

*Children
and
Civil Society*

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Child Citizens?

Can children become full members of a civil society? Do they have the capacity to enjoy its rights of association and property, legal protection and citizens' powers to vote for representatives of their choice, in free and fair elections?

In countries otherwise as different as France, the United States and Japan, most people think not, for reasons that are woven firmly into the fabric of contemporary common sense definitions of civil society and childhood. Citizens are said to belong to a civil society and political community of common laws, and to share its entitlements and duties equally with other grown-ups. When Aristotle famously defined a citizen as any adult who can 'hold office', he invoked a powerful thought that still lives on: to be a citizen is to be the opposite of a powerless subject. To enjoy the status of a citizen is to engage freely and equally with others who are mature enough to act politically by exercising the power to define how to live together peacefully, to decide who should get what when and how. Seen in this way, citizenship is not just about fair and open legal decisions or democratic government or living as equals with other adult members of civil society. According to some old and venerable traditions of political thinking, citizenship is their condition of possibility.

Children - according to the same common-sense definition - are minors. Their ontogenesis is incomplete and so by definition they cannot be citizens who are full members of civil society. To speak of citizens is minimally to speak of beings equipped with the capacity to choose self-reflexively when navigating their daily courses of action through the institutions of civil society and government. Children do not choose to be born and at the beginning of their lives, by definition, they have no say in who is to parent them and which institutions, beginning with their household and its psychodynamics, are to guard over and mark their lives indelibly, forever. Consistent with this ascribed powerlessness, there is also the brute fact - it is said - that children are nowhere acknowledged as entitled to govern their own lives until well into their teenage

years. Hence the conclusion: children are children and only time and proper upbringing can bring them into the adult world of civil society and citizenship.

Viewed in this way, common sense thinking about children may be persuasive, but it nevertheless begs important descriptive and normative questions about their status and power within a civil society. Are children fated to be the temporary possession of adult-dominated institutions and policies? Since children are by definition beings that have not yet passed through the gates of adulthood, surely their childhood, and thus their unequal relationship with adults must be recognised and protected within any civil society? Or might it be that this unequal relationship between child subjects and adult citizens is unnecessary? Might young people deserve to be considered as worthy of greater equality of treatment, perhaps even as the formal equals of grown-ups, so that their dignity is protected? Could it be that actually existing civil societies are confronted with a new challenge: how to create spaces for children considered as citizens?

Among the interesting things about the subject of childhood is that such questions have arisen only in contexts that have been touched by modern hands. Put simply, contingent categories like 'childhood' and 'children' belong to the universe of thinking and acting structured by institutional complexes that we have come to call civil society, representative government and democracy. Once upon a time, the idea of childhood as a special and alterable phase of life simply didn't exist. Every culture of course had its views about living beings in their early years of life. The temptation was always strong to think of them as natural creatures - as naturally innocent, or as naturally depraved, or as naturally expendable, as for instance was the custom in classical Greece, where sickly youth were commonly left in the countryside to die of exposure, or their healthy counterparts were sold into slavery, especially if a family needed money. This belief in the absolute primacy of nature had the effect of suppressing awareness of either the continuities or discontinuities in the transition between infancy and adulthood. In medieval Europe, for example, around the age of five or six or seven, the young were commonly deemed no

longer in need of constant attention from their mothers and were jettisoned into the workaday world of adults. Young people were viewed simply as miniature adults - a picture reinforced by the male-centred 'ages of man' imagery inherited from classical antiquity, and by beliefs in the four humours, and by the parallels that were often drawn between the stages of life and the behaviour of the seven planets.

All this changed with the re-invention and geographic spread of the language and institutions of civil society and representative government. The sixteenth century was a particularly decisive watershed in this respect. The causal links between the fate of young people and the push for constitutional government underpinned by vibrant civil societies oiled by commerce and exchange and Christian norms of conjugal duty were certainly complicated, but the clear consequence was that modern civil societies became associated with the nurturing of a new category of beings called 'children'. This 'discovery' of childhood (the contention of the classic study by Philippe Ariès, *L'Enfant et la vie familiale sous l'ancien régime* [1960], translated into English as *Centuries of Childhood* [1962]) was in fact no 'discovery' of a pre-existing social terrain. The simile is wrong: childhood was rather an invention of certain social groups – middle class moralists, lawyers, priests, men of property and philanthropists – who felt the ground of certainty shaking under their feet, who sensed that the abandonment of old patterns of authority and the push for self-government required the definition and special treatment of young people, to shape their earliest emotional experiences so that they could be prepared for the shock of adult citizenship.

The Great Quarantine

The task of pinning down the history of childhood and children is not easy, initially because there is an obvious problem of sources. In their diaries, letters and autobiographies, members of the literate and educated elites and upwardly mobile social groups have left behind traces of their thoughts and feelings about children; by contrast, the ways in which the vast majority of people regarded

their children, peasants and rural and urban labourers for instance, have passed into oblivion.

The surviving evidence suggests however that bourgeois Protestant circles clustered around figures like Luther and the English Puritans were among the first to express sustained interest in the young and their proper place in an emergent civil society.¹ The contributions of these rising lower middle class believers to the invention of childhood sometime during the sixteenth century was initially justified using many different and conflicting labels – Christian duty, civility, civilization, civil society, the commonwealth, the order of liberty, the republic, education – but the quarantining effects linked to these epithets were pronounced, and historically speaking without precedent. Young people were made to pay a high price. Defined by groups within civil society, children were positioned outside and underneath civil society. The resulting dualism of children and civil society placed children of all classes in the position of being powerless objects of attention by civil society actors and institutions. Reminded constantly of mental and bodily and height differences by adults who called them ‘kids’ - the same slang word first used in the seventeenth century to describe young goats, an animal thought to be naturally stupid and renowned for its insatiable appetite - children were subjected for the first time to highly invasive forms of arbitrary power. Fine talk of civility and civilisation aside, children in fact resembled slaves fit for incarceration within the walls of families, or foundling homes. William Blackstone’s lectures on the common law, given at Oxford in 1758, spoke revealingly of the family as ‘the empire of the father’. He reported that women were ‘entitled to no power, but only reverence and respect’; and that the absolute legal power of fathers over their (male) children ended only when they reached the age of twenty-one years, at which point the young male adult entered ‘the empire of reason’. Until that moment arrived, ‘the empire of the father continues even after his death; for he may by his will appoint a guardian to his children’, Blackstone added. ‘He may also delegate part of his parental authority, during his life, to the tutor or schoolmaster of his child; who is then in loco parentis, and has such a portion

of the power of the parent committed to his charge, viz. that of restraint and correction'.²

