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IDEAL ADULTS, DEFICIENT CHILDREN: THE DISCOURSE ON THE CHILD IN
WESTERN PHILOSOPHY

by

Michael Dean Burroughs

A Dissertation

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ABSTRACT

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The child of Western philosophy is conceptualized in a two-fold manner: first, in the work of philosophers ranging from Plato to Rawls, the child is defined through a negation of the positive traits of the adult. The child is not-rational (as the adult is), not-moral (as the adult is), not-citizen (as the adult can be). In short, the child is conceptualized as the *non-adult*, lacking (or possessing in primitive form) the qualities of the adult. Second, given his deficient classification, the child is regarded as a *being-to-be-transformed*. The child must be corrected and become the adult prior to his inclusion in moral and political realms. This dual conceptualization of the child as a *deficient being* is informed by a correlative idealization of the adult as a rational, autonomous, moral and political agent. In relation to the ideal adult, the child—both in the canon and, ultimately, in the world—has been produced as a subjected being. Conceptualized and approached as a deficient being, the child is subjected to the corrective strategies of the adult and, further, to a deficient self-identification. In contesting the subjection of the child, I argue that the canonical uniformity between moral and political existence and adult existence must be deconstructed. It then becomes possible to reconsider moral and political existence apart from adulthood and *recognize*, perhaps for the first time, the child's moral and political possibilities. Philosophers—both in theory and practice—can begin to ask what children *can be* apart from their deficient classification and begin to *listen* for the *voices* of children in moral and political realms. In doing so, we begin to develop a new conception of the child and the moral and political existence of children.

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INTRODUCTION

This dissertation is a critical examination of the place of the child in Western philosophy. It is my contention that philosophers throughout the canon have offered impoverished analyses of the child, analyses that ultimately have had a detrimental impact on those persons classified as children. Upon cursory review of the canon one might think this project wrongheaded. After all, Plato (*Republic*, *Laws*) and Aristotle (*Nicomachean Ethics*, *Politics*) develop precise accounts of socialization and education for the child. Rousseau (*Emile*) and Kant (*On Education*) write entire treatises detailing forms of education and moral development for the child. Contemporary philosophers—including John Rawls (*A Theory of Justice*) and Tamar Schapiro (“What Is a Child?” and “Childhood and Personhood”)—have, to varying degrees, regarded discussions of education and political and moral development as significant for their own work. Thus, one might contend, to the extent these philosophers are discussing education *for* or development *of* the child, they must also devote substantial consideration to the child, the subject of education and development.

But herein lies the paradox of discussions of the child in Western philosophy—the child can be the focus of an entire treatise, a precise method of socialization, moral development, or education without ever being considered in his own right. That is, Western philosophers consistently fail to develop (or even recognize the need for) a *positive* conception of the child, one focusing on the child’s qualities and concerns *qua* child (apart from those of the adult).¹ Instead, the child is generally discussed in a two-

¹ A *positive* concept of the “child” presupposes some conception of “childhood,” or, the condition in which one is regarded as a child. Throughout this dissertation I will primarily focus on the child as conceptualized in Western philosophy, but this discussion necessarily crosses over

fold manner: first, the child is conceptualized in relation to the adult as the end of his development and measure of his moral and political status. In relation to the adult the child occupies a space of deficiency. Whether he is discussed in educational, moral or political realms, the child's conceptualization is generally obtained through a negation of the positive traits of the adult. The child is not-rational (as the adult is), not-moral (as the adult is), not-citizen (as the adult can be). In a word, the child is conceptualized as the *non-adult*, lacking (or possessing in primitive form) the qualities of the adult. Second, insofar as the child is not the adult, he is regarded as a *being-to-be-transformed*. If the child is an animalistic, appetitive being, lacking agency and the ability to act from choice with others, he is incapable of maintaining the moral and political traditions of the adult. Prior to his inclusion in moral and political realms of activity the adult must correct and reform the child. For this reason, the child is most often encountered in discussions of education and moral and political development. Only through precise plans of education and reform can the child shed his deficient nature and achieve the *telos* of human existence (adulthood).

Taken together, these conceptions of the child—as *non-adult* and *being-to-be-transformed*—yield the figure of the *deficient child* in Western philosophy. It is this conception of the child—as a deficient being, absent from moral and political realms of human activity—that is of primary concern in this dissertation. Although not uniform in its representation, I contend that the image of the deficient child is developed and

into conceptions of childhood. For example, in the history of Western philosophy the child is often identified as an animalistic being, classified in virtue of his condition of deficient reason, virtue and autonomy. It is one's (supposed or actual) inhabitation of this condition that provides for one's classification as a child. Thus, some conception of "childhood" (its qualities and differentiation from the condition of adulthood) is requisite for delimiting the figure of the "child." For more on the relationship between the concepts "child" and "childhood," see David Archard's *Children: Rights and Childhood* (London: Routledge, 1993), 21-28.

reinforced by philosophers throughout the Western philosophical canon. Insofar as this conception of the child is uncritically accepted (and remains unquestioned throughout Western society) those persons classified as children are subjected to an image of deficiency. Primarily understood as deficient beings, children are regarded as devoid of moral and political possibility and devalued in relation to the existence of the adult (that person who unquestionably *does* possess moral and political agency). Thus, although my primary concern is to reveal a particular *concept* of the child at play in the Western philosophical canon, I am also concerned with how this concept influences our understanding of and interactions with children.

In Chapter I, I focus on the emergence of the deficient child in the history of Western philosophy and the origins of the child's subjection to a deficient moral and political status. Examining the conception of the child in the work of Plato, Aristotle, Rousseau, and Kant, I argue that the child is primarily represented as the non-adult and being-to-be-transformed. In the work of Plato, Aristotle and Kant the child is primarily understood in reference to what he *is not* (the adult). For these figures, "child" is a secondary concept insofar as it is shaped in opposition to the "adult" as rational agent and moral and political being. For example, whereas Plato and Aristotle's paradigm adult is ruled by reason and capable of participation in the political affairs of the *polis*, their child is *not* rational, nor political. The child is ruled by passions and appetites and, in his deficiency, is regarded as a potential danger to the continuation of the traditions of the state. Kant's adult, too, is a rational agent and full member of moral and political realms. As a rational, moral and political actor he marks a sharp contrast with the child—an animalistic being, merely inhering (not participating) in the commonwealth and kingdom

of ends. For each of these philosophers, then, the child is a moral and political agent in waiting, a becoming that must learn to yield to the commands of reason or forever remain in the deficient state of the child. Given his deficiencies, the child is regarded as a being-to-be-transformed. If the child is conceptualized as a being close to nature and devoid of rational control, the adult's sole engagement with the child must center on transforming this animalistic being, steering him and his desires toward the virtuous ends of the adult and the condition of adulthood.

Rousseau's child is not approached as the Platonic, Aristotelian, or Kantian non-adult. That is, the child of *Emile* and *Discourse On the Origin of Inequality* is not conceptualized negatively in relation to the adult as political and moral agent of the *polis*. Rousseau's ideal adult—the natural or savage adult—is excellent in spite of (not because of) his place in the state and, thus, Rousseau's discussion of the child in relation to the adult necessarily shifts. But this is not to say that the child *qua* non-adult is absent from Rousseau's work. Rousseau is concerned with the child as one that must be confined to the *natural* state of being (innocent, pure, devoid of multifarious passions) as long as possible such that he can eventually become the savage adult. Thus, despite Rousseau's claims to the contrary, the child's identifying quality is still that of a *becoming*, one who must follow Rousseau's natural education in order to reach the end of the adult, noble savage. For this reason Rousseau's educational plan for the child (as discussed in *Emile*) is extremely controlling—every element of the child's existence is managed (and manipulated) by the educator to ensure his fulfillment of Rousseau's vision of the natural. No matter how well intentioned Rousseau is in his educational plan, then, the child remains a being-to-be-transformed. The child's value is located in his potential to fulfill

the plans of the adult or, in this case, Rousseau's vision of the natural state (as opposed to the moral and political commonwealth).

