mobility and social efficiency has been the consolidation of a meritocratic system. Responding to the demands of educational currency requires that the schooling structure be highly stratified. Under those conditions, it is imperative that the system creates ways to distinguish among students.

The most significant political goals of schooling –social efficiency and social mobility – are not the basis to transfer skills and values that would aim toward a more egalitarian society. On the contrary, as noticed by Labaree (1997) "both these goals accept the inequality at the heart of a market society as given" (p. 26). From this perspective, the allocation of jobs appears to be mediated by some fairness –it is allocated based on merit. It transforms a highly political debate into an "objective" scientific question in justifying social inequalities. To borrow Lewontin's (1991) word, it gives "an apparent objective and "scientific" gloss to the social prejudices of educational institutions" (p. 35). Because the evaluation is based on "scientific testing methods," it gives the impression that privileges are fairly distributed. However, as Bowles and Gintis (1979) point out, the meritocratic perspective fails to appreciate the fact that "economic inequality is a structural aspect of the capitalist economy and does not derive from individual differences in skills and competencies" (p. 56). It reflects the unequal labour market. A meritocratic system is inherently antagonistic to a democratic ethos.

A meritocratic system has many advantages as a way to control the population. It makes society highly individualistic and competitive which reflects the ideal labour market. The

strategy of social efficiency to stabilize the authoritarianism in the economic structure has been to divide the working class in maintaining existing structures of oppression and domination based on race, status, and sex (Bowles & Gintis, 1976, p. 56). The school structure is the perfect competitive and conservative apparatus for dividing and maintaining privileges. It also reinforces the existing structures of inequalities based on status, race, and sex. The competitive element of the meritocratic ideology is a great form to control individuals.

> It is not difficult to see a very particular idea of an urban working class implicit in those pedagogical arrangements. As a result of such schooling, the working class would be alert, obedient, and so thoroughly attuned to discipline through group sanctions that a minimum of policing would ensure the preservation of social order. But, and this is important, programmed from an early age to compete with one another, working-class children would not grow up to form a cohesive and threatening class force. (Katz, 1971, p. 11)

Last but not least, schools are not only made mandatory through the mechanisms they serve but also by law. None of the commodification of children's labour, nor the creation of a competitive labour market, could be possible without the coercive power of the state. The state uses its legal power to enforce these property relations. Children are compelled by the law to attend school. Compulsory attendance laws were made to counter the resistance to surrender children's labour to the school and the state. Credentials are tied to the labour market, so the submission to the authoritarian government of schooling is the most obvious opportunity to earn a living. Under these conditions, learning can hardly be a voluntarily endeavour, but is instead a form of compulsion in shaping subjectivities and exploiting children's vulnerabilities—children are captives of these relations of property. That schooling attendance is compulsory challenges

the faith that it is genuinely for children's own good and reveals its integral part in the system of production. By forcing every child to accept school discipline, which is inherently authoritarian, individualistic, competitive and violent, the coercion of the labour market and inherent violence is legitimized. Schooling is without a doubt the most significant legitimating practice for capitalist unequal property relations that make up the liberal institution of childhood.

This portrayal of public schooling (which also includes the logic of private schools) might seem a reductive view of all those crucial years spent within school walls. Schooling is much more than that, and human beings are quite good at making the best of it. It should be understood that the schooling experience can be enjoyable, and a place where learning and self-realization happens. However, at that level, the impacts of schooling are hugely variable. The individual schooling experience may have provided you with your dream job; it may be remembered as an enjoyable period of friendship and learning; as an obligation that smoothly and non-eventfully occupied the 12 years of your youth; or as a mixed-experience. Indistinctively from personal experience, the focus remains on the structure of schooling which remains similar for all school-age children.

After 150 years and more of forced schooling, evidence points to the fact that we cannot "teach ourselves out of inequality" (Marsch, 2011), oppression, and exploitation. The bottom line is that compulsory schooling has a hidden political agenda which constitutes accustoming all children to capitalist labour discipline and building consent to liberal society. The hidden origins of schooling explain why most persons who attended school never learned the historical context of the implementation of mandatory schooling except the triumphant mythology of its emancipatory character. This chapter is not advocating for any reform *per se*. There are plenty of well-researched critiques out there on practically all aspects of forced schooling. As far as

this dissertation is concerned, the schooling system is excellent in accomplishing what it was designed to do. Keeping in mind the political reasons why schools were made mandatory by the governing classes of the 19th century might explain why the many reforms failed to build a more emancipatory or egalitarian system—it was not designed for that purpose. Forced schooling cannot be separated from the political functions it was set to accomplish—social control and social efficiency to allocate jobs.

The failure to recognize the political function of schooling also explain why the education system is often the scapegoat of all social ills—whether unemployment, poverty, ignorance, delinquency, the lack of healthy habits, et cetera. The liberal tendency to address political problems through the educative channel is strong. The failure to recognize the political functions of schools not only explains why these problems are not (and cannot) be realized through the schooling experience, but also testifies to the lack of consensus about what the system of public education should accomplish. Should schools serve as babysitters for parents who work? Should they serve to allocate jobs through the race for credentials? Should they serve to provide jobs for teachers? As a sophisticated obedience training? As a process of standardization and normalization of social norms and expectations? For the transmission of useful competencies? As a mechanism of nation-state building? These are common political motivations that are easily brushed aside under the guise of serving children's best interests. As Allen and Goddard (2017) point out:

> It is widely accepted by observer of every political stripe that education is in crisis. The central question, as we see it, is whether education, as something that exists somewhere within the system of mass schooling, can be returned to—or newly grounded upon—principles that serve the ends of a democratic society. If we are to seriously ask this

> question, we must remain open to the possibility that education could be, essentially and inescapably, in the core of its being, a system that serves and seeks to perfect governmental control, a system that owes nothing to dreams of enlightenment and social justice and everything to the goals of the bureaucratic management of populations. (pp. 3–4)

Maybe schooling, as it is right now not in the basic structure of coerced training and meritocracy, may not be the social good it has been depicted as being. A lasting lesson learned from compulsory schooling is that self-government is an aberration. As Carrig (2006) maintains, the main point is that education, as conceived within the liberal paradigm, is the *attempt* to determine, control and shape human action and in that sense, it is the antithesis of autonomy: "And, though Locke admits that it is feasible for a man to liberate himself from his education, he plainly indicates that it is only the very few who do so" (p. 394). It is the scarcity of emancipated individuals that make the reproduction of this system of oppression, domination, and exploitation possible. If schooling serves to culturally colonize us to the empire of the commodity forms, is it possible to decolonize our ways of thinking and acting? Can we move beyond this institutionalized benevolent violence inherent in schooling's paternalism?

Thus, we must be careful in drawing the proper nuances between the triumphant rhetoric of the discourse on public education and its historical praxis as forced schooling. This understanding reveals a lack of historical perspective on educational policies and it overlooks the fact that in the last 150 years, education has been intrumentalized "as agency of intellectual, cultural and moral uniformity" (Miller, 1995, p. 3). Since its inception, public schooling has served the interest of corporate capitalism by ensuring social efficiency—to act as "a giant sorting machine for an unequal society" (Arons, as cited in Miller, 1995, p. 124). Public and private schooling represents market institutions, and capitalism cannot be transcended by the institution that (re)produce capitalist property relations.