Under the impact of such thinking, the historical change in the lives of young people was dramatic. Children were no longer principally seen as incorrigible slaves of their wicked nature, brutish and devilish creatures tainted by the sin that began at the time of creation, and that was subsequently passed down from generation to generation (a view that lingered well into this period, and that was often associated with the theology of St Augustine). Young people were also no longer principally regarded as miniature adults whose simplicity, sweetness and drollery provided relaxation and (sexual) amusement for adults in their vicinity (a view represented in some seventeenth-century paintings that featured children dressed in their own distinctive clothes, with their own distinctive mannerisms). Young people instead became objects of adult definition, adult psychological interest and adult moral solicitude. They were viewed as creatures that stood half way between animals and adults - creatures that were capable of correction and instruction, and thus in need of confinement in families through special practices that gave them the special treatment sufficient to enable them to pass from the half-animal world of minors to the world of adults, replicating in a few short years the stages of civilization that human beings themselves had taken several millennia to achieve.³ The exceptions, such as ill-bred peasant scoundrels, the urban beggar children wearing ragged trousers, the pickpockets and scoundrels with snotty noses who somehow managed to slip through the nets of paternal supervision, were living proof of this new preoccupation with children. So too was the fascination with the figure of the *puer senex*, the rare male child prodigy who behaved from the beginning like an old man. Such freaks defined the rules of an age in which the young were deemed non-adults. Thomas Williams Malkin was a much-talked about example: born in 1795, he started his career at the age of three, proved himself to be an expert linguist at four, an outstanding philosopher at five, and then began reading the fathers of the Church at six, only to die of old age and excess at seven.⁴

So the invention of children and childhood went hand in hand with new strategies of control that on the surface of things had little to do with the norms and institutions of civil society or citizenship or representative democracy, as they would later be understood. If anything, certainly when measured in power terms, the new strategies of control were their antithesis, as evidenced by the rapid spread throughout eighteenth-century Europe of homes of correction for abandoned children. London's Foundling Hospital, established by Royal Charter in 1739, is today still often considered a shining example of a golden age of philanthropy, but for the children who found themselves confined within its solid brick walls life rather resembled a military camp. On entering the Hospital, children had their hair cut in the same style; they were issued with a standard uniform and given the same meagre diet, repeated weekly. Hunger and bullying and violent punishment were endemic; hard work and God-fearing obedience to adult superiors was expected; and the young inmates quickly discovered that every aspect of their existence was geared to their future role of dutiful and productive servants, artisans and soldiers.

Children considered 'legitimate' found that life within their own families bore a striking resemblance to that of 'bastard' foundlings. Respectable children were regarded as fresh clay in the hands of adult potters and dressed accordingly in civilising metaphors that suggested the primacy of nurture over nature. The Dutch humanist Desiderius Erasmus (1466-1536) spoke of the possibility of overcoming the 'monstrous bestiality' of the human condition by cultivating the 'quality of rawness and freshness' of children's minds. The famous English philosopher John Locke noted that he regarded the child for whose father he had written the 1693 treatise *Some Thoughts Concerning Education* 'only as white Paper, or Wax, to be moulded and fashioned as one pleases'. Standing behind these metaphors of bestiality, rawness and pliability were eager thoughts of power over the future: the presumption that the hands that rocked cradles would one day rule the world. Locke was quite clear about this. 'Of all the Men we meet with,' he wrote, 'Nine Parts of Ten are what they are, Good or Evil, useful or not, by their Education'.⁵

The popular methods backing this presumption varied through time and space, but they consistently supposed not only a deep consciousness of childhood - a strong will to brand young people with the name of 'child' - but also a deep desire to isolate children in order better to bend them to the will of their adult rulers. Printed advice came thick and fast. 'Sleep neither too little nor too much. Begin each day by blessing it in God's name and saying the Lord's Prayer. Thank God for keeping you through the night and ask his help for the new day. Greet your parents. Comb your hair and wash your face and hands', advised an early sixteenth century German manual on discipline (two centuries later, Byron was among those still complaining that children disliked washing and hence always smelled of bread and butter, or worse). Encouraging children to internalise social norms and to cultivate their sense of individual conscience were given top priority among the Dutch Protestants of the seventeenth century. From a republican perspective, Rousseau's *Émile, ou de l'éducation* (1762) developed similar thoughts. Though indebted to the quarantining imperative and its universe of presumptions, his manual of advice gave a radical twist to images of children. It was a forerunner of the view that childhood was a realm of purity and dynamic innocence subsequently lost to adults. *Émile* begins with the famous line: 'Everything is good as it leaves the hands of the Author of things, everything degenerates in the hands of man.' Then followed the advice: 'Respect childhood, leave nature to act for a long time before you get involved with acting in its place'.

The advice supposed that children were (potentially) creatures blessed with a depth of moral wisdom about the world that adults find hard to comprehend. From there it was just a short step towards the conclusion that children should be given more space outside civil society in which to develop their capacities, for instance through play with objects made available to them by adults. In the closing decades of the eighteenth century, the first hints of the child as player of games and consumer of commodities appeared. Parents were encouraged to tap into the emerging toy industry to occupy their children's attention by supplying them with marbles, dolls, tops, board games, jigsaw puzzles and model soldiers; by the middle of the nineteenth century, manufacturing centres such as the

Black Country in England and Nürnberg in Germany turned out huge quantities of cheap metal and wooden toys that even working-class households could afford to buy.

But during the age of the great quarantine, childhood was not all play. Hegel's image of the family, which belongs to the very end of this period, pictured the domestic as the 'first ethical root of the state', as a sphere of sensuous reciprocity, of harmony nourished by unadulterated love. The image was greatly idealised, as revealed by the systematic spread of rougher methods of crushing the wills and training up children to the standards of adulthood, backed by threats of force. The age of quarantined children was marked by great violence against them - in the name of their civilisation. The lingering belief in the innate depravity of children encouraged parents and guardians to pick up the rod so as not to spoil the child. Raw leather could be made to stretch; soft wax would take any impression; as the twig was bent, so would the tree be inclined, ran the common sayings of the new 'poisonous pedagogy'.⁶ There were children hanged for committing minor offences, such as rebelling against their parents. Whipping, beating, scolding and generally abusing children, so as to fling them into a state of fear, was widespread, through all social ranks. Not even toddlers were spared: the future seventeenth-century king Louis XIII was reportedly whipped by his nurse from the age of two (a fitting tribute to an age that believed in the aphorism, 'Woe to the kingdom whose king is a child'); and Susanna Wesley, the mother of Methodism and herself the twenty-fifth of 25 children, noted that from the age of one, at the latest, her own children were taught to fear the rod and to cry softly.

The Age of Welfare Regulation

There is no space here to detail the complex variety of challenges to the enslavement of children - for that is what it was - but striking is the fact that well into the nineteenth century the majority of children living in the Atlantic region managed in various ways to escape the worst effects of the quarantine process. There was tremendous resistance, most of it unorganised and 'private',

to the efforts of the middle class friends of civil society to define young people as children, then to forcibly isolate and civilise them. Material necessity, fear of starvation and infant mortality, and the simple imperative of survival, gripped the offspring of the peasantry and craftspeople and urban workers and vagrants. Young people were thus expected to grow up fast, to earn or steal a crust by working for money or kind, as well as to help their elders with tasks around the farm, or the workbench, or the home, if indeed there was a home.