Having discussed the origins of the deficient child in the history of Western philosophy, in Chapter II I focus on the continuing representation of the child as a deficient being in contemporary Western philosophy (especially in liberal ethical and political thought). Rawls's *Theory* contains an approach to the child familiar to us from the work of Plato, Aristotle, and Kant in that the child continues to be identified in terms of deficiencies—his limited rationality, deficient agency and appetitive nature. These deficiencies are stark in contrast to the qualities of the Rawlsian adult—an ideally autonomous, rational and moral being. Insofar as the child is *not* the autonomous, rational, and moral adult, he represents a problem for Rawls's ideal state. The deficient child must become (or be transformed into) what he is *not*, the rational and autonomous adult. In similar fashion, Tamar Schapiro's work (which is heavily influenced by Kant and Rawls) provides a conception of the child as animalistic, devoid of will, and lacking a self. Childhood is classified as a deviant condition in relation to the ideal standard of liberal adulthood. Thus, for both Rawls and Schapiro the child continues to be defined in reference to a deficient state of being. The child is not the adult and the adult's primary concern in engaging with the child remains an effort to move him *from* an animalistic state of being *to* the ideality of adulthood.

As I contend at the conclusion of Chapter II, this image of the ideal adult (and the contrasting image of the deficient child) extends into psychological accounts of moral development in the work of Lawrence Kohlberg (*Essays on Moral Development*). A broad thread of discourse (what I call the *hegemony of adulthood*) runs throughout

philosophical and psychological conceptions of the child, presenting the child as a deficient being in relation to the adult as the *telos* of human existence. Adopting Kantian and Rawlsian accounts of agency, Kohlberg presents the liberal adult as the universal end point of moral evolution, a being separated from the child by an expanse of developmental stages. In conjunction with Kohlberg's naturalistic account of moral development, the philosophical account of the deficient child and the ideal adult (ostensibly) gains substantial strength. The normative distinctions between the adult and the child offered by Kant, Rawls and Schapiro (and the Western liberal philosophical tradition more generally) are now presented as objective, natural divisions in the human species. Given that the child has not realized adulthood—the biological and evaluative end of this developmental model—he is classified, both naturally and normatively, as a deficient being.

In my final chapter (Chapter III) I argue that the representation of the child as a deficient being (revealed throughout Chapter I and II) is problematic and argue for the reconsideration of the moral and political possibilities of the child (beyond mere deficiency in comparison to the adult). My argument is informed by Michel Foucault's discussion of the production of human subjects, such as the *sexually perverted child* and the *delinquent*. In *The History of Sexuality* and *Discipline and Punish* Foucault reveals how kinds of persons can be *produced* as subjected beings—subjected to the interests of others and to a deficient self-identification—within institutionalized networks of discourse, knowledge and power. Following Foucault, I argue that the deficient child of Western philosophy is a production of the Western philosophical canon. The image of the deficient child takes shape in relation to the moral, political and educational projects of

philosophers throughout the canon. The child is located at the origins of these plans, posited as a being possessed of numerous deficiencies that, when corrected, lead to the completion of the projects of the adult philosopher, legislator, and educator. Throughout the canon, then, we find a classification of the deficient child that is both malleable and instrumental, taking on the qualities—whether appetitive or irrational, innocent or pure—of greatest need to the philosopher in question.

Given his deficient classification, the child—as discussed in Western philosophy and, ultimately, as existing in the world—can be *subjected* to both the corrective strategies of the adult and the pathological identity of a deficient being. As noted above, philosophers from Plato to Rawls primarily represent the child as a being that must be corrected and reformed in order to take on the moral and political norms of the adult. The child must be subjected to strategies of correction through control, discipline, and moral and political development. But the child is also a subjected being insofar as he is always *spoken for* in moral and political realms of activity and excluded from identification with moral and political actors. In this sense, the deficient child of Western philosophy occupies a similar position to the morally immature woman as discussed in Carol Gilligan's *In a Different Voice*. Just as the woman of developmental psychology has been saddled with a demeaning image (as morally immature or undeveloped) and *spoken for* by the figure of the male, so, too, the child has been silenced in Western philosophy by the adult. The child has been isolated from any *recognition* as a being with moral and political concerns, instead confined to a demeaning identity (as irrational, appetitive, incapable of moral and political action, etc.). Ultimately, those classified as children are left to accept the deficient identity imposed upon them and, in virtue of their exclusion

from a moral and political community, often *do* lack the ability to engage in moral and political realms of activity.

In order to challenge the subjection of the child and, in turn, reconsider the moral and political possibilities of the child, I argue that the canonical uniformity between moral and political existence and adult existence must be deconstructed. The child is subjected to a deficient identity insofar as he is encountered as the non-adult, as deficient in relation to the ideal adult *qua* sole bearer of moral and political existence. But in taking a critical eye to the actual condition of adulthood, it becomes clear that the adult rarely (if ever) realizes the idealizations of the canon. The adult does not possess unhindered autonomy and independence in moral and political realms. Nor is the adult's moral and political development ever complete. If upon deconstructing the hegemony of adulthood it becomes clear that adults are not ideal beings, then adults cannot be attributed sole possession of (nor children denied) moral and political status on the basis of this assumption. It is clear, then, that reconsidering the moral and political possibilities of the child calls for an antecedent examination of the *ideality* of adult existence. In relation to this image of the ideal adult the child has been provided with little opportunity to be recognized as (and, I contend, to *be*) anything other than the subject of correction and reform. However, once we move away from this conception of the adult and moral and political existence, it becomes possible to reconsider the moral and political possibilities of other persons, including children. Free of the assumed equivalence between moral and political existence and adult existence, the moral and political possibilities of children becomes an open question. We can begin to ask what children *can be* apart from their

deficient classification and where philosophers have long *spoken for* children—namely, moral and political realms—we can instead begin to *listen* for the *voices* of children.

Following the work of figures such as Gareth Matthews (*Dialogues with Children* and *Philosophy and the Young Child*) and Robert Coles (*The Moral Life of Children*), I conclude this dissertation by illustrating ways that adults can create an open space for the child to assume an identity apart from deficiency. By *listening* to the voices of children (as opposed to focusing on strategies of correction or the canonical standards of adult moral and political agency) Matthews and Coles provide children with new moral, political, and philosophical possibilities. That is, they offer children recognition as beings capable of possessing (and acting on) moral, political, and philosophical concerns. In turn, the children with whom they work come to regard themselves as potential actors in moral, political, and philosophical realms of human activity. As in the work of Matthews and Coles, I contend that philosophers must begin to listen to the voices of children, both in theory and practice. In doing so, the canonical image of the deficient child is contested and those classified as children can gain recognition, perhaps for the first time, apart from their likeness or divergence from the condition of the adult.

CHAPTER I

THE NON-ADULT AND BEING-TO-BE-TRANSFORMED: THE DISCOURSE ON THE CHILD IN THE HISTORY OF WESTERN PHILOSOPHY

Introduction

When we turn to Plato's *Republic* and *Laws*, Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* and *Politics*, Rousseau's *Emile*, and Kant's *On Education* and *Metaphysics of Morals* we find that each text contains discussions of children. In this chapter I want to devote closer attention to discussions of the child in these texts.¹ That is to say, I want to examine the way the child is conceptualized in reference to the educational, political and moral concerns of the adult. The critical move I will make in this chapter does not turn on, say, whether Plato provides a praiseworthy account of early childhood education or whether Kant provides an empirically accurate account of child development. It is beyond debate that each of these philosophers (including Aristotle and Rousseau) offers recommendations for children—in the form of educational practices and social and moral development techniques—that strike the contemporary reader as wrongheaded.² Instead, my concern will be to, first, draw attention to the very fact that the child *is* a significant issue for each of these thinkers. The child appears as a “problem” of sorts that continually surfaces to occupy a space in their work. Second, I shall approach the “child” as taken up

¹ I focus on these texts for two reasons: First, these texts are of great significance in the Western philosophical canon. Many readers will already be familiar with these texts given their overall importance in the history of moral, political, and educational thought. Second (and as discussed in my Introduction), each of these texts contains focused discussions of the child. Given that I am interested in understanding dominant conceptions of the child in Western philosophy, these texts serve as an important point of departure.