Chapter 6

Recognizing children's full humanity

> *If the advocacy for children's rights should succeed, our debates over educational approaches and child rearing practices will change radically. The differences, for example, between "strict" and "permissive" parenting disappear when seen in the context of children's liberation because even the most permissive approaches then seem embarrassingly authoritarian. With respect to schools, making minor adjustment in present teaching methods becomes a meaningless exercise when we consider the prospect of children designing their own educational experiences. And the rhetoric about the psychological needs of children will have to be reevaluated to apply to children who will be free to choose their own ways of living rather than having to settle for what adults have unilaterally determined to be best for them.*
>
> *(Farson, 1978, p. 4)*

The kernel of the argument of this dissertation has been to approach parenting and education, not as a set of techniques to instrumentalize children and to achieve specific goals, but as crucial political relationships. Recognizing children's full political being constitutes the heart of their emancipation. As Minow (1986) stresses, to recognize children's autonomy and full humanity, and to interact with them in ways that validate that empowerment, is not something that can be measured according to developmental charts. At its core it is a political statement (Minow, 1986, p. 5). The best antidote to domination is equality and, in this sense, this chapter puts forward a concept of emancipatory parenting and education that recognizes, an "equality of intelligences" (Jacotot, as cited in Rancière, 1987, p. 214). Moving beyond the liberal institution of childhood and its paternalistic parenting paradigm means embracing core democratic and feminist values to guide our actions toward the following generation. Nurturing the world beyond capitalist oppression and exploitation requires more than manipulating children's needs

and desire for autonomy. It authorizes us to fully appreciate the requirement to cultivate political relationships based on equality and consent.

Despite their theoretical separation in the liberal framework of analysis, parental authority (and the institutions that act in *Loco* parentis) and political authority are rooted in the same principle. You cannot have a political framework based on consent and individual autonomy without having these principles reflected within parenting and educative relationships during the most formative years. This chapter explores the core principles behind an emancipating parenting and educative paradigm. It challenges the dehumanizing aspect of paternalism[21] which uses the "need of protection" and "need of direction" to override children's political right to participation as free and autonomous agents in society. As Per Miljeteig (2005) stresses, "it is only when participation rights are understood as civil and political rights, or as democratic rights, that participation rights gain full meaning and become possible to implement" (p. 124). This chapter draws on critical legal theory. It counter-balances the "right of generation" inherent in paternalism by advocating the recognition of children's right to political emancipation. The argument aims to challenge the liberal doctrine of rights on its own terms. To compensate for the limits of a right-based approach,[22] the argument also draws on First Nations political thought and indigenous traditions of government.[23] Their contribution is crucial because First Nations

[21] It is beyond the scope of this chapter to provide an overview of emancipating parenting practices. There is literature that focuses specifically on the practical approach of the day to day of this paradigmatic shift, mostly from the perspective of attachment parenting, non-violent communication, unschooling and the self-directed and democratic educative movement.

[22] Although civil rights come from the liberal tradition, they remained abstract rights until the democratic tradition reclaimed them (Wolfe, 1977, p. 6). The nature of parent–child relation is of such that children cannot lead their own liberation movement. These shortcomings will be addressed through a focus on traditional First Nations parenting philosophies that fully approach parenting as a political relation.

[23] First nations in North Eastern America were quite diverse. Yet, they all share a similar intellectual tradition of governance. Their political cultures were "profoundly non-hierarchical, non-authoritarian and non-coercive" (Simpson, 2011, p. 53). This chapter is based essentially on the experience of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy formed by the Mohawks, Oneidas, Onondagas, Cayugas, and Senecas and the Nishnaabed people (or Anishinaabe) which included the culturally related Ojibwe, Odawa, Potawatomi, Mississauga, Saulteaux, and the Omàmìwinini.

political traditions are profoundly egalitarian (Alfred, 2008, p. 27; Delâge & Warren, 2017, p. 35) and their parenting approach reflected these core values. Their political culture included "all human beings as equal members in the regimes of consciousness" (Alfred, 2008, p. 20). The argument also draws on contemporary social movements informed by critical unschooling pedagogies that place equality and participation at the centre of learning. Although unschooling is radically different from traditional homeschooling, for legal purposes it is often hidden under this label, like a trend within the home-based learning movement. Gray (2017) defines unschooling as follows:

> Unschoolers do not send their children to school, and they do not do at home the kinds of things that are done at school. More specifically, they do not establish a curriculum for their children, they do not require their children to do particular assignments for education, and they do not test their children to measure progress. Instead, they allow their children freedom to pursue their own interests and to learn, in their own ways, what they need to know to follow those interests. They also, in various ways, provide an environmental context and environmental support for the child's learning. Life and learning do not occur in a vacuum; they occur in the context of a cultural environment, and unschooling parents help define and bring the child into contact with that environment. (p. 9)

Unschooling is also called a respect-based, consent-based approach to learning, democratic education or holistic education. All these terms highlight different aspects of this approach. Yet, they all share the "learner-centered democratic worldview" (Ricci, 2012, p. 4).

Within liberal theory, consent and autonomy within the "political realm" are valued and seen as necessary for the "good life" and they are a central determinant of what it means to be

human. Claiming children's full humanity means to apply the core value of the "political" realm into the family and "private" realm. Said differently, it implies treating children as persons with autonomy, respect, equality and with the capacity to consent. Before any objection can be made on the grounds that although the idea of autonomy for children is appealing in theory, it might appear impractical in practice, some clarifications are in order.

This emancipating parenting paradigm borrows from the tradition of participatory democracy the notion of participation and equality. This not only means that adults not only expect that younger persons will participate in society they make a commitment to act in a way that makes that participation possible. Equality refers to the fact that the child's concerns should carry equal weight when reaching decisions. Equality also pertains to the expectation of equal treatment, of not being treated more severely, and with higher expectations, than adults would be on a day to day basis such as not being punished, shamed, humiliated and threatened for merely not seeing eye to eye on something. This emancipating feminist parenting paradigm asserts that children are entitled to control their mind and body. The role of the adult is therefore not to convince or coerce the child into a specific course of action, but to properly inform the child about the options, and then advocate and support the child on the path they have chosen. This emancipating parenting paradigm emphasizes the notion of consent. It is not to be confused with the notion of consumer choice. An illusion of choice is often entertained in the liberal institution of childhood, mocking children's capacity for informed decision-making process by only letting them decide on trivialities. The critical element here is not so much the notion of choice but rather the child's capacity to decide and to act upon a decision that would have a direct impact on the person's life and body: such as scheduling and time management, consultation about care-providers, and consent about educational decisions, and so forth. An emancipating parenting

paradigm prevails when genuine equality, participation, consent among generations and children's right to autonomy and self-directed learning are being honoured.