Among the civilisers of the emergent civil societies of the Atlantic region, the ruffians and vagabonds who absconded were regarded as less than children, as in need of new forms of government and philanthropic regulation that more effectively 'policed' children, using more benevolent methods. 'Every person that frequents the out-streets of this city', declared a group of New York city reformers in 1824, 'must be forcibly struck with the ragged and uncleanly appearance, the vile language, and the idle and miserable habits of great numbers of children, most of whom are of an age suitable for schools, or for some useful employment.' The reformers added: 'The parents of these children, are, in all probability, too poor, or too degenerate, to provide them with clothing fit for them to be seen in at school; and to know not where to place them in order that they may find employment, or be better cared for.'⁷ By the middle of the nineteenth century, this new way of thinking flourished. The upshot was that legislators, Christian philanthropists, newspapermen, writers and public moralists imagined a better future for children. They questioned the use of violence and quarantine as means of reproducing childhood - and rejected the principle of dealing with recalcitrant children by humiliating them, sometimes by taking their lives.

We know from the reception afforded Charles Dickens's *Oliver Twist* (1838) that literature played a vital role in persuading publics of the urgent need to view children and childhood differently. Among the most powerful appeals to stop the wanton cruelty against children was the fictionalised autobiography by Jules Vallès, *L'Enfant* (1879). An open attack on the double standards of bourgeois culture, a plea for greater civility directed at young and old alike, the

novel was dedicated to ‘all those who were bored stiff at school or reduced to tears at home, who in childhood were bullied by their teachers or thrashed by their parents’. It featured a young boy, Jacques Vingtras, who suffered persistent scapegoating and violent abuse at the hands of a schoolteacher father and peasant mother who seem mainly interested in climbing social ladders. The boy’s mother is especially pleased to find divine authority for her sadistic impulses in the biblical injunction that sparing the rod spoils the child. So at home she gets on with the daily act of worship, all the while subjecting her young son to ingenious humiliations. He appears to internalise his mother’s zeal, and indeed he seems most at home and free of emotional suffering when he is receiving his regular sacrament of beatings and humiliations. He seems to enjoy being forced to eat onions that make him vomit. He apparently likes being battered black and blue. He obeys orders to wear trousers that are so rough and ill fitting that they draw blood. He willingly swallows his mother’s regular doses of penny-pinching public humiliation and his father’s attempts to have him incarcerated. So brutalised is the boy that he seems to pity those among his mates who are the victims of non-violent parental affection. He even feels unwell when his mother refrains from chastising him. ‘I’d give a great deal to get a clout - it makes my mother happy, it cheers her up; it’s like the flip of a wagtail or the dive of a duck.’ Or so things seem. Much of the action in *L’Enfant* is hideously farcical, so charged with emotional coldness and cruelty that the reader is encouraged to identify with the angry introspection of a misunderstood child, who eventually learns in subtle ways to escape his prison of punishment and to stand up to his parents, even to love them in time. Despite everything, the morally and physically abused child is in fact a model for others, an example of how to endure injustice, and how to use early moral intuitions to overcome it in the name of dignity and simple decency - against its self-appointed adult guardians. The young child’s conclusion even had political implications: ‘I’ll defend the Rights of Children in the same way others defend the Rights of Man’.⁸

Language like that sent reformers scurrying in all directions, to find new ways of rescuing children from violence, material deprivation and ill breeding - and

from their unduly short childhoods. The horrible condition of the lower class young was no longer seen simply as a fact of life; and young people in general were now considered capable of escaping their immaturity. For that to happen, they needed to be trained into obedient maturity, to see that one day they would become adults, and that until that day arrived, like young animals not yet ready to cope in the wide world, they had to be trained up into literacy, and socially useful practices. ‘The feebleness of infancy demands a continual protection’, noted Jeremy Bentham, who was among the first to express the new wisdom in the language of child welfare. ‘Everything must be done for an imperfect being, which as yet does nothing for itself. The complete development of its physical powers takes many years; that of its intellectual faculties is still slower.’ He added: ‘At a certain age, it has already strength and passions, without experience enough to regulate them. Too sensitive to present impulses, too negligent of the future, such a being must be kept under an authority more immediate than that of the laws.’⁹

The process of producing happier, literate, socially useful children through families, hospitals and foundling homes was presumed to take time. The period of childhood was consequently extended, and the new pedagogies and laws and government policies combined to usher in a second phase of childhood: an age of welfare regulation that demonstrated not only that there was no such fixed condition called childhood, but also that childhood could be a prelude to membership of a civil society and full citizenship exercised within a political community. The old spatial metaphors that had defined childhood as subservience were shattered. New spatial metaphors appeared. Children were still reckoned to live outside of civil society, beyond its margins; but from hereon they were supposed no longer to stand beneath its structures, as in the age of the great quarantine. Children were regarded instead as positioned alongside and just outside its boundaries - as proto-adults who were capable of entering into its dynamics, as labourers, servants, owners of property, civil administrators and military and naval men, and as citizens.

How did the change come about? The age of welfare regulation was inaugurated and subsequently driven by many forces, including the advent of public inoculation against smallpox and other fatal diseases; public outcries against cruel employers and the trans-Atlantic opposition to slavery; new claims about the benefits of public education, including teaching children to read and write; and the dramatic reduction of fertility rates, of the kind that first happened in the United States and France. The shrinking numbers of young people in these countries was triggered by a change of expectations unleashed by their revolutions against absolutism. Dreams of material improvement, equality and liberty spread rapidly through the Atlantic region. It soon became something of a laboratory where young people were rescued from violence, over-working and ill breeding by philanthropic and state intervention in households, especially the homes of the poor scum that comprised the majority of the population. Among the vital champions of such intervention were children's home improvement societies, of the kind that flourished in nineteenth-century America. Rooted in civil society and fostered originally by the Protestant churches, middle class bodies like the New York Children's Aid Society (founded in 1853 by Charles Loring) and the Boston Children's Aid Society (founded in 1860) specialised in the placement of poor, neglected and orphaned children in farms and small towns - and did much to popularise new methods of care for children that were said to be firmly in their best interests, not merely the interests of adults.

The resultant of these various trends had vast social effects. Young people were gradually removed from the official labour market, sub-categorized, compulsorily educated, required by law and social pressure to spend a growing proportion of their lives in the publicly regulated institutions of childhood, alongside civil society. Many striking paradoxes marked the era of welfare regulation. In an age when children were still poor people's riches, children, in the name of civil society, were forcibly removed from its labour markets. Formally excluded from involvement in the market structures of civil society, children were increasingly housed in its schools. Regarded as beings that were not yet capable of responsibly shifting for themselves, children who violated

social standards, for example by committing a crime, suddenly found themselves treated – and punished – as if they were adults. Public muddle about the status and powers of children was commonplace during this period. It was certainly stained by the juices of paternalism: while there was much talk of ‘care’ and ‘improvement’ in connection with civil society, representative government and democracy, children were regarded as objects of welfare administration, as the aim and effect of top-down policies designed to minimise violence and humiliation, to prepare them for their discharge into adult life. A case in point, at the end of the nineteenth century, was the rise of the ‘child savers’ in the United States – reform-minded intellectuals, professionals and organisations who were rhetorically committed to ‘protecting’ children from themselves, and from the ‘delinquency’ that was said to be produced by the physical and moral dangers of an increasingly industrialised and urban society.