² For example, the recommendations of Rousseau and Aristotle to habituate infants to cold water or Plato's recommendation to remove children from their biological families. See Rousseau's *Emile*, trans. Allan Bloom (New York: Basic Books, 1979), 60; Aristotle's *Politics*, trans. C. D. C. Reeve (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 1998), 223 (1336a10-15); Plato's *Republic*, trans. C. D. C. Reeve (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 2004), 237 (541a-b).

in the history of Western philosophy in order to identify as far as possible *why* the child is discussed (the function of the discussion of the child in these texts) and the *manner* in which the child is conceptualized in these discourses.³

We can begin with a few questions to orient our investigation of these texts and discussions of the child found within them: First, in the texts under consideration, what are the primary contexts for the discussion of the child? When the child is discussed, is this occurring in conjunction with a discussion of education or the stability of the state or political and moral agency or something else entirely? Second, what concerns does the child raise for these philosophers? Does the child present a problem for them, and, if so, what are the contours of this problem and what form does it take?

My hope is that approaching accounts of the child with these questions in mind will provide for novel engagement with the location of the child in the history of Western philosophy. Rather than beginning with simple (and potentially anachronistic) critiques centered on the misguided developmental and educational views of these philosophers,

³ My use of the term *discourse* has affinities with (though does not directly correspond to) Foucault's understanding of this term in works such as *Discipline and Punish. The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Vintage Books, 1995) and *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction, Volume 1*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Vintage Books, 1990). I am not only interested in documenting explicit discussions and characterizations of the subject (the child) in the work of Plato, Aristotle, Rousseau, and Kant. Although doing so is significant in its own right, I also want to reveal the broader ethical and political aims that permeate these discussions and, conversely, that prevent or inhibit the formation of others. It is my contention that broader ethical and political aims condition the explicit characterizations of the child that we find in works ranging from the *Republic* to the *Doctrine of Right*, the *Nicomachean Ethics* to *Emile*. Thus, it is important not only to understand *what* is said about the child, but also *why* the child emerges in the work of these thinkers in a specific form. The forms of the child in the history of Western philosophy, I argue, are the *non-adult* and *being-to-be-transformed*, characterizations that issue from the child's discursive location at the nexus of broader ethical and political aims and relations of knowledge and power. The totality of these relations, ethical and political aims and explicit characterizations is what I refer to here as *discourse*.

we can instead pay greater attention to the conceptualization of the child himself,⁴ the moral, socio-political, and educational relevance of discussions of the child and the function of these discussions in the work of these philosophers. We can also pay heed to what *is not* said about the child and the political and moral domains in which the child is absent.⁵

In adopting this method of approach to the work of Plato, Aristotle, Rousseau, and Kant we will find a dominant (but not uniform) conceptualization of the child as a deficient being, as the *non-adult*—that is, a being understood as lacking (or possessing in primitive form) the positive traits of the *ideal* adult. Given this deficient status, the child is commonly encountered as an object of control, a *being-to-be-transformed* who must be led (if not forced) to preserve the moral and socio-political norms of the adult. The adult is the ideal in comparison to which the child is nonideal, the end toward which the child, if he is to have any purpose, must progress.

Section 1: Plato

Plato's influence in a vast range of sub-disciplines of philosophy—ethics, politics, epistemology, metaphysics, etc.—is well documented. No less significant, however, is his impact on conceptions of the child in Western philosophy. Plato serves as the first

⁴ Where necessary I will use the masculine pronoun in place of “child.” I adopt the masculine pronoun in order to avoid confusion and to remain congruent with this use by the figures discussed in this chapter (Plato, Aristotle, Rousseau, and Kant).

⁵ I do not focus on what *is not* said about the child with an eye toward an anachronistic critique of Plato, Aristotle, Rousseau, Kant, and their lack of substantive engagement with the child's possibilities in moral and political realms. Rather, it is my contention that a complete understanding of the concept of the child is aided by paying attention both to what *is* and *is not* said about the child by these figures. Apart from any critique, if the child is never discussed by these figures as an active participant in moral and political realms, then we gain evidence for understanding their conception of the child as, in part, a being lacking (or possessing in primitive form) moral and political agency.

Western philosopher to devote extended attention—systematically, throughout multiple texts—to the child. Especially important for our considerations is the influence of this work on Aristotle, Rousseau, and Kant. There are clear traces of Plato’s approach in the work of these philosophers, both in regard to educational approaches to the child and conceptions of the child.⁶ It is fitting, then, that we begin our examination with Plato’s foundational discussion of the child.

My aim is to uncover the concept of the child in Plato’s work. In order to do this it is necessary to turn to the child’s location in the *Republic* and *Laws*, texts containing Plato’s most substantive discussions of the child.⁷ In discussing these texts I will turn to the following questions: First, what are the primary contexts of the child’s appearance? Second, what concerns does the child raise for the philosopher in question? And, in sum, what concept of the child emerges within Plato’s ethical, political, and educational work?

⁶ For example, see Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. Terence Irwin (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 1999), 21 (1104b10-14); Rousseau’s *Emile*, 40, 107, 362-363.

⁷ Of course, more can be said about Plato’s treatment of the child in other texts. For the purposes of this dissertation, however, I have chosen to focus my efforts on the *primary* contexts of emergence for the child in Platonic texts (*Republic* and *Laws*). In future work I plan to expand my focus on the child as found in other Platonic texts, including: *Crito*, trans. G. M. A. Grube, in *Plato: Complete Works*, ed. John M. Cooper (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 1997), 41, 43 (46c, 49b); *Protagoras*, trans. Stanley Lombardo and Karen Bell, in *Plato: Complete Works*, ed. John M. Cooper (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 1997), 760 (325d-326e); *Phaedrus*, trans. Alexander Nehamas and Paul Woodruff, in *Plato: Complete Works*, ed. John M. Cooper (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 1997), 517-520 (238e-241d); *Symposium*, trans. Alexander Nehamas and Paul Woodruff, in *Plato: Complete Works*, ed. John M. Cooper (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 1997), 463-464 (178c-179b); and *Meno*, trans. G. M. A. Grube, in *Plato: Complete Works*, ed. John M. Cooper (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 1997), 872, 873 (71e, 73b). I will also consider dialogues concerned more generally with education, and thus which comment on the child indirectly. For example, see Plato’s *Laches*, trans. Rosamond Kent Sprague, in *Plato: Complete Works*, ed. John M. Cooper (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 1997).

1.1: The Child, the Ideal *Polis* and Education

The *Republic* and *Laws* serve as accounts of Plato's ideal *polis*.⁸ Providing both a model for the ideal state and a plan of action to realize it, Plato fills these texts with specifications on matters of state legislation, forms of government, defense, education, and the arts. The attempt in both texts is not only to explain in detail the establishment of the ideal *polis* but also the benefits that would result for its inhabitants. Among these benefits are stability in the state and its institutions, the inculcation of justice in the operations of the state and its citizens, and the promotion of the philosophical life.

We should recognize from the start that Plato's discussion of the child in these texts cannot be separated from his concern with the formation and security of the ideal *polis*. Discussions of the child—as with other topics of discussion in the *Republic* and *Laws*, such as the arts and the attainment of virtue—do not occur as an island, contextually separated on all sides from the larger body of Plato's social and political concerns. Rather, the child is discussed in these texts precisely as an integral part of forming the ideal state, or, in some cases, as a perceived threat to this end. Given that the child is situated and conceptualized within a discourse on the formation of an ideal *polis* we can take Plato's preoccupation with achieving this end as relevant to his account of the child in these texts.