6.1 Broadening the notion of rights

The strong prejudice against children denying them the right of participation is the most emblematic of paternalist doctrines. Within the liberal paradigm, childhood is understood through the lens of disability and the idea of an inherent "lacking" of capacities compared to adults. In this rationale, adults have the responsibility over children and therefore are entitled to control and coerce them if necessary, to ensure their protection.

> Despite presumably good intentions, the introduction of a protective measure almost always involves the deprival of a right. Whether we protect children from the risk entailed by work by denying them the right to work or from the dangers of cycling on busy roads by forbidding them to do so, we are limiting their rights. Precisely because these prohibitions are justified as protection, they help to conceal the fact that alternative possibilities are conceivable, e.g. solution that would place restrictions on the freedom of movement of adults. Thus, the protection of children can be interpreted as a protection of the interests of adults, i.e. a protection *against* children. This is compounded by the fact that the protection of children also provides a perfect means to control children. (Qvortrup, 1987, p. 11)

As stated in previous chapters, these paternalist and protectionist attitudes not only reinforce the structural vulnerability of children but also strengthen the idea that children are powerless, dependent and needing to be segregated from "adult" society. For the protagonists of paternalism, at least when it comes to children, needs and rights become a zero-sum game. According to them, if we abandon children to equal rights there will be no one to defend their

needs. The strategy to undermine children's legitimacy as rights bearers (right of participation) has been to present rights and needs as mutually exclusive. In this context, inasmuch as the focus on rights does not exclude the fulfilling of needs, the focus on needs precludes the possibilities of rights. Yet, if you endorse control, obedience and force as the most important adult-child relationship to ensure a minor's protection, then it becomes impossible to lead the way toward recognition of children's right of autonomy and self-direction. This view of children as in need of protection precludes their entitlement to basic civil rights of participation and consent.

The liberal model of constitutional personhood is exclusionary, which pinpoints the limits of liberal justice.

> This is precisely because the child as a person, is effectively denied by law. This is precisely because the child, *by virtue of being a non-adult,* is deemed to be not competent, to be dependent and thus subject to the hegemony of adult views and judgements. In this sense the law, in itself, serves as a barrier toward seeing the child *as an individual*. (McNamee et al., 2005, p. 234)

As Woodhouse (2004) reminds us, most beliefs that justified the exclusion of groups of people based on their incapacities to act as full persons have proven to be fallacies. An important legacy of all civil, political and social movements that struggled over the last century to reclaim and broaden the scope of human dignity has been to question categories of exclusion (p. 230). It is therefore crucial to also question the age-bounded forms of exclusion. The law is crucial because it provides a legal definition of "the child" and "childhood" by "defining and regulating the boundaries between adulthood and childhood" (McNamee et al., 2005, p. 233). The law is based on the developmental paradigm, where the minor is a subject in need of protection not

rights, where the need for adult-led socialization not only legitimizes unequal property relations, but outlaws any possibilities for the expression of children's competences and autonomy.

Strategies to counter the childist prejudices around incompetence have been to rethink the underlying assumptions behind the concept of competencies. Since the 1990s, there has been an increased effort in critical social science to seriously approach children as agents in their lives and the world around them. Critical legal studies are moving also in this direction.[24] Within this new paradigm, "children are and must be seen as active in the construction and determination of their own social lives, the lives of those around them and of the societies in which they live. Children are not just passive subjects of social structures and process" (James & Prout, 1990, p. 8). It is now much easier to encounter critical literature that approaches children as political beings, not just as immature children acting out as stereotypically portrayed by strong childist prejudices.

An emancipating parenting paradigm challenges the received notion of competence and its relation to responsibilities. Seen from this perspective, competence is not the pre-condition for being given responsibilities, but quite the opposite: competence is the result of being given

[24] Since the signature of the UN Convention of the Rights of Children (CRC) in 1989 (by all countries except the United States of America and Somalia), children's right of participation has been introduced into the legal tradition. Yet, although British law legislated to enforce the Children Act to make its laws conform to the CRC, the act is still ambivalent in its jurisprudence as to whether autonomy or paternalism should prevail. Canada signed the UN Convention of the Rights of Children in 1989, and it was ratified in 1991. However, no piece of legislation has been introduced to modify the jurisprudence that still operated around the principle of the 'child's best interest' without any provision for participation and self-determination. The Children Act in British Law is the main attempt to take children as legal persons seriously by making legally binding the UN Convention for the Rights of Children (CRC). The aim of the legislation stipulates that the "welfare principle" should be the guiding principle in court rulings. The novelty of this "welfare principle" should be decided not based on the paternalistic approach of the "child's best interest" but rather the child's wishes. This is a legal precedent, whose implementation raises many debates, especially with a long tradition of paternalism around the welfare of the child principle when adults were the sole deciders of what constitutes the "child's best interest." But even if the most emancipatory piece of legislation implores to consider seriously children as legal subjects and rights bearers, the reality is quite different. The rulings deciding which article predominates in a legal decision—toward autonomy or paternalism –ends up a being more a moral issue than one displaying objectivity. As Archard (2004) points out, since the CRC does not enforce a priority of needs: it "requires states to take 'all appropriate measures' to implement rights of the CRC, and 'the rights' may be taken to read as 'all the rights equally'" (p. 67). Paternalist tradition rules over emancipation.

responsibilities. As Hutchby and Moran-Ellis (1998) stress, from the perspective of a competence paradigm, the divide between the adult as competent and the child as incompetent does not exist:

> Children, considered *as* children rather than as apprentice adults, are just as mature, rational, competent and social as adults. However, it is clear that there are radical differences between the rationalities and competencies of children and those of adults. (p. 16)

There are obvious limits to the discourse of rights and overemphasis of a contractual relationship and self-interested individuals. This is particularly true for the parent–child relation. A feminist interpretation of a rights approach, as exemplified by Martha Minow (1986, 1987), approached the enfranchisement of children as a great opportunity to enrich the grounds for a more encompassing understanding of rights. Minow (1986, 1987) stresses the importance of understanding rights in terms of broader relationships and to show how the significance of human interconnectedness can help a "new generation of rights" to account for both adult and child interdependence. Arguing in this direction, Minow (1986, 1987) maintains that feminist legal jurisprudence can help broaden the interpretation of the "next generation of rights"—rights that fully acknowledge relationships. Defining childhood in terms of needs as opposed to rights overemphasizes the child's dependence and minimizes adult interdependence. As she stresses:

> Accounting for these relationships among child, parent, and state not only challenges simplistic conceptions of rights, but also offers an avenue for developing richer notions of rights. … My analysis is informed by three feminists concerns: appreciation of relationships, a commitment to a vision of self forged in connection with—not just

> through separation from—others, and a preference for glimpses of complexity, contextual detail, and continuing conversation. (Minow, 1986, p. 15)

This understanding of rights could help to decide on cases as to maintain the delicate balance between the child's right of participation and still acknowledging the specificity of the parent–child context. Stressing children's competence however, is not enough and we quickly reach the limits of the right-based approach. The Western paternalistic doctrine and its emphasis on domination is so thoroughly entrenched within both our political and parenting system that it appears "valid, objective, and natural; it has become what Jens Bartelson has called the unthought foundation of political knowledge" (Alfred, 2008, p. 68). It is hard to approach children as active participants and agents mostly because childism has not only constructed our cultural views about them, it has determined most of the research about children.