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Especially in the field of government, the building of pioneering systems of welfare protection was often slow, in no small measure because they triggered bitter conflict and resistance. In Britain, for example, the 1802 Health and Morals of Apprentices Act limited the hours worked by children in textile mills to 12 per day; and the 1833 Factory Act prohibited the employment of children under the age of 9. But it was not until the passing of the 1880 Education Act that schooling became compulsory for children aged between 5 and 10 - and not until 1900 that the school leaving age was raised to 14 years, so effectively removing younger people from the vagaries of labour markets. The American case equally highlights the drawn-out difficulties that frustrated welfare reformers. In 1916, a Democratic Congress passed the first child labour law (known as the Keating-Owen Child Labor Act) in the country’s history by substantial majorities. Its proponents considered the legislative victory a triumph, and with good reason. Signed into law by President Woodrow Wilson, it condemned the perceived evils of child labour by prohibiting the sale in interstate commerce of goods manufactured by children. But two years later, in a cliffhanging judgement, the Supreme Court held the law to be unconstitutional. Within eight months of that judgement, a newly elected,

Republican-dominated Congress passed another child labour law, again by a sizeable margin. The Supreme Court dug in its heels, and three years later it rejected the law as unconstitutional by a margin of 8-1. Congress took its revenge; it ensured that judicial obstruction was to produce a much bigger, unintended effect. In 1924, Congress introduced a constitutional amendment. It passed through the House and Senate by big margins. The issue of protecting children against exploitative employers then spread to the state legislatures. By 1938, twenty-eight states with a clear majority of the country's population had passed the amendment. In that same year, Congress agreed the Fair Labor Standards Act, which contained provisions outlawing child labour. By 1942 - half a lifetime after the pioneering legislation - the cause in favour of children was finally upheld by the Supreme Court.¹¹

Efforts to abolish child labour formed part of a much bigger shift, a great historical transformation of the definition and treatment of children. Government and philanthropic intervention into the world of childhood had not merely the effect of lengthening the time young people spent as minors; it triggered a paradigm change in how they were regarded by others. Mental and physical violence directed at young people was increasingly viewed as illegitimate. Child poverty was seen to be unnecessary. All children were said to be capable of literacy and in need of a certain level of material and spiritual wellbeing; as fragile beings, they were thought to be deserving of adult feelings of compassion and mercy. The history of legislation covering compulsory schooling exemplifies the mood change. Consider again the case of Britain, where governments became involved for the first time with the schooling of children, in 1833, with an education grant of £20,000. The first Education Act (which conceived education as neither compulsory nor free) did not reach the Statute Books until 1870; only in 1876, with Sandon's Education Act, did government stand behind efforts to encourage as many children as possible to attend schools, and to make their parents responsible for ensuring that they received basic instruction. In 1891, the Fee Grant Act finally made elementary education free of charge – at which point, government effectively acknowledged that all adult members of the society had a responsibility for the youngest

generation, who were from hereon presumed to be capable of leaving the world of childhood to become adult citizens capable of satisfying their duties, but also blessed with entitlements, including the rights to live and work and organise within a civil society protected by the casting of votes in elections.

The Coming Enfranchisement

The most recent phase of childhood - let us call it the age of the child citizen - is one in which the principle that children are capable of living within civil societies, and that they are honorary citizens, serves as both a rallying point for many organisations, networks and groups, and as the focus of conduct and policymaking in the fields of government, law and civil society. Although the emancipation of children as full citizens is bitterly contested - there is plenty of resistance from government administrators, paediatricians, social workers, nurses, day care centre employees, school teachers and child therapists - there are also many indications that the release of children from bondage, into civil society and its political and legal entitlements, is now under way. The old dogmas of quarantine and welfare regulation are crumbling; it is as if civil societies and governments have decided that they cannot live with the incivility that they formerly inflicted on children. The consequence is not only that the dualism between children and civil society becomes blurred in many people's minds; the power-ridden division between child and adult becomes questionable, and is publicly questioned, with politically unsettling effects.¹²

Although unstable, self-contradictory and by no means fully consolidated, the age of the child citizen, roughly speaking, had its beginnings in the years immediately following the end of World War Two. It is true that the changes affecting the definition and treatment of children since that time have older roots. Not to be underestimated are the long-term boomerang effects, the unintended consequences, of the two earlier phases of childhood. The quarantine of children, for instance, presupposed that there was no such thing as the innocence of childhood. Much later, it also stimulated awareness that the cruel treatment of children was incompatible with the values and rules of a civil

society. The age of welfare regulation, with its talk of ‘care’ and ‘the best interest of the child’, similarly produced allergic reactions to the condescension of children. Both epochs subsequently prompted distinctions to be drawn between biological ‘time’ and ‘social’ time, so that, for example, the biological immaturity of children is today routinely distinguished from the many different ways in which that immaturity can be symbolically understood, and made publicly meaningful and institutionally effective.

If the age of the child citizen is the unintended consequence of two earlier historical epochs, then it also has more immediate roots in the efforts of civil society campaigners, professional experts, governments and businesses to do something about the powerlessness of minors induced by the earlier history of childhood. Thanks to their efforts, which are not always altruistic, the conditions in which children live their lives are coming to be seen as contingent, as therefore capable of improvement. The subjection of children comes to seem strange. The task of vindicating their rights to live well finds its way onto political agendas. Once presumed to be the section of society best suited to the rod, creatures that were little and prone to misbehaviour, children nowadays find themselves at the centre of policy disputes and political fights. Some of them also find a voice of their own; through youth parliaments, children’s forums and other bodies, they are heard and come to expect to be listened to by others.

The contemporary politicisation of childhood is driven by a wide variety of forces. Summarised in the briefest way, the most important trends include:

- *the twentieth-century assault on the patriarchal family*. The contemporary retreat of the patriarchal family, especially in the Atlantic region, is not the result of what some structural-functional sociologists blandly call ‘modernization’. Two global wars, the Russian and Chinese Revolutions, the political victories of the suffragettes, the construction of welfare states, new labour market obligations and opportunities for women and, most recently, neo-feminist movements have had the combined effect of weakening patriarchy

on a scale never before witnessed in such a short time.¹³ In the Atlantic region, the changes have been a mixed blessing for children. The early death of infants has radically declined in tandem with a comparative decline of the numbers of children. That has meant better conditions of life for many children, including their cherishing as children (the matter-of-factness with which earlier generations handled high infant mortality rates is almost unimaginable to most people today). But for some children, life has come to be plagued by such factors as fatherly neglect, pauperisation and (increasingly reported) domestic violence. The continuing wide gap between women's legal equality with men and the fact that on average in OECD countries women enjoy not much more than half (55-60 per cent) the wealth and income of men is not to the general advantage of children. The point is that while the breakdown and decline of patriarchal families has not led automatically to the improvement of the lives of children, their actual living conditions are nevertheless changing fast.