The fact that discussion of the child is located within Plato's larger discussion of the formation of the state is evident once we turn to Plato's account of education. To understand the establishment of the ideal *polis* in the *Republic* and *Laws* we must, in turn,

⁸ On the ideal nature of the *Kallipolis* of the *Republic*, see Plato's *Republic*, 47 (369c10), 147 (458a-b5). On the ideal nature of *Magnesia*, the ideal state of the *Laws*, see Plato's *Laws*, trans. Trevor J. Saunders (New York: Penguin Books, 1970), 110-111 (702d-3e).

consider the ends of education. First, education is intended to produce a certain individual—the virtuous adult possessing a well-ordered soul.⁹ Second, education is intended to produce a certain state—the just and well-ordered state. In order to create the just and well-ordered state we must create just and well-ordered individuals.¹⁰ Thus, we cannot understand the formation of the state without understanding Plato’s plan for education as it is one of the primary conditions of possibility of the ideal state. And, given that children are the subjects of education, we can begin to see the importance that these beings have for Plato. The ideal state will rise or fall largely on the basis of proper education of children; children must become the virtuous adults that will preserve the *polis*, the citizens that will obey its laws, the craftsmen that will work within its walls.

Given the significance of education in these texts we should briefly familiarize ourselves with the fundamental elements of Plato’s educational curriculum. The child must go through education (*paideia*) of two primary kinds: musical education (*mousike*) for the philosophical element of the soul and physical education (*gumnastike*) for the body and spirited element of the soul.¹¹ Musical education—composed of stories, songs, rhythms and harmonies—is of paramount importance in Plato’s educational plan as it

⁹ The Platonic soul consists of three parts: the rational, the spirited, and the appetitive. The well-ordered or “just” soul is one in which the inferior, spirited, and appetitive parts follow the guidance of the superior, rational part. See the *Republic*, 132-133 (443d-444d5), 280-281 (580b-581a5), 293 (588e-589d).

¹⁰ Plato, *Republic*, 109 (425a-5), 122 (435e-436a); Plato, *Laws*, 237-238 (797a-c).

¹¹ Plato, *Republic*, 56 (376e-4), 215-216 (521e-522b). In the *Republic* (as opposed to the *Laws*) Plato marks a distinction between Guardian and Ruler education, with the latter form of education building on the former (*Republic*, 96-99 (412a-414b), 216-233 (522b-537e)).

focuses on the most important, philosophical element of the soul.¹² Physical education—composed of training for physical fitness, training for war,¹³ and the improvement of the spirited part of the soul¹⁴—is of secondary importance. Regardless of the qualitative ranking of these elements of education, Plato specifies that an education does not qualify as “correct” unless it adequately covers both the musical and physical elements.¹⁵ Both elements are established “chiefly for the sake of the soul” as are all other subjects, including literature, mathematics, astronomy, and dialectic.¹⁶

Plato specifies that the songs, rhythms and harmonies to which the child will be exposed—the musical education of the child—must be those that best imitate “the voices of temperate and courageous men in good fortune and bad.”¹⁷ Stories (included as a branch of musical training) must be supervised to “shape the souls” of children properly.¹⁸ To this end, stories, both in content and style, must avoid negative portrayals of the gods (as lacking virtue, as fighting amongst themselves), illustrating instead a

¹² Guardian education consists of physical training for the body and the spirited element of the soul, and musical training for the philosophical element of the soul (*Republic*, 56 (376e4), 96 (411e3-412a)). Plato specifies that musical training must come prior to physical training (*Republic*, 57 (377a-10)).

¹³ For the general distinction between musical and physical education in the *Laws* see page 70 (673a). The specificities of training for war include activities of war (*Laws*, 234, 260 (794c-d, 813d-e)), ambidextrous training (*Laws*, 235 (795d)), and dancing and wrestling (*Laws*, 235-236, 261-263 (795d-e, 814d-816d)).

¹⁴ Plato, *Republic*, 96 (411e-412a7).

¹⁵ Plato, *Laws*, 226 (788c).

¹⁶ Plato, *Republic*, 94 (410b5-c5). On the presence of these special subjects in the curriculum see *Laws*, 253-271 (809b-822c) and *Republic*, 216 (522a).

¹⁷ Plato, *Republic*, 81 (399c1-2).

¹⁸ Plato, *Republic*, 57 (377b-c).

virtuous and law-abiding existence for citizens to emulate.¹⁹ Games—akin to musical training insofar as they are deployed to shape the souls of children—are also an integral part of the educational plan of both the *Republic* and *Laws*. If children play games that replicate just citizens and the governance of laws they will in turn seek to replicate and preserve both when they are adults; by absorbing “lawfulness from musical training...lawfulness follows them in everything and fosters their growth, correcting anything in the city that may have been neglected before.”²⁰ Key to all forms of musical education, then, is training the child, habituating the child’s soul to morally and socially expedient ends. This habituation results from repeated imitation of the noble and the fine, in game, story, song, rhythm, and harmony. Focusing on the latter two modes of habituation, Plato writes:

Because rhythm and harmony permeate the inner most element of the soul, affect it more powerfully than anything else, and bring it such grace, such education makes one graceful if one is properly trained, and the opposite if one is not...since he [the well-educated child] feels distaste correctly, he will praise fine things, be pleased by them, take them into his soul, and, through being nourished by them, become fine and good. What is ugly or shameful, on the other hand, he will correctly condemn and hate while he is still young, before he is able to grasp the reason.²¹

The end of this training is the excellent adult and the just and dedicated citizen of the state. The unity of these aims is clear for Plato: “what we have in mind is education from childhood in *virtue*, a training which produces a keen desire to become a perfect

¹⁹ Plato, *Republic*, 57-75 (377a-394c).

²⁰ Plato, *Republic*, 109 (425a-5).

²¹ Plato, *Republic*, 84 (401d5-402a3).

citizen who knows how to rule and be ruled as justice demands.”²² To educate the child is to rule the child properly, to “establish a constitution in them as in the city...[to] take care of their best part with the similar one in ourselves and equip them with a guardian and ruler similar to our own to take our place.”²³ To achieve these aims a specific mode of approach toward the child is required:

Education has proved to be a process of attraction, of leading children to accept right principles as enunciated by the law and endorsed as genuinely correct by men who have high moral standards and are full of years and experience. The soul of the child has to be prevented from getting into the habit of feeling pleasure and pain in ways not sanctioned by the law and those who have been persuaded to obey it.²⁴

The adult’s approach is that of “leading” children away from childhood, of “attracting” children to adulthood along lines of pleasure, game, and song. There is a precise manner in which the adult will approach the child; he will always advance with numerous “charms” in hand, “deadly serious devices” for subduing the soul of the child and investing him with the laws and ways of the state.²⁵

But if the child is the focal point of this rigorous educational training and socialization there is very little concern with him in his own right. That is, there is little concern with a *positive* conception of the child, one focusing on the child’s qualities and

²² Plato, *Laws*, 29-30 (643e-644a); B.II, 42 (653b).

²³ Plato, *Republic*, 295 (590e-591a). Also see *Laws*, 29 (643d).

²⁴ Plato, *Laws*, 51-52 (659d-e).