6.2 Emancipating parenting and learning paradigm

There are alternatives to right-based approaches which allow reflection on the necessary conditions to establish the foundation of an emancipating educative and parenting paradigm. Given the strong prejudice against children in Western political culture, it might be easier to build the house on a new foundation altogether. The resurgence of First Nations parenting and governing practices is a good example of relationships that generate a strong foundation for democratic behaviours and civic culture. Similarly, Western-based learning approaches that place non-hierarchical relationships at the centre of parenting and educative philosophy are highly relevant to the present discussion. They both share striking similarities.

The principles of First Nations political government are radically different from the traditional Western ones (and the ones imposed on them by colonial institutions). "The crucial feature of the indigenous concept of governance is its respect for individual autonomy" (Alfred,

2008, p. 25). The ideals of indigenous political thoughts are respect, harmony, autonomy and peaceful coexistence (Alfred, 2008, p. 2). These are reflected in the principle of participatory democracy, equality (Delâge & Warren, 2017, pp. 35–97) as well as in a decentralized nature that "balances many layers of equal power," non-coercion and the respect of diversity (Alfred, 2008, pp. 26–27).

Within this worldview, there is a strong corollary between good governance and good parenting, as the latter is crucial for developing the ideals of indigenous political thought within children. This is based on an understanding that parenting and educative relationships are the first and often the most powerful exposure of children to governance, dynamics of power and decision-making processes. Given their strong understanding of the intimate relationship between parenting and governing, their conception of children radically differed from the Western liberal one.

> In pre-colonial Nishnaabeg nation, children were highly respected people, valued for their insights, their humour, and their contributions to families and communities at each stage of their lives. Children were seen as Gifts, and parenting was an honour. Coming from the spirit world at birth, children were closer to that world then their adult counterparts and were therefore considered to have greater spiritual power -a kind of power highly respected amongst the Nishnaabeg. Adults had a lot to learn from these small teachers. Parenting strategies were developed with these core beliefs in mind, while also considering the kinds of adults and community Nishnaabeg people wanted to create and live in. (Simpson, 2011, pp. 122–123)

First Nations parenting philosophies and politics were based on a prolonged attachment and intense investment of time. They were characterized by an extremely gentle approach.

(Delâge, 2017, p. 344). First Nations children knew no punishment, no coercion, no manipulation, no criticism, and no authoritarian power (Simpson, 2011, p. 123). The main features of their pedagogy (also shared by democratic education) were their emphasis on non-interference, interdependence, teaching by modeling and learning by doing (Simpson, 2011, p. 123).

There is a lot of misunderstanding of parenting practices that developed around the respect of individual autonomy. From a culture where possessive individualism is strong, the other side of the coin is often overlooked, and the role of the extended family and community is downplayed. Implementing the principles of an emancipating parenting paradigm is highly taxing, requiring a lot of investment of time to nurture this egalitarian relationship. As Simpson (2011) points out,

> Non-interference can only work in a system where children are highly connected and attached to their parents and extended family, where the culture is inherently child-friendly. … Allowing children to have freedom of choice in a detached, individualistic, adult environment would of course put children in danger; and this is the misunderstanding that settler societies continue to make in reference to Indigenous parenting philosophies. Freedom of choice is just one facet of a philosophy designed to created honourable, responsible healthy adults. (p. 133)

Their communities were designed to respond to human needs at every stage of their life, from constant care for infants, to designing of communities where toddlers can explore and follow their curiosity freely and have the necessary space to get to know their individual selves during youth. In this parenting paradigm, adults are extremely present, but their ways differ from the Western-based approach. To describe adult guidance, the term leadership is more accurate than

authority. These leaders guide youth by "diverting their own authority or power. In essence, they "lead by following." They teach by allowing students to direct their own learning. They are always around us, like our clans and non-human spirit beings, but they are not *directing* us" (Simpson, 2011, p. 119). Despite the emphasis on individual autonomy, and because of it, children raised in this environment are highly collectively minded as the community guarantees the respect of differences. This granted responsibility creates highly autonomous individuals. Similarly, Haudenosaunee child rearing philosophy created "talented, responsible, civic-minded citizens capable of living in a democracy" (Mann, 2000, p. 275).

> It also created leaders that were able to build consensus by listening to the people, leaders who were full of humility, responsibility and respect, leaders who were willing to sacrifice on a personal level for the betterment of the nation. It was a kind of leadership based on shared, not absolute power, grounded in an authentic power rather than an authoritarian one; and it created communities that were profoundly less authoritarian, less coercive and less hierarchical than their European counterparts. (Simpson, 2011, p. 123)

The resurgence of First Nations parenting and educative practices is made difficult by colonial power dynamics and institutional legacies imposed on them.

6.3 Alternatives to schooling

The Western-based counterparts that offer avenues to explore alternatives for social change are the critical unschooling movement and the democratic and self-directed education movement. Children's political emancipation is linked in North America to its political context of emergence, especially to the free school philosophy. In its turn, the free school movement cannot be divorced from the intellectual and political context of the civil rights movement in the 1950s and 1960s in the USA. Without mentioning the obvious gains that the African American

community gained in fighting segregation, the civil rights movement mobilized and radicalized youth in an unprecedented way. Not only did the civil rights movement give legitimacy to direct actions, civil disobedience and non-violent resistance (Miller, 2002, p. 21) but for the first time, youth imposed themselves as a major political force. Until then, students' voices or youth were dismissed as irrelevant. The civil rights movement mobilized and radicalized youth –an energy that ignited much of the countercultural and anti-war movements in white student communities. It is no historical coincidence that the radical dissent in educational thinking emerged mostly in the USA out of the context of racism and building a counter culture in the 1950s and 1960s. As part of its legacy, the civil rights movement acted as a trail blazer to a radical critique of education. The Supreme Court's decision of *Brown V. Board of Education* is not only a landmark legislation against segregation, but the African American community initiated a "strong critique of their schooling" (Miller, 2002, p. 22) that had major repercussions outside the Black communities. The major legacy of the dissent of the 1960s in terms of the politics of childhood has been to question the faith that mandatory schooling—a general consensus at the time shared by all political inclinations—was a neutral force within a liberal democracy. As Tyack and Hansot point out, schools were "an almost sacred institution, the nearest equivalent in our constitutional order to an established Church" (as cited in Miller, 2002, p. 5). As Miller (2002) maintains, it is reasonable to maintain that without the civil rights movement, the radical education critique would not have had a solid political bases to really take off (p. 22).