•*the development of government and civil society schemes in support of the principle that children, considered as young citizens, have the right to certain universal entitlements.* Free dental and health care and schooling schemes have become commonplace, but there are signs on the political horizon of more radical schemes, such as plans for the provision of basic income to children as citizens. The former US Treasury Secretary, Paul O'Neill, championed federal government proposals for opening an investment saving account in the name of every child at her or his birth, to place a specified sum of several thousand dollars into the account at every birthday until the age of 18, with the accumulated funds then allowed to grow at a compounded rate until the individual reaches retirement age. The proposal has had some effect. Legislation to establish more modest Kids Accounts - in a society in which up to 20 percent of households have no bank account - has reached Congress; at state level, experiments are under way to create children's accounts through Cradle to College Commissions, supported by banks, colleges, businesses and foundations; and the SEED Initiative, sponsored by the Ford Foundation and other civil society bodies, is so far the most intensive effort to invest in children of different ages and family incomes by providing an initial deposit matched by

family contributions, over a four-year period. In Britain there is a more ambitious scheme already in operation: the Child Trust Fund, under whose rules each child born on or after September 2002 receives a voucher of at least £250, rising to £500 for poorer families, then an additional payment of the same order when they reach 7 years, the amount paid into a special cash or stock-market based account, which cannot be touched by the young person until she or he reaches 18.

- *changes in the field of civil and family law.* These changes are dramatically transforming the jurisprudential status of children. There is growing agreement that law must make the child's needs paramount; that there is an unquestioned right of (foster or step-) parents to raise their children as they see fit, free of government intrusion; but that in cases of neglect, maltreatment and abandonment, or in circumstances where adults themselves are unable to reach agreement and are forced to resort to legal processes, the role of the courts is to take the side of the child, in support of their needs, in order that they can become a person living in dignity, and capable of becoming an adequate parent for children of the future.¹⁴ Consider just three statutes in Britain during the past several decades: (a) the 1984 Appeal Court ruling in favour of Gillick, a ruling that established the principle that in the absence of an express statutory rule, all parental authority 'yields to the child's right to make his [sic] own decisions when he reaches a sufficient understanding and intelligence to be capable of making up his own mind on the matter requiring decision'; (b) the 1991 Age of Legal Capacity (Scotland) Act, which established that young people have full (or 'active') legal capacity at 16 years, and that although the courts can set aside certain transactions as 'prejudicial' (like buying a computer or a bike), a child aged 12 or over can make a will, be entitled to consent or not to an adoption order; the same Act also declared that a child of any age has 'passive capacity', for example, the right to own heritable and moveable property; and the Act had the effect of replacing the term 'minor' with 'age 16' in certain statutes; (c) the 1995 Children (Scotland) Act which established that any child under 16 years, if s/he has sufficient understanding of the nature and

consequences of the proceedings, now has legal capacity to instruct a solicitor in connection with any civil matter.

- *the rapid growth of power-scrutinising organisations and networks dedicated to the improvement of young people's lives.* Many monitoring bodies concerned with children are rooted in civil society, within state borders. Well-known examples include Action on Rights for Children, ChilOut (Children Out of Detention) and the Child Welfare League of Canada. Some child-monitoring initiatives operate across borders, often inspired by the 1989 UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, whose clauses specify the entitlements of all young people under 18 years of age, or at least until the age of majority, if that comes earlier. Examples of cross-border social initiatives include Plan International; End Child Prostitution, Pornography and Trafficking; and the Campaign for Universal Birth Registration, which takes its cue from Article 7 of the UN Convention on the Rights of a Child, in support of the entitlement of each and every child to enjoy a legal identity (each year an estimated 48 million children are born without such an identity). What is striking about most or all of these power-monitoring initiatives is their rejection of the political language associated with the age of welfare regulation. Instead of condescending descriptions of children as frail and vulnerable creatures in need of protection and compassion, they speak firmly of the rights of children to enjoy their rights. Acts of preying upon children - including paedophilia - are deemed unjustified abuse.

- *histories of childhood.* Guided by the work of Philippe Ariès and others, scholars from several disciplines have tried to show, for the first time and often with surprising effect, the varying spatial and temporal ways in which people and institutions have defined childhood, and how children themselves experience childhood as a particular phase of their lives. Such research has stimulated awareness that our childhood is not simply a bundle of formative experiences that we forget or remember; it forces recognition that the way we think about childhood itself has a history. The new histories have definite relativising effects on the understanding of children – effects that have been compounded by the growing public impact of various species of psychoanalysis

and child therapy. In spite of many in-house disagreements, the science and art of child development has emphasised that the experiences of adulthood are permanently linked to the formative episodes of childhood. Freud's famous observation that a child suckling at his or her mother's breast is the prototype of every relation of love serves as a clue to the bigger point - one that becomes obvious to those who think about it - that childhood and adulthood operate within the same spectrum; that at any moment an individual's life is propelled into the future by the repetition of past (sexual and emotional) experiences that are more or less recognised, evaded or unwittingly consummated. Seen in this way, it is a brute fact that all adults were once children, but how exactly childhood works within adults, and what significance it has for them, is a 'contingent fact', a matter for adults themselves to recognise and to act upon. Put differently: children are equipped with the strong wish to grow up, to become like adults, but adults are forever (like) children. 'A life', Adam Phillips explains, is 'an idiosyncratic repertoire of repetitions'.¹⁵

- *children's literature*. In the burgeoning literature by or about children, young people are now considered, like adults, as readers with tastes and powers to set trends.¹⁶ The age of the child citizen witnesses the advent of a huge global children's book industry; well-publicised listed ratings of children's books, featuring many different sub-genres; and the popularity of Roald Dahl, Jacqueline Wilson (the most borrowed author in Britain's libraries) and other authors who write explicitly in defence of the democratic principle that children are at least the equals of adults. There are as well huge-selling works that are now widely considered 'children's classics', like Astrid Lindgren's *Pippi Longstocking* series, Antoine de Saint Exupéry's *The Little Prince*, E.B. White's *Charlotte's Web*, as well as 'blockbuster' works, like thirteen-year-old Anne Frank's diaries, which contain the following kinds of entries: 'Monday 28th September 1942...I think it's odd that grown-ups quarrel so easily and so often and about such petty matters. Up till now I always thought bickering was just something children did and that they outgrew it. Of course, there's sometimes a reason to have a "real" quarrel, but the verbal exchanges that take place here are just plain bickering. I should be used to the fact that these squabbles are

daily occurrences, but I'm not and never will be as long as I'm the subject of nearly every discussion. (They refer to these as "discussions" instead of "quarrels", but Germans don't know the difference!) They criticize everything, and I mean everything, about me: my behaviour, my personality, my manners; every inch of me, from head to toe and back again, is the subject of gossip and debate. Harsh words and shouts are constantly being flung at my head, though I'm absolutely not used to it. According to the powers that be, I'm supposed to grin and bear it. But I can't! I have no intention of taking their insults lying down. I'll show them that Anne Frank wasn't born yesterday. They'll sit up and take notice and keep their big mouths shut when I make them see that they ought to attend to their own manners instead of mine. How dare they behave like that! It's simply barbaric...'¹⁷