²⁵ Plato, *Laws*, 51-52 (659d-e). These “charms” and “deadly serious devices” are “songs” and “recreation.” Plato writes, “the souls of the young cannot bear to be serious, so we use the terms ‘recreation’ and ‘song’ for the charms, and children treat them in that spirit.”

concerns *qua* child, apart from those of the adult.²⁶ This should not surprise us; the context of the child in education—within a broader account of the ideal *polis*—is not governed by a concern with an understanding of the child but with forming a certain type of being *other than* the child: the virtuous adult. In turn, the repeated and systematic achievement of this end is requisite for founding the state and preserving its laws and moral and social norms. Paradoxically, Plato’s discussion of the child does not center on the child or the concept of childhood; it is an account of the most effective methods (“charms”) for correcting the child’s soul. Plato is concerned with how best to form the child as an obedient subject able to control his desires, obey the laws, and become the

²⁶ This is not to say that Plato does not offer *any* positive characterizations of the child. For one, Plato discusses the moral psychology of the child, specifically in regard to the child’s natural drives to imitation (for example, see *Republic* 76-77, 84, 109 (395c-396a, 401b-402a, 424e5-425a5)). In virtue of the child’s tendency to imitation the adult educator must avoid exposing the child to vice and carefully control his educational and social environment such that he imitates a virtuous existence. I grant that Plato (and other philosophers considered in this dissertation) do offer some consideration of the child’s nature, often centering on the child’s moral psychology. And, in general, a fully developed philosophical concept of the “child” must pay heed to these considerations and be careful not to ignore and contradict basic psychological facts about the child. Psychological facts have a direct bearing on what a “child” is, and, thus, they need to be considered in any robust philosophical account of the child. However, when considering a psychological conception of the child we must be careful not to simply accept the psychological facts as presented. It is my contention that we must take a critical eye to psychological observations and attempt to understand the paths of their formation (whether through extensive observation and study or as influenced by preconceptions about the child and his relation to the adult as the end of psychological development). However, in this dissertation my primary aim is not to reject the empirical or psychological claims of major figures in the canon. Rather, I focus on (1) the child as presented to us by major figures in the Western philosophical tradition (including their psychological observations) and (2) the manner in which empirical claims and psychological facts about the child are developed and become instrumental to the larger ethical and political projects of the philosophers in question. For example, if the child is a being with a strong drive toward imitation, then he can be led to imitate the virtuous adult, thereby making possible the ideal *polis*. If the child is governed by animalistic impulse, then he must be controlled and coerced, thereby taking on the norms and traditions of the adult. In each of these cases, “facts” about the child’s psychology are such that, when corrected or reformed, the moral and political ends of the philosopher become possible. It is my contention that these ends inform much of the philosopher’s understanding of the child in the Western philosophical canon, including many prominent claims as to his nature and moral psychology. For more on this point, see Chapter 3, Section 2 below.

virtuous adult. In effect, the child is located in this discussion not insofar as he is a child, but insofar as he is the subject of transformation with the potential to enter adulthood; he is taken up in discourse as a *being-to-be-transformed*.

1.2: Controlling the Children of the *Kallipolis*

The child is situated within an account of education that serves the end of the establishment of the ideal *polis*. He is taken up as the *non-adult* and, in turn, as an object of transformation, a being-to-be-transformed. Education—and adult engagement with the child—is successful insofar as it moves the child *from* childhood *toward* adulthood. If the child is a being-to-be-transformed, with the ends of the transformation—the virtuous adult and state—always cast *in advance* of his conceptualization, then he must always be understood as both “morally” deficient insofar as he has not reached the end of virtuous adulthood, and as “politically” dangerous, insofar as he jeopardizes the other (the ideal *polis*). It is to the danger of the child that I now turn my attention.

In uncovering the child’s location in the *Republic* and *Laws* it becomes clear that he presents a problem for the educator and legislator. A corresponding need to resolve this problem emerges in the form of controlling the child. The child is a problem that must be subdued in order to ensure the establishment and preservation of the just state. As an example of this concern to control, consider the following passage from Book VII of the *Laws*:

I maintain that no one in any state has really grasped that children’s games affect legislation so crucially as to determine whether the laws that are passed will survive or not. If you control the way children play, and the same children always play the same games under the same rules and in the same conditions, and get pleasure from the same toys, you’ll find that the conventions of adult life too are left in peace without alteration....In fact, it’s no exaggeration to say that this fellow [one who introduces novelty in games to

children] is the biggest menace that can ever afflict a state, because he quietly changes the character of the young by making them despise old things and value novelty. That kind of language and that kind of outlook is—again I say it—the biggest disaster a state can suffer.²⁷

Plato’s language is striking here; it is worth considering why a seemingly benign change in the games of children constitutes “the biggest disaster a state can suffer.” According to Plato the danger lies in the fact that with the introduction of new games children will “inevitably turn out to be quite different people from the previous generation; being different, they’ll demand a different kind of life, and that will then make them want new institutions and laws.”²⁸ There is a fear, then, of the introduction of novelty into the state, a newness that will disrupt trans-generational continuity in the laws and socio-political and moral norms.²⁹ This fear is present in Plato’s general educational plan and informs the pervasive censorship of the arts in the *polis*,³⁰ as well as the creation of a centralized office for the control of children—“by far the most important of all the supreme offices in the state”³¹—the Minister of Education.

²⁷ Plato, *Laws*, 237-239 (797a-c, 798e). Plato maintains a general aversion to “change” throughout the *Laws*. Plato writes: “Change, we shall find, except in something evil, is extremely dangerous. This is true of seasons and winds, the regimen of the body and the character of the soul—in short, of everything without exception (unless, as I said just now, the change affects something evil)” (*Laws*, 238 (797d-e)). Plato is particularly concerned with alterations or changes that “harm” the traditions of the *polis*—for example, changes to the laws (which codify absolute moral standards) and changes of the “criteria for praising or censuring a man’s moral character” (*Laws*, 239 (798d)).

²⁸ Plato, *Laws*, 239 (798c).

²⁹ I thank Dr. Mary Beth Mader for helping me to clarify this point in my work on Plato.

³⁰ For examples of censorship in the *Kallipolis*, see *Republic*, 57-75 (377c-394a5). For examples of censorship in *Magnesia*, see *Laws*, 243-245 (801d, 802b-d).

³¹ Plato, *Laws*, 195 (765e), 259-260 (813c-d).

Children are the primary targets of these strategies of control. Plato maintains that “change...except in something evil, is extremely dangerous”³² and children *just are* a form of novelty; they are *new* insofar as they are born into a pre-existent world without the values of the adult and devoid of the norms of the state.³³ The child is not disposed to take on these norms or seek out virtue, but must be compelled to seek these ends. Failure to invest the child with these ends—via Plato’s plan of education, censorship, and control—leaves open the possibility of social rupture and the dissolution of the state. To avoid this end, control must originate prior to conception. “Supervised procreation” will ensure that parents do not produce “unbalanced children who are not to be trusted, with devious characters, and...misshapen bodies.”³⁴ Immediately following conception, while in the womb, the fetus will be subjected to “athletics of the embryo”: a method of keeping the fetus in invigorating motion as much as possible.³⁵ The eventual deployment of games (and musical education in general) is concerned first and foremost with control

³² Plato, *Laws*, 238 (797d).

³³ But if we take Plato’s theory of knowledge and maintenance of the immortality of the soul into account, the child’s novelty is perplexing. It is unclear how the child can be “new” if his soul is immortal and his knowledge is “recollection” of that which his soul previously encountered in the realm of the Forms (see Plato’s *Meno*, 886 (85d-86b)). For one, Plato maintains that knowledge is effectively “lost” or “forgotten” upon birth (see Plato’s *Phaedo*, trans. G. M. A. Grube, in *Plato: Complete Works*, ed. John M. Cooper (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 1997), 66 (75c-e)). Thus, even if the child possesses an immortal soul (and is not “new” in this sense), he does not automatically recall the knowledge gained by his soul during its time in the realm of the Forms. He must be treated by the adult as if he is a wholly new being that lacks knowledge of virtue. Second, the child lacks knowledge of the particular norms and traditions of the state (as discussed in the *Republic* and *Laws*). In this sense, the child is a new *political* being and, thus, the adult educator and legislator must ensure that he learns and accepts the laws and traditions of the state.

³⁴ Plato, *Laws*, 222, 211 (784b, 775d). Plato discusses “female officials” appointed by state officials for this supervision: “The female officials must enter the homes of the young people and by a combination of admonition and threats try to make them give up their ignorant and sinful ways” (*Laws*, 222 (784c)).