The free school movement was not a pedagogical movement *per se* but reflected an attack on the liberal consensus and corporate capitalism. It is a movement that is also different from other educational movements (such as alternative schools, voucher or charter schools,

homeschooling and unschooling, to name a few). It was geared around individual emancipation, social responsibility and democratic participation. Its political position was clearly a critique of alienation resulting from corporate capitalism. As Miller (2002) points out, "the free school movement involved a cultural and political critique that recognized that mainstream public schooling would not and *could not* be radically transformed" (p. 7). This is most explicit in how the hidden curriculum of mandatory schooling, and much of the learning experience, is based on property relations where children are molded into useful commodities—human resources. A central element of the free school ideology was to challenge the alienation within American culture and realize full human potential by placing democracy and individuals at the heart of the learning experience.

Although many of the cultural and political heritages of the 1960s and 1970s have made their way into mainstream culture—such as gender and race relations and ecological awareness—education lags behind (Miller, 2002, p. x). There is much to regain from the rediscovering of the dissenting voice in education—especially the free school ideology and its strong emphasis on challenging forms of alienation and support for participatory democracy.

The prospect of moving toward a transformative agenda is more limited when it comes to the educative system. It has been argued that although there are good intentions within the compulsory schooling system, it was not designed to implement an egalitarian and democratic society, nor can it rise to the task. Given the system's inertia toward real change, the most promising pathways toward children's political emancipation and emancipating parenting paradigms is to be found in the self-directed learning movement or the unschooling movement, both being gathered under the broader homeschooling movement. Learning outside schools is a contentious subject for all the pedagogical, social, and political questions it raises, and the

limited answers they can currently provide. The scientific research is only starting to catch on to this question. Since its inception, the mandatory schooling system has been the target of infinite calls for improvements. Given the relentless efforts to reform it, and the limited changes achieved, it is not surprising that an increasing number of parents have opted for an alternative to formal schooling.[25]

As Stevens (2001) points out, homeschooling[26] is becoming an alternative to the public and private educational system worldwide, and its numbers are rising in most Western countries to such a point that it has become a genuine grassroots movement (p. 14). The pioneers of the homeschooling movement in the 1980s could be divided into two distinct pioneer groups. One group inspired by the writing of the child developmental psychologist Raymond Moore sparked a Christian-based homeschooler movement. Their argument was that peer pressure in schools lead children to lose their self-esteem and lose the interest to learn and to be curious. Homeschooling allowed parents to customize the curriculum according to each child while retaining the possibility of transmitting family values and beliefs. On the other side of the spectrum, unschooling emerged out of a call to reform the public-school system born out of the counter-culture of the 1960–1970s in the USA.[27] The Christian-based homeschoolers and the

[25] It is hard to compile the data of the homeschooled population. Some states and provinces do not require declaration nor keep statistics about this educational choice. In Canada and the USA, it is estimated that between 0.4% to 4% of school-age children are homeschooled. Homeschooling as an educative practice is in the rise (Van Pelt, 2015, p. 22).

[26] It should be noted that homeschooling refers to a legal category. The term cannot specify any specifications as to the motivations, pedagogy used or the learning experiences as such. Homeschooling is a category that means that parents did not transfer their educative responsibilities to the school authorities. In other words, it only indicates that children do not attend the private or public-school system. In this sense, the term homeschooling is a misrepresentation of the reality and many educating parents resist its usage (Brabant, 2013, p 14). As Brabant (2013) stresses, the practice of homeschooling is rarely reduced to the home and many do not reproduce school at home. Thus, the use of the term is problematic but remains the most commonly used.

[27] The homeschooling movement is often associated with the United States of America, but it emerged during similar timeframe in Canada, the United Kingdom, Australia and New Zealand. Although less documented, it seems to have emerged during similar time in other industrial countries such as Germany, France and Spain (Brabant, 2013, pp. 46–47).

unschooling families, despite radical differences in their approaches (they only had in common the fact that their children did not attend school), have found a *modus vivendi* so that the homeschooling movement could win legal battles to secure educational choice outside of the school's authority. According to Brabant (2013), the homeschooling movement must be understood within the political context of: (a) new considerations regarding the learning needs of children and the limits of a mass school system to customize teaching to the child's needs; (b) the ideas of progressive thinkers about education (Illich and Dewey in the USA, Neil in UK, Freire in Brazil, Steiner in Austria, Montessori in Italy, Freinet in France, Otto in Germany); (c) the growing tension between secular and religious education; (d) an international emphasis on the protection of individual rights against those of states after the horrors of World War II (notably the Holocaust and Hiroshima); (e) the access to higher education for parents, but especially mothers (p. 46).

In a way, the critiques of mass capitalism and the counterculture of the 1970s redefined themselves in the home-based educative movement. John Holt was the most outspoken voice that encouraged unschooling parents to homeschool as the only sustainable legal way to offer an alternative education. It proved to be extremely difficult maintaining funding for free and democratic schools, and the wave of social conservatism of the 1980s severely limited those educative experiments. With the hopes of publicly funded democratic and free schools receding, homeschooling seemed the easiest, if not the only possible option, to offer an alternative education to children. Since then, the movement gathered strength and diversity, as homeschooling became an option when alternative schools, public and private confounded, could not offer a different educative approach.[28] The tendency in recent decades to extend the years of

[28] Homeschooling families relies on a variety of pedagogies and labels to define the educative project: project-based learning, structured homeschooling, the pedagogies of Charlotte Masson, Freinet, Montessori and/or Waldorf, relax

attendances of mandatory schooling (with a scheme going from 4 to 18 years old), the increase pressures of a standardized curriculum[29] and its emphasis on testing has left little room for educative alternatives. The system certainly authorizes alternatives, but the concessions of greater autonomy and diversity are curtailed by its insistence on standardized testing, rigid curriculum and standards (Miller, 2008, p. 57), restraining the capacity to fully provide the benefits of emancipating education to respond to bureaucratic demands.

It is extremely complex to discuss the homeschooling social movement because of its great diversity. Nonetheless, as Miller (2008) argues, educative alternatives (both integrated in the mass schooling system but often evolving at its margins through parent-led initiatives) remain a coherent movement (p. 45) in the sense that despite their divergences, they are working toward the similar goal of transforming the current monolithic schooling system toward a more inclusive and participative democratic educational system.

> Visit any gathering of homeschoolers, any conference of educators drawn together by their passionate interest in a child-centered philosophy, and you will encounter *citizens*, not consumers or entrepreneurs. They are engaged in serious discussions about their ideals, experiences, challenges, and hopes, finding ways to work together and learn from each other—not for their own gain or amusement, but to enrich the lives of their children and students, and implicitly if not always explicitly, of their communities and even the planet. Of course these groups harbour their share of self-interest, petty politics and other

homeschoolers, unschoolers, radical unschoolers, forest schools, gameschoolers, worldschoolers, self-directed learning, wholistic learning, natural learnings, and all the hybrid in between, to name a few.