- *the self-creation of youth sub-culture*. Beginning during the 1950s, for the first time ever, there appeared new life styles for young people that quickly came to be called 'youth culture'. Defined by distinctive symbolic styles and tangible choices in matters such as clothing, slang, politics and music genres, the youth-based subculture offered participants membership and identities outside of those ascribed by family, work, school and other civil society institutions. The long-term effects of youth subculture remain controversial. Some observers interpret it as a ritualised resistance from below to dominant (bourgeois) culture; others claim that the subculture has made young people, whose hormones change earlier and faster than ever before, more worldly wise; still others insist that youth subculture has become so dominant that the worship of adolescence ensures many people now retain immature attitudes well into adulthood.¹⁸ Less controversial is the way youth subculture, in defiance of the old adage that old heads cannot be put on young shoulders, has powerfully interpellated children to think of themselves as members of a younger generation. Consider just one example from the early youth generation: 'Rock 'n Roll', a famous song written and performed in the early 1970s by Lou Reed, a louche, musically talented New Yorker with a drug habit, good connections and a large chip on his shoulder. Those who heard it performed live usually agreed that it was among the most sublime contributions

to music of that generation. Quite at odds both with Reed's cultivated talent for making himself permanently misunderstood through dark and brooding performances, its simple lyrics summarised one (imaginary) view of the history of the outbreak of youth culture: 'Jenny said, when she was just five years old/You know there's nothin' happening at all/You know my parents will be the death of us all/Two TV sets, two Cadillac cars...ain't help me nothin' at all...One fine morning, she heard on a New York station/She couldn't believe what she heard at all...Despite all the amputation/You could dance to a rock 'n' roll station/It was all right'.

- *the rise of the child consumer, and a politics of children's consumption.* Business corporations, especially in the field of communication media, show unprecedented interest in youthful outlets for their products. While the figure of the child as a participant in the world of commodities made its first appearance towards the end of the quarantine phase of childhood, and while children as buyers and consumers of toys, books, clothing and other commodities expanded considerably during the welfare phase of childhood, it was usually the spectre of childhood pauperisation that gripped the imaginations of contemporaries. During the age of the child citizen, by contrast, children have become the target of concerted advertising and marketing strategies that have proved to be as controversial as they have been profitable to manufacturers and retailers. On an unprecedented scale, children have been drawn fully into markets, where they are targeted by businesses keen to exploit whatever buying power they or their parents or guardians have. The whole process is however not quite the one-way street that some observers have supposed it to be. Those who worry that children will drown in an endless flood of choosing, buying and expending commodities have a point. But for all the claims that children are the victims of organised efforts to manufacture a future generation of dead-head consumers who will serve as the obedient slaves of a totalitarian consumer society of 'comfortable, smooth, reasonable, democratic unfreedom' (Herbert Marcuse), the terrain of children's consumption is now heavily contested. Many efforts to de-commodify young people's lives have begun: Jamie Oliver's media-

led assault on the British school lunch culture of turkey twizzlers, including his *Democracy Cookbook* (2006) initiative ‘for youth workers to help them engage young people in politics, show them what it means, how it works, and demonstrate the difference they can make with their vote’; campaigns against the use of Scooby-Doo, Bob the Builder, Shrek and other film and cartoon and celebrity characters to sell food stuffed with salt, fat and sugar to minors whose obesity rates are rising; and the enforcement of legal limits on advertising targeted at children. The unsustainability of present and predicted future patterns of high-intensity consumption is also prompting campaigns to highlight to children their long-term responsibilities as earthly bio-citizens.

- *initiatives to reduce the voting age for young people.* The early history of representative democracy was marked by the presumption that young people were entitled to become citizens with full voting rights only when they reached the age of 21 years; voting and office holding was sometimes confined to elected representatives who were even older (a practice that remains in countries such as Italy, where in Senate elections voters must be aged 25 years). Many adults today think such rules are set at about the right level. They are against reform, and say so openly. Their language bears striking parallels, in the history of representative democracy, to the rhetoric used by those who opposed the emancipation of slaves, or who resisted granting the vote to male workers, or women, or colonial subjects. Conservatives say that ‘kids’ lack ‘maturity’; their ability to think logically through an argument, to understand cause and effect, and to take responsibility for their own actions, is sub-standard, or so it is said. The claim is of course circular and true by definition: kids are naturally kids; maturity is thought to have no history, so that youth and politics will never mix. So it follows that teenagers, in their imprudence, will misuse the vote. At sixteen (say opponents) teenagers are negative and rebellious; they are more keen on making a statement than acting responsibly. Like hysterical suffragettes bent on dragging passions into politics, or ill-mannered nineteenth-century workers, young people are a danger unto themselves. The champions of voting reform contradict this way of thinking, with some success. The era of the child citizen unleashes pressures for reducing the voting age below 18. The

earliest successful moves to set the voting age at 16 began during the 1990s, at the municipal and state levels in Germany. In 2007, Austria became the first of the world's leading democracies to adopt a voting age of 16 for all purposes. Elsewhere, civil society campaigns pursue the same goal. Examples include groups like Article 12 in Scotland; Americans for a Society Free from Age Restrictions and Rock the Vote in the United States; and Germany's K.R.A.T.Z.A., a youth support network that stands for the abolition of all age limits for voting.

The Child Citizen?

The changes unleashed by these and other forces are arguably of major significance in the history of civil societies and modern representative democracy. The overall transition that is now under way in many richer countries is one that leads from a condition of childhood in which children were neither in nor of civil society, and were accordingly treated as mere subjects of adult's power, towards a world in which children are gradually coming to be seen as full members of civil society, and as citizens who are the equals of adults. Something like a de-colonisation of children and childhood is going on. No longer are young people regarded, for instance, as little animals in need of a good thrashing, or as delicate creatures that should be seen but not heard. Overweening adult presumptions are breaking down. In various fields of law and government and civil society, children are coming to be seen as thoughtful and sentient beings, as citizens who are entitled as of right to lives unblemished by fear and violence, happy and fulfilling lives unscarred by enforced labour, or the pressures of market consumption, or the prejudiced bossing of those who have already reached the age of so-called majority. The old presumption that the physical immaturity of children consigns them of necessity to generalised immaturity is crumbling. Just as the physical 'disabilities' of groups once referred to in derogatory ways as 'the crippled' and 'the old' are now seen as needing compensation, so that 'the disabled' and 'the elderly' can live their lives in dignity, in the sunshine of respect from others, so the biological facts of physical immaturity of children are seen increasingly to

be detachable from questions about how, in social and political ways, this so-called immaturity is to be compensated in ways that are meaningful and satisfying to children themselves. Reminders are served that immaturity means something positive: far from connoting inertness or mere lack or the inability to shift for oneself in the world, it signifies the positive power of children to act meaningfully and in dignity - to live, play, work, shed tears, love and ponder things in peace and quiet, just as grown-ups do.