³⁵ Plato, *Laws*, 227-228 (789b-e).

over the child that allows the educator to form the child's incomplete and "tender" soul into that of the virtuous adult and the law-abiding citizen, providing the child with a second nature superior to its original, deficient nature.³⁶ In order to accomplish this all-important end the legislator can use any means at his disposal:

The young can be persuaded of anything; he [the legislator] has only to try. The only thing he must consider and discover is what conviction would do the state the most good; in that connexion, he must think up every possible device to ensure that as far as possible the entire community preserves in its songs and stories and doctrines an absolute and lifelong unanimity.³⁷

Thus, Plato's legislator will deploy the "useful lie"³⁸ along with the song, the game along with the story, the harmony along with the poem. Each of these tactics has a specified role for Plato's educational plan or, what is the same, Plato's plan for controlling the child and preserving the state.

If, with a whole economy of control being specified in these texts, we still sense an element of fear in Plato's discussion of the child it is because this control can never be perfect. The child is not always within the adult gaze and control of children cannot be accomplished in a simple, one-off act. Therefore, controlling the child requires constant vigilance, spurred on by the possibility of a failure so terrible that "it would be

³⁶ Plato, *Laws*, 29 (643c-d).

³⁷ Plato, *Laws*, 57 (664a). Also see *Republic*, 108 (424b5-c5). In the *Laws* Plato praises Sparta and Crete as actual examples of states that successfully maintained unanimity and continuity in the laws and traditions of the state (though he does not reference the role of stories and songs in their achieving these ends). Plato writes, "The criticisms people bring against the way Sparta and Crete are run might be right or wrong... However, ... one of the best regulations you have is the one which forbids any young man to inquire into the relative merits of the laws; everyone has to agree, with one heart and voice, that they are all excellent and exist by divine *fiat*; if anyone says differently, the citizens must absolutely refuse to listen to him" (*Laws*, 17 (634 d-e)).

³⁸ Plato, *Laws*, 56 (663e). Also see *Republic*, 63 (382a-d), 99 (414c).

inappropriate to describe the consequences.”³⁹ To prevent this possibility a regime of control will be deployed by the legislator: controlling children’s games, censoring stories and songs, keeping “the young people themselves under constant surveillance.”⁴⁰ This education will be “compulsory for ‘one and all’...because they [children] belong to the state first and their parents second.”⁴¹ Via these tactics the educator and legislator will rule over children at every turn:

Children must not be left without teachers, nor slaves without masters, any more than flocks and herds must be allowed to live without attendants. Of all wild things, the child is the most unmanageable: an unusually powerful spring of reason, whose waters are not yet canalized in the right direction, makes him sharp and sly, the most unruly animal there is. That’s why he had to be curbed by a great many bridles so to speak.⁴²

Insofar as he is continually subjected to “bridles” of control—starting in the womb and proceeding throughout childhood—the child is treated as the being-to-be-transformed. Here, this approach is constituted by the rejection of the child as a cause of change in the *polis*. This rejection of change begins with a paradoxical rupture with tradition and the past. Plato’s educational and legislative plan originates in a move to “take over the children” by exiling their families from the *polis*, thereby removing children from their habits and traditions to bring them up in the laws of the state.⁴³

³⁹ Plato, *Laws*, 260 (813d).

⁴⁰ Plato, *Laws*, 287 (836a).

⁴¹ Plato, *Laws*, 248 (804d).

⁴² Plato, *Laws*, 252 (808d-e).

⁴³ Plato, *Republic*, 237 (541a-b). Plato notes that this plan will begin with “everyone in the city who is over ten years old.”

1.3: The Child of Education and Control

A focus on Plato's plan of education allowed us to locate the child within this discourse as a deficient being (a non-adult) and, thus, a being-to-be-transformed.⁴⁴ In turn, we have seen that this deficient being emerges as a problem for the legislator and educator. Anxiety surrounds the newness inherent to the child and methods of control are developed to neutralize the problem (the child) as threat to the *polis*. Whereas the emphasis in education is moving the child from childhood to a virtuous and stable adulthood, the emphasis in control of the child is subsuming him (as newness, as unknown danger) within the traditions of the state.

Taken together, these ends of control do more than preserve the state; they also cover over substantive consideration of the child. What we find instead is a *totalized* child—a concept that is distinct in its lack of distinction, a homogenous conception of the child as a target for intervention, born of the concerns of the adult. There is little attention paid to differences between children; there is little place (and certainly no motivation) for focused consideration of the diverse qualities and concerns of children as, instead, the focus is placed squarely on the child's transformation into the adult.

What, then, are we to make of the characterizations of the child that Plato *does* offer to us? Perhaps, after all, we do find substantive consideration of the child in these accounts. The child is an appetitive being: he is ruled by the appetitive and spirited parts

⁴⁴ But the child is not the only deficient being in the *Republic*. Plato writes, “pleasures, pains, and appetites that are numerous and multifarious are things one would especially find in children, women, household slaves, and in the so-called free members of the masses—that is, inferior people” (*Republic*, 117 (431c)). Like the child, the “masses” (or the worker class—farmers, craftsmen and common laborers) are compared to the appetitive part of the soul (*Republic*, 281 (580d-581a)). And, like the child, they are regarded as inferior beings, lacking wisdom and requiring the government of the naturally superior class (the Guardians). Unlike (some) children, however, the worker class lacks the potential to shed their deficiencies through the process of education and development.

of the soul⁴⁵ and is of the class of “inferior people” who seek “pleasures, pains, and appetites that are numerous and multifarious.”⁴⁶ His condition is one, like the drunkard, of a lack of self-control.⁴⁷ The child is irrational; he lacks knowledge and understanding and is weighed down by “leaden weights... which have been fastened to it by eating and other such pleasures and indulgences, which pull its soul’s vision downward.”⁴⁸

But these characterizations do not provide us with a robust conception of the child. Rather, Plato’s characterizations of the child are largely derived from a negation of the traits of the adult. By contrast, the virtuous adult—inhabiting the ideal condition of the human being—*is* characterized by a number of positive abilities and characteristics: the ideal adult is virtuous, possessing temperance, courage, and wisdom;⁴⁹ he chooses pleasure properly⁵⁰ and is just in that he rules over himself with reason.⁵¹ These positive characteristics—essential for the adult and the state—structure Plato’s perception of the child. He is understood as lacking virtue, as choosing pleasure before all else, as ruled by the worst part of the soul. Regarded as a deficient being in contrast to the ideal adult, he must be made the object of educational and social intervention.

⁴⁵ Plato, *Republic*, 129 (441a5-b), 230, 235 (534d-5, 539b-c). Also see *Laws*, 30-31 (644c-d).

⁴⁶ Plato, *Republic*, 117 (431c).

⁴⁷ Plato, *Laws*, 32-33 (645e-646b).

⁴⁸ Plato, *Republic*, 212 (519a7-b5).

⁴⁹ Plato, *Republic*, 121-122 (435b5-e5).

⁵⁰ Plato, *Laws*, 19 (636e).

⁵¹ Plato, *Republic*, 132-133 (443d, 444d), 281 (580c).

Section 2: Aristotle

Plato's influence on Aristotle's discussion of the child is evident in the *Nicomachean Ethics* and the *Politics*. As in Plato's *Republic* and *Laws*, Aristotle's account of the child is inextricably bound up with concerns over education and moral and political development. And, as in Plato's discourse, Aristotle's discussion of the child in the *Nicomachean Ethics* and *Politics* provides for an encounter with the child as a problem, a deficient being (the non-adult) and, thus, a being-to-be-transformed. But I do not want to oversimplify; there are important differences between these accounts, too, and although Plato's influence on Aristotle should be considered, we should not do so at the expense of failing to treat Aristotle's discourse in its own right.