[29] There is an effort to diversify the curriculum in recent decades. The debate around those issues reflects an irreconcilable dilemma. From the perspective of minority groups, either being from the First Nations, black history or LGBTQ rights, the narrative does not go further enough. From the perspective of the dominant group, it consists in a scandalous rewriting and distortion of history. Some reforms make it through, other die in the attempt. The rewriting of officially sanctioned textbooks reveals the limits of a uniformed curriculum to integrate the diversity needed in a healthy democracy and the necessity to embrace different point of view.

> quirks of social living; no one claims that democracy is perfect. But there is a significant qualitative difference between a community of parents or educators pursuing a shared vision, and a meeting of education technocrats or a convention of entrepreneurs (such as test publishers or corporate charter school operators) pursuing their own profits. (Miller, 2008, p. 57)

As Aurini and Davies emphasized, homeschooling is a growing movement based on the logic of educative choice and free choice, but outside of the capitalist market logic (as cited in Brabant, 2013, p. 62). Thus, among this diversity, the unschooling/self-directed[30] learning group constitutes most possibilities because it exemplifies a conscious effort to change the paradigm regarding children's rights and capabilities. It offers the opportunity of living out the principles of a radically different parent–children paradigm.

I do not wish to discuss the pedagogical efficiency of self-directed learning. The scarce research is quite positive in studies conducted with adults and their capacity to enter and perform in post-secondary institutions (Gray & Riley, 2013). There are too many variables to take into consideration to do justice to this argument and its limits. Moreover, a constant concern throughout this research project has not been to assess the educative choices based on the academic capacity of the student to compete on the capitalist labour market, but its capacity to produce well adjusted, happy individuals and engaged citizens. As previously stated, the unschooling and self-directed learning philosophy and practice is a political position. Some

[30] Again, the dichotomy is not a clear-cut demarcation. Even in the most parent-led curriculum-based homeschooling, there is usually enough time left to let room for the child self-direction in the choice of the material covered. Although their education is not self-directed as such, there is still much more autonomy than in traditional schools. There are students attending democratic schools or self-directed learning centers. Those institutions operate according to the principle of democratic self-directed learning. These learning centers or schools can be parent-run learning coops, privately or publicly funded. Thus, some children living a self-directed learning might be homeschooled or integrated within school authorities, depending of the specific legislations of the states/provinces and countries.

would even question the idea that such an individualised philosophy of education can contribute to a greater form of social justice and emancipation. There have been legitimate concerns that self-directed learning, because of its lack of specific curriculum that would expose learners to the experience of minorities, is ill-equipped to teach social justice. The claim is that unschooling encourages extreme individualism and disengagement with society, thus making children unaware of other's perspectives.

Yet, it is exactly this radical break from the top-down approach to knowledge transmission that makes self-directed education so powerful. The pedagogical myth which maintains that everything to be learned must be taught. The greatest promise of this educative practice is that it does not send the message that children are inferior because they lack experience, or that some perspectives are irrelevant because they do not reflect the dominant view. Children do not internalize this feeling of inferiority because their learning experience has been based on mutual respect and consent, with a sense of competence emerging with the multiple interactions with individuals of all ages in the broader community. It entices the development of the same attitude of respect and openness toward others. Emancipation is possible because the full humanity of the child is recognized and appreciated. The learning experience is emancipating because it forces the child to use its own intelligence, and to figure out the world around him or her by developing his or her own perspective. The sense of self-worth resulting from this trust-based relationship entices the child to recognize the other's value, perspective and humanity. Thus, within such an approach, difference is not a threat to suppress, but constitutes an opportunity for developing a democratic platform through which one learns to cooperate. Once you learn to cherish your own perspective, and the uniqueness of it, it becomes easier to reciprocate than if your educative experience is based on competition and a race to get

ahead of your peers. Under the self-directed learning philosophy, education is not instrumentalized to create a "false consciousness" of the normalization of subordination.

Another promising aspect which is shared in subgroups within the homeschooling movement[31] is its connection with a feminist ethic and how it promotes a different form of civic engagement which is often overlooked because its activity happens outside of the usual structures of power. It is a connection that has been noted also by Brabant (2013) in her research on the homeschooling movement in Québec (pp. 112–115). The educative system has been created around masculinist values that promote a conception of the world based on domination, the use of technology to resolve problems, and an emphasis on the public and production aspect of life. As Brabant (2013) stresses, drawing on feminist literature of Noddings (2002), Martin (1992), and Tappan and Brown (1996), the educative values promoted by feminist ethicists are: their emphasis on dialogue; the development of personal narrative instead of the repetition of discourses of others; and a caring approach to personal, family, and community life that includes both the private and the public in their learning about citizenship (p.112). Those feminist homeschooling mothers' educative praxis, through the re-appropriating of political power through informal channels, is directly engaged in the transformation of political culture. Their understanding of political leadership is closely similar to the form of political leadership valued in the democratic tradition of First Nations political thought. Although those connections are most obvious with unschooling feminist mothers, these aspects are also part of the homeschooling movement.

[31] As previously mentioned, the homeschooling movement is diverse. There is a branch of homeschooling families that, through their emphasis on traditional religious ideas, reproduces masculinist domination. However, there is also a branch of radical feminist whose critique of capitalist society brought them to decide to homeschool.

Despite certain methodological limits, a study by Cheng (2014) supports those lines. Cheng (2014) concluded that homeschooled children are more politically tolerant than publicly and privately schooled children. It is unclear as to whether it is the importance of the individualized approach that facilitates this tolerance, or the exposure to minorities and diversity as part of their unschooling education that is the definite factor. It is probably a combination of both. As Morrison (2018) stresses, a majority (53%) of unschooling families surveyed to address the question of multicultural education explicitly expose their children to multiculturalism and among those, close to 16% have an explicit analysis of the institutions that reproduce systematic inequality and oppression (p. 104). Although this approach carries potential, it does not constitute a guarantee that it will deliver.

> Perhaps, though, the small pieces of evidence found in this study and earlier ones (Morrison, 2016a, 2016b) have illustrated that potential and space exist in unschooling to nurture equity-oriented individuals. Unschooling can potentially provide more high-quality opportunities for children to experience democracy face-to-face, examine the world as-is, and imagine a world that could be. Because unschooling removes children from the school context (which often implants inaccurate notions of equity and oppression, as mentioned above) and because unschooling enmeshes children in a different social context, one untainted by influences of inequitable social norms, it perhaps follows that unschooling has a potential for "naturally" fighting inequity. (Morrison, 2018, pp. 112–113)

As the homeschooling movement is gathering strength, further research on the practices of unschooling as a political praxis is needed to better understand the connections between self-directed learning and social justice.

Critical unschooling and self-directed and democratic learning focus on being an individual in a community instead of using education to control children to adhere to dominant interests in society. As Huang points out, democratic education supports "a more radical pedagogy, political critique of schooling and fight for social justice through education" (Huang, 2014, p. 62). In practice, critical unschooling is an "autonomous and learner-centered approach to education" that aims to subtract education from its unequal dynamics of power and domination (Romero, 2018, p. 58).