Enfranchisement by stealth: that is one way of describing the long-term trajectory that makes children living in various parts of the globe the beneficiaries of policies and support that win them greater dignity and respect and freedom. Symptomatic of the long-term enfranchisement is the way that the period of so-called minority is subjected to increasingly anomalous patterns of definition, duty and entitlement. In today's Britain, for instance, young people can vote at 18; but at sixteen, they can pilot a glider, sleep together, marry (without parental consent in Scotland) and have children. In Scotland, sixteen year olds can bring an action for aliment - or even when they are under 16, so long as they display the capacity to instruct a solicitor. All sixteen year olds can be independently domiciled and give their consent to surgical, medical and dental treatment; they can be company directors, or be tried by jury in Crown Court and locked up, or change their name by deed poll, or leave school. Under the 1991 Child Support Act, whose central legal concept is the 'qualifying child', a person ceases to be a child at 16. Young men (women have to wait another year) can even join the armed forces.

Anomalous definitions of childhood are symptomatic of the democratisation of childhood. We have entered times in which its fields come to be ploughed by deep political controversies; on a scale never before seen, the experience of childhood comes widely to be seen as contingent. That results in a widening repertoire of images and interpretations of childhood; monistic presumptions about children's necessary servitude, or their bestiality, or their utility as young beasts of burden, or as angels, give way to a kaleidoscope of views about childhood and children. It might even be said that childhood is so pluralized

that childhood is no more. The spaces opened up for different definitions of the experience of minority even enable some children, for the first time, to win political and legal protection for their claims, and even to find a public voice, for instance through school councils, youth parliaments and children's forums.

There are admittedly mountains of prejudices and double-standards that still burden and spoil children's lives, but symptomatic of the trend towards their inclusion as citizens in civil society is the accelerating breakdown of philosophical confidence in the old practices of treating children as feral or fragile creatures. Suppositions that the fundamental power division between adult and child is rooted in factual differences are admittedly still alive today. They underpin recent proposals (in Germany and Italy and elsewhere) for extending a second vote to parents, who are understood as 'interested guardians' of the interests of their children. Starker versions of such thinking have old roots. The nineteenth-century English journalist James Fitzjames Stephen gave voice to the supposed differences when discussing the legal status of being a child. Although admitting that 'minority and majority are questions of degree, and the line that separates them is arbitrary', he blasted as meta-barbaric those who dared to raise questions about children's legal status. 'If children were regarded by law as the equals of adults, the result would be something infinitely worse than barbarism. It would involve a degree of cruelty to the young which can hardly be realised even in imagination. The proceeding, in short, would be so utterly monstrous and irrational that I suppose it never entered into the head of the wildest zealot for equality to propose it.'¹⁹

The old confidence exuded by Fitzjames Stephen and others of this period has been withering for some time. It shows every sign of withering away completely. In the age of the child citizen, there is growing awareness of the need for distinctions and discriminations that are much more subtle than thresholds – the 21st or 18th or 16th birthday – that seem utterly arbitrary, and misleadingly so, if only because they suppose that mature, sane, responsible adults appear magically, at an instant, like butterflies from the cocoon of childhood. The opening sequences in the passage from birth to adulthood to old

age (with which childhood shares more than a few passing resemblances) to death are not like that. Just like adults of any age, children enjoy well-developed capacities to feel and abhor pain. It is not true that the young feel no pain, or less pain, or that there is something like a rule that stipulates that the younger a child the less pain s/he 'naturally' feels, or remembers. Hence the campaigns, waged by groups such as War Child and Amnesty International, to highlight the hellish suffering experienced by child soldiers, whose numbers have reportedly swelled to more than 300,000 worldwide.

While children are certainly not adults in miniature, there are other deep continuities between the worlds of minority and majority. Those who have and/or know children also know that whatever their degree of self-centredness, their actions are always tempered by some measure of self-less concern for others, as well as a strongly imagined sense of self-respect. These are of course qualities shared with adults, some of whom in moments of honesty will admit that their own sense of self-respect is not only bound up with the concern for others, but that contact with children often has the effect of reminding adults that they can unlearn qualities that are sometimes better developed in children. 'Few grown-up persons', remarked John Dewey, 'retain all of the flexible and sensitive ability of children to vibrate sympathetically with the attitudes and doings of those about them. Inattention to physical things (going with incapacity to control them) is accompanied by a corresponding intensification of interest and attention as to the doings of people.'²⁰

Dewey's point prompts the vexed question of whether or not children know how to live - as citizens - in the big, wide world. It is often said, and common sense seems to dictate, that they know little or nothing, that lacking conceptions of how they should live, parents, guardians, teachers and other adults have no alternative but to teach the young by imposing their own standards upon minors. 'The child literally does not know how to live, and must be taught to do so', wrote John Plamenatz five decades ago. He drew from this the conclusion that since it has neither knowledge nor experience of the world, the child is incapable of making choices worthy of the name, and must therefore be

the object of alien rule. 'If it is not taught in one way, it will be taught in another; it feels the need to be influenced, to be guided, to be put on its feet morally and spiritually...We impose our standards on our children, not because our standards are better than theirs, but because they have none of their own.'²¹

From the point of view of the child citizen, there are several troubles with this view. Ignorance is not a monopoly of childhood; nor is inexperience or uncertainty about how to live in the world. The acknowledgement by adults that people do not know enough to navigate their way through the world - that they are humble creatures in need of humility and help from others - is in any case a fundamental democratic virtue.²² Moreover, the view that children are ignorant of the world, and are therefore incapable of dwelling responsibly on the (distant) consequences of their own actions, is again not a defect of minors; the history of adult struggles for and against self-government is splattered with ignorant fools and headstrong knaves. Finally, the view that children are ignorant and irresponsible, and that it is therefore 'in their own best interests' to be subjected to external controls, begs large questions about not only who defines their 'interests', but also which forms of control are most appropriate and legitimate - exactly the same questions that have proven to be the stuff of every known attempt to build civil society and democratic procedures and institutions. Rash ignorance and efforts to minimise its harmful effects are not specialities of the young. Governmental intervention into the affairs of adults for the stated purpose of minimising or preventing misguided acts that have harmful effects - think of John Stuart Mill's reasoned call for the regulation of soldiers who drink alcohol on the job, or of someone unwittingly about to swallow cyanide - are of course a feature of all known forms of government. What is distinctive and special about democracy, beginning with its assembly-based forms in the classical period, is that they may be seen as practical experiments in exactly the same art of naming and regulating their citizens' precipitant behaviour, but doing so by means that are subject to processes of public accountability and the public giving of consent.