Aristotle departs from Plato (and all other philosophers before him) in authoring a systematic ethical treatise, the *Nicomachean Ethics*.⁵² This pursuit brings with it a focus on the excellent (adult) life and, in turn, an account of the child as deficient insofar as he is *not* excellent. Plato, too, considers the child's deficiencies in relation to the excellent adult. However, Plato's account of the deficient child and the excellent adult lacks the sustained teleological approach found in Aristotle's *Ethics*. On Aristotle's teleological approach, the child is not just deficient in virtue or dangerous to the state; the child is primarily understood as an incomplete human being. That is, the child (unlike the excellent adult) has not actualized the capacities of the complete human being, nor

⁵² The *Nicomachean Ethics* is closely related to the *Eudemian Ethics* with Books IV, V and VI of the latter reoccurring as Books V, VI, and VII in the former. In this work I focus on the content of the *Nicomachean Ethics*. See Aristotle's *Eudemian Ethics*, trans. J. Solomon, in *The Complete Works of Aristotle, Volume Two*, ed. Jonathan Barnes (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984).

achieved the end for the sake of which human beings live (the human *telos*).⁵³ Thus, where Plato places a primary emphasis on controlling the child for the preservation of the *polis*, Aristotle emphasizes the child's development toward the realization of the human *telos*.

2.1: The *Ethics* and the Child

In the *Nicomachean Ethics* Aristotle is concerned with providing an account of the ultimate end of human life and the excellent life as lived in accord with this end. The end of human life—"most choiceworthy" and "complete and self-sufficient, since it is the end of the things achievable in action"—is happiness (*eudaimonia*).⁵⁴ In turn, the excellent life is one that realizes this ultimate end over the course of a complete life.⁵⁵

In order to illustrate *eudaimonia* in outline (providing a "target" for the potentially excellent individual⁵⁶) Aristotle provides an account of human function (*ergon*). For Aristotle, we must locate the essential activity of the human being in order to understand his best good, as this good *just is* the excellent performance of this activity over a complete life.⁵⁷ This activity must be distinctive of human beings; it is not located in the

⁵³ Aristotle's conceptual approach has been extremely influential for subsequent accounts of the child, including many of the dominant accounts in our own era. Here I am thinking of, for example, contemporary developmental psychology and its reliance on a teleological account of human development. For more on this point see Chapter 2, Section 3 below. We might also consider the common understanding of the child in the West as "incomplete" in various ways (physically, morally, etc.).

⁵⁴ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 8 (1097b2), 162-163 (1176a30-1177a10).

⁵⁵ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 12 (1100a5).

⁵⁶ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 2 (1094a25).

⁵⁷ The kind of essential activity in question varies depending on which part of the *Nicomachean Ethics* one consults. Books II-V focus on practical virtue as excellent activity whereas Books VI and X focus on theoretical virtue and contemplation as excellent activity. For

essential activities of plants or non-human animals (taking nutrition or perceiving via the senses). Rather, given that the possession of reason is distinctive of human beings, human function must be found in “some sort of life of action of the [part of the soul] that has reason.”⁵⁸ Excellent human function, then, is “activity of the soul in accord with virtue, and indeed with the best and most complete virtue...in a complete life.”⁵⁹ This discussion of the human good serves as foundation for the remainder of the *Ethics* in which Aristotle provides an account of the primary components of the excellent life: the acquisition of virtue (both virtues of character and virtues of thought), friendship, external goods, and contemplation.⁶⁰

For our purposes Aristotle’s ethical treatise is significant insofar as it provides another primary context for discussion of the child in the history of Western philosophy. We have seen that Plato’s discussion of the child cannot be separated from his political concerns in the *Republic* and *Laws*, namely, the formation and preservation of the ideal *polis*. Likewise, Aristotle’s discourse on the child cannot be detached from concerns centering on the formation of the ideal moral agent, the practically wise individual (*phronimos*). To be practically wise is to be in “a state grasping the truth, involving

Aristotle’s distinction between practical virtue (virtue of character) and theoretical virtue (virtue of thought) see *Nicomachean Ethics*, 18 (1103a5-10).

⁵⁸ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 9 (1098a3-4). Taking nutrition is the function of a plant, while sense-perception is the function of a non-human animal. Also see Aristotle’s *On the Soul*, trans. J. A. Smith, in *The Complete Works of Aristotle, Volume Two*, ed. Jonathan Barnes (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), 658 (413a20-30).

⁵⁹ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 9 (1098a15-19).

⁶⁰ For Aristotle’s discussion of virtues of character see *Nicomachean Ethics*, B.II-V; for discussion of virtues of thought see B.VI and B.X; for discussion of friendship see B.VIII-IX; for discussion of external goods see 11 (1099a25-1099b7), 116-117 (1153b15-20), 148 (1169b10), 166 (1179a); for discussion of contemplation see 163-167 (1177a15-1179a30).

reason, concerned with action about things that are good or bad for a human being.”⁶¹

The *phronimos*—the individual possessing practical wisdom—possesses all of the virtues of character (the possession of practical wisdom is necessary and sufficient for virtue of character⁶²), chooses pleasures correctly, deliberates well and decides correctly about actions regarding human goods.⁶³ In short, the *phronimos* is the “standard and measure” for the student of Aristotle’s *Ethics* and *Politics*,⁶⁴ and as an ideal standard the *phronimos* conditions and colors Aristotle’s account of the child.

In Aristotle’s outline of the human good and moral excellence the child is taken up insofar as he *is not*, indeed, *cannot* be the excellent individual. He is not *eudaimon* (along with non-human animals) because “happiness requires both complete virtue and a complete life”⁶⁵ and the child possesses neither. The child is understood in relation to what he lacks: he is devoid of complete virtue given that he is incapable of deliberation and decision as well as the lived experience necessary to be practically wise.⁶⁶ Given these deficiencies, the child’s state of being is inhospitable to the excellent life. As

⁶¹ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 89 (1140b5-8).

⁶² Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 99 (1145a).

⁶³ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 89-90, 98-99 (1140a25-1140b25, 1144b-1145a5).

⁶⁴ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 37 (1113a35), 142 (1166a13). Also see Aristotle’s *Politics*, 192 (1323b20-24). Practical wisdom serves as a unifying link between the *Ethics* and *Politics* given its status as the primary virtue of both the morally excellent individual and the excellent statesman and citizen. In the best of constitutions the excellent individual and the excellent citizen are one and the same (*Politics*, 100 (1288a35-40)).

⁶⁵ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 12 (1100a-5).

⁶⁶ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 33 (1111b5-10), 93 (1142a13-15).

Aristotle writes, “no one would call a person blessedly happy who...has a mind as foolish and prone to error as a child’s or a madman’s.”⁶⁷

Lacking a developed rational part of the soul, the child is understood as possessing a thoroughly appetitive nature. Children are akin to the intemperate, living “by appetite, and desire for the pleasant is found more in them than in anyone else.”⁶⁸ In all, the child’s life is wholly undesirable: “no one would choose to live with a child’s [level of] thought for his whole life, taking as much pleasure as possible in what pleases children, or to enjoy himself while doing some utterly shameful action.”⁶⁹ These deficiencies call for a specific mode of approach to the child, one of control and subordination to the norms of the excellent adult:

If, then, [the child or the appetitive part of the soul] is not obedient and subordinate to its rulers, it will go far astray. For when someone lacks understanding, his desire for the pleasant is insatiable and seeks indiscriminate satisfaction. The [repeated] active exercise of appetite increases the appetite he already had from birth, and if the appetites are large and intense, they actually expel rational calculation. That is why appetites must be moderate and few, and never contrary to reason. This is the condition we call obedient and temperate. And just as the child’s life must follow the instructions of his guide, so too the appetitive part must follow reason.⁷⁰

⁶⁷ Aristotle, *Politics*, 191 (1323a27-34).

⁶⁸ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 49 (1119b6).

⁶⁹ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 157 (1174a-5).

⁷⁰ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 49 (1119b7-15).

The discourse on the child in the *Ethics*—taken up within Aristotle’s concerns with the excellent adult—leaves us with an account of the child as in need of reform.⁷¹ The perception of the child is covered over by deficiencies within a discussion of the virtuous adult (the excellent individual) such that he is taken up as a being-to-be-transformed. For this reason he must become “obedient and subordinate” to his “rulers” in order to cast off his deficient condition. It is to Aristotle’s method of reforming the child—moving him *from* childhood *to* adulthood—that we will now turn.