> The unschooling movement is a beacon of hope for the evolution of teaching and learning. Through self-direction and autonomy, students and teachers can break the bonds of educational modalities rooted in colonial and industrial power structures in pursuit of a more equitable and democratic society. (Romero, 2018, p. 56)

The radical paradigmatic shift involved with an emancipating parenting paradigm is that education is the child's responsibility. A society where children are responsible for their own education is characterized by placing little expectation on children—giving them total autonomy and control over their labour and activity. Research has been made to explain the biological foundations that make children natural learners, such as their inborn curiosity, playfulness, and sociability and how children who experience this freedom, against Western prejudices, grow up into skillful adults (Gray, 2017, p. 5). Thus, self-directed education means an "education directed and controlled by the person becoming educated. It should be noted at the outset that self-directed education, as used here, refers to all education that derives from a person's self-chosen activities, whether or not those activities are consciously directed toward education" (Gray, 2017, p. 2).

Maintaining that children are responsible for their education does not mean the absence of authority as such nor should we imply that children are abandoned to themselves or to

ignorance. Discussing the notion of ownership and responsibility is ultimately a discussion about freedom and authority. Not understanding children's capacity to be autonomous and able to take responsibility for their own education, and the kind of social freedom that it empowers, it is, therefore, hard to redefine the understanding of their role as parent and adult. Like the First Nations approaches to leadership, parents or educators diffuse their authority to embrace the role of facilitators. The parental responsibility, therefore, is to support the child's autonomy. Parental involvement is not in the micro-managing of children's lives, but rather to mobilize the resources to create the condition to create an environment conducive to learning and self-directed education. Gray (2017) points out the essential educational conditions which are the parental responsibility to implement for self-directed education:

> These include (1) the social expectation that education is children's responsibility (which becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy); (2) unlimited freedom to play, explore, contemplate, and pursue one's own interests; (3) access to the tools of the culture and opportunity to play with those tools (use them in creative, self-directed ways); (4) access to a variety of adults, who are helpers, not judges (people are more ready to seek help from someone who does not judge them than from someone who does); (5) free age-mixing among children and adolescents (younger students acquire advanced skills and knowledge by observing and interacting with older ones, and older students develop leadership and nurturing abilities by interacting with the younger one); and (6) immersion in a stable, moral, democratic community (which helps students acquire a sense of responsibility for the community as a whole, not just for themselves). (p. 16)

Recognizing that children learn better when they are self-directed and interested, that children are more responsible and curious in a non-hierarchical, non-coercive environment, that they thrive in the absence of humiliating disciplinary techniques, shaming, threats, rewards, and

punishments, is not radical anymore and it has made its way into mainstream pedagogical thinking. Different pedagogical alternatives challenge the core assumptions of traditional schooling and its techniques. There are enough parents and pedagogues that are convinced of the benefits of self-directed and interest-inspired learning. However, there has been little effort to implement them. Similarly, few children are exposed to the kind of adult leadership that can foster an egalitarian and democratic political culture.

It is interesting to learn what trusting children's autonomy and responsibility can bring to society. More than 40 years of literature that follows self-directed education can attest to the efficiency of this learning approach to master the skills for modern society. The approach might even be more relevant and necessary for children given the era of increased complexity and fast-paced technological change we live in. There is a burgeoning of democratic schools worldwide, as well as increased interest in critical unschooling as a form of home-based learning. Only time will tell us if the political conditions are right to become an alternative for more than a small percentage of the child population.

Conclusion

Beyond paternalism: Children's right to participation in their learning experience

Unschooling is a way of life that is based on freedom, respect, and autonomy

Richards, 2020, p.47

There are alternatives within the mainstream schooling system, and those differ greatly from one province or state to the other. Despite the capacity of the schooling system to accommodate a certain diversity and to adapt to different student's needs, mandatory schooling remains a powerful tool for regulation and assimilation of populations. It is not surprising that alternatives within the mainstream system have had difficulties navigating exigencies imposed by the state, especially when their philosophy and pedagogical approaches significantly diverge. Although there is more openness toward alternatives for younger kids to explore play-based learning, the options narrow as the person grows and the pressure to focus on credential earning dominates the schooling experience. Over the years, many alternative schools have given in to institutional pressures to conform or had to turn to other educative models more in line with the traditional schooling approach.

Children's right to participation in their learning experience, or what Carlo Ricci (2012) terms the "willed curriculum" is crucial to fully achieve social freedom and equity. By establishing a democratic environment as a cultural basis for human interaction, all other struggles for emancipation would benefit by ensuring a gradual normalization of a genuine democratic ethos. Learning about democracy is not as powerful and transforming as directly experiencing it. We can hardly teach emancipation and liberation with tools meant to serve the needs of the capitalist economy. As Ricci and Pritscher (2015) point out:

> Many educational leaders do not make a distinction between training and education. As a result, we excessively train for corporate jobs furthering the profit of the 1%. Education to develop self-direction, love of learning, curiosity, and compassion has been seriously avoided as a result of excessive training for jobs. (p. 64)

Beyond the rhetoric of the importance for children to be autonomous, the idea that they should have real control over crucial aspects such as their education is threatening for a society used to hierarchical controls and benevolent forms of domination and oppression. Given the rise in recent decades of learning alternatives outside of traditional schools, and unschooling more specifically, the pressure to further regulate homeschooling has become a political issue.

The provincial government in Quebec, Canada made changes over the years 2016 to 2019 to further regulate homeschooling. As family- learning gains in popularity, other states are following to ensure proper regulation. Although it is case-specific to the province of Québec, since the provincial governments in Canada are responsible for education, it reflects similar struggles around the world against the undemocratic aspect of forced schooling and parental initiatives to make possible more learner-centered democratic learning. Having been directly involved at the leadership of the Quebec Association for Home-based Education (Association Québécoise pour l'éducation à domicile) working to mobilize the homeschooling community during the parliamentary committee around the new homeschooling regulation, the underlying goal of the mobilization was to ensure the possibility of self-directed learning. This position derives from a pragmatism of inclusion of the great diversity of families and children's needs, but also from a desire to place children's right to participation in the agenda of educative policies.

Unfortunately, despite initial gains from the Liberal government to find a compromise between protecting children educative rights and educative freedom, the majority government

elected on a conservative and populist platform (Coalition Avenir Quebec) reversed unilaterally by reinstating the policing power of the state by imposing the Quebec schooling curriculum less than a year after the initial piece of legislation was sanctioned. The imposition of the provincial curriculum leaves little freedom for self-directed learning. By curtailing the right of children to actively participate in their learning journey, the government missed a great opportunity to further build a democratic culture across generations.

The heart of the homeschooling debate has traditionally been and is still mostly about who should control children's educative labour: the state or the parents. In other words, the issue is about how to balance the child's right for instruction on one hand and parental right to decide on their children's education on the other. The opinions are polarized on each side of the spectrum. Whether it is the state or parent that controls children's labour, it reduces the child to a subordinate status, of dispossession and alienation. This subordination reinforces the childism and paternalism that has led historically to much abuse at the hands of either the state or the family.