And the future?

What are the probable long-term effects of the quiet revolution in favour of children's rights as citizens? How will it all end? It is far too early to guess, let alone to tell. All that can be said safely is that for two centuries, European theories of civil society have largely had deaf ears and closed eyes for children, instead priding themselves on thinking of civil society as an adults' affair, as a sphere of life higher in status than that of the family. Think of Hegel's treatment of domestic life in *Philosophie des Rechts*: the family is parochial, body-bound, oiled by sentiments of closeness, the proximity of adults concerned with the animal-like concerns of lust and procreation, the nurturing of uncivilised children, who are 'outside' of civil society and state or, more accurately, duty bound to behave as objects of transcendence, as preludes to the higher worlds of civil society and the state.

It is time to abandon this kind of thinking, which in practical terms has been rendered obsolete and (from a strategic and normative perspective) is now better described as an uncivilized remnant of the early nineteenth century. It was the eighteenth-century wit Nicolas de Chamfort who remarked that the best index of the degree of civility of any society is the way it treats women. That aphorism remains true, but it needs to be supplemented with another: the quality of life within any actually civil society is best measured by the way it treats its young people, who are after all one key to the doors of the future of all government and society. It follows from this maxim that there is today an urgent need to do something about the lingering condescension and disempowerment of children - beginning with such elementary reforms as the campaign for universal registration; the strengthening of the Gillick criteria in courts of law; the prohibition of child trafficking and solitary confinement and forcible strip searching of young offenders; and the reduction of the age at which young people can vote for representatives. The current jump in the levels of child poverty - documented by a recent world report on children's living conditions in rich countries²³ - must be reversed; that it can be achieved is suggested by the striking fact that given levels of child well-being are policy-

susceptible, and that there is no obvious relationship between child poverty and GDP per capita. The cluttering of children's lives with unnecessarily different and confusing thresholds of adulthood should be seen as a public problem; for the sake of their sense of self and dignity, and their learned ability to juggle and make sense of different situations, their domestic and wider societal lives should be better synchronised, not broken into fragments. All forms of cruelty and violence against children should be outlawed. So too should the outright victimisation of children by contingent and removable prejudices, many of them masquerading as generosity and benevolence. Energies must be invested in the creation of new mechanisms for enabling children publicly to represent their own interests. But the basic requirement for any or all this to happen is a switch of perception, a change of heart and mind, a willingness to see things differently: commencing with the recognition (as Tocqueville said of slavery in nineteenth-century America) that democracies that try to harbour the ships of servitude and injustice will find their shores battered by the gales of contempt for their hypocrisy. That rule certainly applies to children, who are no longer to be regarded simply as the citizens of the future. A new truth is out: children are now the measure of how all other citizens should be treated.

NOTES

¹ See John C. Sommerville, *The Discovery of Childhood in Puritan England* (Athens, Ga., 1992).

² Sir William Blackstone, 'Of Parent and Child', in *Commentaries on the Laws of England in Four Books*, 12th edition (London 1793), book 1, chapter 16, pp. 451-453.

³ See the illuminating observations of Norbert Elias on children and 'civility' in *The Civilizing Process. The History of Manners* (New York 1978), especially pp. 53-54, 73-74, 140-141, 168-177, 188-189, 203.

⁴ Benjamin Heath Malkin, *A Father's Memoirs of his Child* (London 1806).

⁵ John Locke, *Some Thoughts Concerning Education* edited John W. Yolton and Jean S. Yolton (Oxford 1989 [1693]), pp. 265, 83.

⁶ Alice Miller, *For Your Own Good. Hidden Cruelty in Child-Rearing and the Roots of Violence* (New York and London 1983), especially pp. 3-91.

⁷ *Documents Relative to the House of Refuge, Instituted by the Society for the Reformation of Juvenile Delinquents in the City of New York, in 1824* (New York 1832), p. 13.

⁸ Jules Vallès, *The Child* (London 2005), p. 327.

⁹ Jeremy Bentham, *Theory of Legislation* (Boston 1840), volume 1, p. 248.

¹⁰ Anthony M. Platt, *The Child Savers. The Invention of Delinquency* (Chicago and London 1969).

¹¹ Robert Dahl, *A Preface to Democratic Theory* (Chicago and London 1965), pp. 106-107

¹² Some accounts of this trend include John O'Neill, *Civic Capitalism: The State of Childhood* (Toronto 2004), especially pp. 101-109; Xiaobei Chen, 'The Birth of the Child Citizen', in Janine Brodie and Linda Trimble (eds.), *Reinventing Canada: Politics of the 21st Century* (Toronto 2003), pp. 189-202; and Urie Bronfenbrenner and Peter R. Neville, 'America's Children and Families: An International Perspective', in Sharon L. Kagan and Bernice Weissbourd (eds.), *Putting Families First: America's Family Support Movement and the Challenge of Change* (San Francisco 1994), pp. 3-27.

¹³ Göran Therborn, *Between Sex and Power. Family in the World 1900-2000* (London 2004).

¹⁴ Among the classic and most highly influential defence of these principles is Joseph Goldstein, Anna Freud and Albert J. Solnit, *Beyond the Best Interests of the Child* (New York and London, 1973).

¹⁵ Adam Phillips, 'Childhood Again', in *Equals* (New York 2002), p. 150.

¹⁶ Karin Lesnik-Oberstein, 'Defining Children's Literature and Childhood', in Peter Hunt (ed.), *International Companion Encyclopedia of Children's Literature* (London 1996), pp. 17-31.

¹⁷ Anne Frank, *The Diary of a Young Girl* (London and New York 2002), pp. 43-44.

¹⁸ Compare Stuart Hall and Tony Jefferson, *Resistance Through Rituals: Youth Subcultures in Post-war Britain* (London 1993); Steven Mintz, *Huck's Raft: A History of American Childhood* (Cambridge, Mass., 2004); and Marcel Danesi, *Forever Young: The 'Teen-Aging' of Modern Culture* (Toronto 2003).

¹⁹ James Fitzjames Stephen, *Liberty, Equality, Fraternity* (Cambridge and New York 1967), pp. 142, 193.

²⁰ John Dewey, *Democracy and Education* (New York 1925), pp. 51-52.

²¹ John Plamenatz, *On Alien Rule and Self-Government* (London 1960), pp. 23-24.

²² See my *The Life and Death of Democracy* (London, New York and Madrid, 2009).

²³ The United Nations Children's Fund, *Child Poverty in Perspective: An overview of child well-being in rich countries* (Florence 2007)