The novelty with the self-directed movement in education is that it places children's right to participation in their learning experience, while challenging simultaneously, by its very existence, the pressure of homogenization of the state and the traditional distribution of power within the patriarchal family.

The child's right to participation is protected by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) and ratified by all countries except three in 1990. As stipulated by article 12 of the Convention, children have the right to participate in all decisions that will have a direct impact on their lives and their point of view must be taken into consideration. Children's right to participation is a core principle of the convention. The intent underlying the principles was that children should be involved in all the public policies concerning them. And although

children's voices are heard when it comes to family law over custody battles, it is striking to the extent to which children have little voice when it comes to educational matters. Among the difficulties in implementing article 12 of the United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child, and to further the cause of children's emancipation, is the lack of political will to take the question seriously (Stern, 2006). This becomes most evident when countries who have a poor record for compliance with human and civil rights toward their adult population did not have difficulty, in theory, granting the same rights to children. As Stern (2006) stresses and even goes as far as to claim that "children's rights are not accorded the same respect as the human rights of other groups—if they are considered to be human rights at all" (p. 256). As long as we deny children's right to participation, or that it remains subordinated to the right of development or protection, there are few chances than to democratize society beyond the current liberal consensus. The idealized childhood and the political rhetoric that fuels this paternalistic caring narrative make it difficult to question adult privileges. There is a wide difference between the rhetorical use of children's right to participation and its implementation in practice which is the greatest obstacle to engaging seriously in the question.

In this regard, it is crucial to challenge adult attitudes toward children. It has been argued that childism, with paternalism as its underlying principle, is part of the core cultural and political beliefs that prevent reaching an egalitarian society. This paternalism is reproduced to a great extent through the narrow funnel of the liberal institution of childhood. Analyzing the connection between the institution of childhood and other forms of oppression and domination is a fertile ground yet to be fully explored within critical theory. It constitutes a powerful mechanism to legitimize and internalize a paternalist *ethos* that sanctions the belief of the superiority of some over others. Many have internalized the dehumanizing dimensions of

paternalism and childism, just as women have internalized sexism, or racialized groups have internalized racism. As Young-Bruehl (2012) stresses:

> The histories of people of color, women, and homosexuals in overcoming the prejudices against them have demonstrated that social change is achieved in stages. It requires, first, understanding gained by the victims of the ideas and institutions that say to them, "You are naturally inferior." (p. 267)

It is crucial to overcome the conscious and unconscious justifications behind the prejudices (Young-Bruehl, 2012, p. 267). This is an arduous task because the institutions acting in *loco parentis* reinforce this prejudice against children. A critical awareness is certainly the first step toward an emancipating educative and parenting paradigm. The increased sensibility in the last generations towards validating children's experience has led to an increased awareness of the damaging and demeaning parenting practices of earlier generations. Children's capacity to make informed choices is more recognized and family life nowadays makes room for more democratic deliberations and consensus making processes. Yet, paternalism and its *ethos* of subordination pervade the liberal institution of childhood, and with its stronghold on the educative system, recreate society's future generations in its image. It is unfortunate that it is so difficult to entertain children's right to participation as a serious political issue. The prospect of radical social transformation can only succeed through the development of a democratic culture, based on respect, care, empathy, and human needs instead of competition, efficiency, and productivity. The whole purpose is not to make schools more performant according to capitalist logic but more human. As two educative thinkers summarize it:

> What is needed is an educational revolution that sees children not as pawns and cogs in a machine, but as holistic human beings capable of exercising their agency in substantive

> ways. Children are among the last acceptably oppressed group in the world that we live in and this unacceptable state needs to be aggressively challenged. (Ricci & Pritscher, 2015, p. 197)

There is a progressive transformation of the parenting paradigm, but more research is needed to establish the prospect of self-directed education. Most of the alternative schools that I am aware of are the result of the parent's resourcefulness and efforts. It is, therefore, a good starting point to study unschooling families but also the self-directed centers and democratic schools that apply the principles of respect and autonomy at the center of their learning journey.

Beyond that, it will all depend on the political will for change to alter the rules of the game. Participation is about giving and sharing power and making sure that all the voices are listened to. The more points of view that are taken into account, the richer democratic life will be. By giving real power to children, it is impossible to predict the outcomes as it is a democratic culture in the making, as both generations are being transformed through a form of democratic participation which is not expressed predominantly through its institution, but through its process. Self-directed learning is not a blueprint, it can only provide guiding principles that place trust, respect, and autonomy at its core of the adult–child relationship.

Forced schooling is so entrenched within capitalism and its political culture that I have little hope that it will change anytime soon. Unschooling, the self-directed learning movement and the homeschooling movement generally remain a marginal practice. The homeschooling movement is an irritant to the forced schooling system, and the self-directed branch its most caustic element. Although the homeschooling movement does not explicitly aim to challenge the status quo, its simple existence and practice force us to question many assumptions we have regarding children—what constitutes the best conditions for learning, and how society should

address this. The knowledge that such an option exists might be the best remedy to make school more conducive to human emancipation. The challenge to schools and the state's quasi-monopoly on the control of children's education is not taken lightly, especially when the pedagogical approaches challenge the state-sanctioned curriculum. As more parents and children embrace homeschooling in all its variations, either for improving their children's well-being, or to engage in educative activism, the pressure to conform is becoming stronger. As parents resist, the system is pushing families from a status of marginality to one of illegality.

The current mandatory system is facing a crisis of legitimacy. Its emphasis on social discipline, efficiency and the production of human capital might be ill-suited not only to prepare the younger generation to the global challenges to come but also incompatible with the needs for a diversified democracy. More and more parents and educators are coming to this conclusion, and it is interesting to see what the outcomes will be. Tinkering, experimenting, and thinking of alternatives to formal schooling is a fertile ground of possibilities for individuals and communities.

Social reformists of the 19th century quite rightly understood the transformative power of education. After all, a society's vision of the future is revealed most explicitly through the form of education it sanctions (Miller, 2008, p. 20). Education must be central to any transformative agenda towards social justice. If we want to harness the educative power for social transformation toward an egalitarian society, we must move beyond demanding increased investment in a system that reinforces the capitalist logic inherent to it. This is a discourse that is too prevalent within the left which embraces the myth of the common school. In other words, a well-funded educative system will do little toward social transformation if the main structures of inequality and of domination that it sanctions are not addressed and transformed.

The mandatory schooling system is quite resistant to change, and speculation about its future is a risky endeavour. The greatest tension that could precipitate its demise is the incapacity to resolve its contradictions, of the mismatch between what are the hopes of concerned parents and the results the system can deliver. Until it collapses from its contradictions, there is comfort in knowing that there would be an avant-garde by dedicated parents and educators that created networks, institutions, and political cultures of the organization. Those who have documented and gained expertise in democratic learning and parenting practices could constitute a basis on which to build a universally accessible, self-directed public education system. It is only by placing the recognition of children's full humanity and uniqueness at the heart of public education that this transformative agenda can be realized. Until then, educative activism within the unschooling/homeschooling movement remains alive and strong at the margins of the forced school system.

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