2.2: The Child, Education, and the City-State

We can now turn to a second primary context in which the child is discussed, a location necessitated by the end of the virtuous adult and the deficiency of the child. This context—the realm of education and moral development—is intimately related to Aristotle’s discussion of the excellent individual. If the child is deficient in reason and virtue, if he is not excellent, it is crucial that he be “well brought up” and habituated to the fine and the noble.⁷² For the child it is not unimportant “to acquire one sort of habit or another, right from...youth. On the contrary, it is very important, indeed all-important.”⁷³

The method employed to direct the child on the path to virtue is that of training and habituation. Being “well brought up” is a necessary condition for actualizing the

⁷¹ I use the terms “reform” and “correction” to indicate the adult’s primary mode of engagement with the child as discussed in Western philosophy. The child is regarded, first and foremost, as deficient in relation to the adult and, thus, as in need of reform or correction. Both terms indicate the adult’s desire to change or alter the child’s condition such that he sheds his deficiencies and advances toward adulthood. As discussed in this dissertation, “education” and “control” are the primary means for reforming and correcting the child. Educational strategies and tactics of control are deployed with the goal of “transforming” the child from his deficient state into the ideal condition of the adult.

⁷² Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 4 (1095b5-12).

⁷³ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 19 (1103b22-25).

capacity for excellent activity.⁷⁴ Thus, to become the fully virtuous adult the child must *first* learn to take pleasure in the just and noble, and pain in evil and injustice. Those children deprived of proper moral development will lack the necessary motivation to seek virtue because the non-rational part of the soul has not been trained to “listen to reason.”⁷⁵ In essence, depriving a child of moral training is to abandon him to his own deficiencies, to a life of the base pleasures and interests of the child. To avoid this condition a harmonious partnership between the non-rational and rational parts of the soul must be established in one’s youth as arguments for the fine and noble cannot surmount the motivational force of ingrained habituation in childhood.⁷⁶ The child must be transformed; he must be prepared for virtuous adulthood “like ground that is to nourish seed” via “all-important” moral development and training.⁷⁷

At this point, we can identify two clear elements of Plato’s influence on Aristotle’s account of the child: first, a conception of the child as naturally appetitive and devoid of virtue and, second, a belief that this deficient being must (and can) be transformed to take on a virtuous character. A significant passage in Book III of the

⁷⁴ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 169 (1180a15-16).

⁷⁵ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 17-18 (1102b29-1103a4). Aristotle devotes pages 16-18 (1102a5-1103a10) to a discussion of the parts of the soul—the rational and the non-rational—and their contributions to virtue. Virtues of thought issue from the rational part of the soul and virtues of character issue collectively from the rational part of the soul in cooperation with the non-rational part. The non-rational part of the soul is divided into two parts (the nutritive and the appetitive). The extent to which the appetitive part of the soul “listens to reason” determines the degree of moral virtue in the agent. For more on the structure of the soul see *On the Soul*, 658-659 (413b13-32), 687 (432a15-b8), 689, (433a31-b13).

⁷⁶ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 168 (1179b20-1180a).

⁷⁷ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 168 (1179b26-27), 19 (1103b-25).

Republic demonstrates Plato's pioneering thought on the importance of moral habituation:

They must imitate right from childhood what is appropriate for them—that is to say, people who are courageous, temperate, pious, free, and everything of that sort. On the other hand, they must not be clever at doing or imitating illiberal or shameful actions, so that they won't acquire a taste for the real thing from imitating it. Or haven't you noticed that imitations, if they are practiced much past youth, get established in the habits and nature of body, tones of voice, and mind?⁷⁸

In the *Nicomachean Ethics* Aristotle directly references Plato's influence in this regard:

“we need to have had the appropriate upbringing—right from early youth, as Plato says—to make...[children] find enjoyment or pain in the right things.”⁷⁹

We continue to see the influence of Plato on Aristotle, namely, in Aristotle's discussions of music and organized games as primary means of moral habituation.⁸⁰ We will recall that in the *Republic* and *Laws* Plato argued that the control of children's games is essential in shaping their character, thereby preserving the interests of the state. Music in the *Kallipolis* had to be that which best imitates “the voices of temperate and

⁷⁸ Plato, *Republic*, 76-77 (395c-d2). Plato is discussing the early education of the Guardians of the *Kallipolis*.

⁷⁹ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 21 (1104b10-14). Plato's *Republic* and *Laws* are also referenced numerous times in Aristotle's *Politics*. See *Politics*, 26-45 (1260b30-1267b20), 224 (1336a34), 241 (1342a33).

⁸⁰ These are not the only means of moral habituation discussed by Plato and Aristotle. For example, in both the *Nicomachean Ethics* and the *Politics* Aristotle stresses the role of the family in the early moral development of the child (*Nicomachean Ethics*, 133 (1162a5-9), 169 (1180a30-33); *Politics*, 1-5 (1252a-1253a35)). Plato diverges from Aristotle on this point in his proposal to abolish the nuclear family in the *Republic* (107-108 (423e4-424a2), 147 (457c10-d2)).

courageous men in good fortune and bad,” while stories had to be closely supervised by state officials to “shape the souls” of children properly.⁸¹

In the educational plan of Aristotle’s *Politics* children must be limited to games that are worthy of free citizens and that replicate the virtuous activity of mature adults.⁸²

Aristotle takes musical education to be a primary means of moral habituation, maintaining that the use of harmonies and rhythms in moral development is especially important given the ability of these mediums to “represent” noble characters to the child:

Everyone who listens to representations comes to have similar emotions, even apart from the rhythms and melodies of those representations. And since it so happens that music is one of the pleasures, and virtue has to do with enjoying, loving, and hating in the right way, obviously one must learn and become accustomed to nothing so much as correctly judging and enjoying decent characters and noble actions. In rhythms and melodies there is the greatest likeness to the true natures of anger and gentleness, and also courage and temperance, all of their opposites, and the other characters...we undergo a change in our souls when we listen to such things. Someone who is accustomed to feeling pain and pleasure in things that are likenesses is close to someone who reacts in the same manner to the true things.⁸³

Given that music has the ability to produce “a certain quality in the soul,” we should use it to make virtuous characters familiar and pleasing to the child.⁸⁴

Aristotle’s choice of music and games as primary means of habituation is anything but arbitrary; their selection follows directly from his account of the child. The

⁸¹ Plato, *Republic*, 81 (399c1-2), 57 (377b-2).

⁸² Aristotle, *Politics*, 224 (1336a25-34).

⁸³ Aristotle, *Politics*, 235 (1340a12-25).

⁸⁴ Aristotle, *Politics*, 236 (1340b11). On page 236 (1340a38-1340b10) Aristotle details the “different dispositions” a listener takes on upon hearing various melodies and rhythms. For example, “relaxed harmonies” create a “tender-minded” disposition while “Phrygian harmonies” create a “state of inspiration.”

child is not capable of philosophical reflection, lacks practical wisdom, and is not subject to moral education via the intellectual process of dialectic. The child's paramount concerns are gaining pleasure and avoiding pain. Given this understanding of the child, the educator turns to methods of habituation that take advantage of the appetitive condition of the child such that our "whole discussion" must be about these ends (pleasure and pain).⁸⁵ Music and games are the ideal means of early moral development as both are productive of pleasure and, when associated with the noble, fine, or socially expedient, will connect the appetitive focus of children to these ends, thereby leading them to the end of virtuous adulthood. Aristotle's choice of music as a means of moral habituation is grounded in the "natural pleasure" of this medium:

The teaching of music is appropriate to their nature at this stage of life. For because of their age the young do not willingly put up with anything unsweetened with pleasure, and music by its nature is one of the sweeteners...there seems to be a certain affinity among children to harmonies and rhythms.⁸⁶

Pleasure and pain in music provides the means to "steer" children to proper ends and, in effect, serve as motivating forces in habituation to virtue.⁸⁷ These forces make virtuous ends amenable to the appetitive child and (if deployed effectively) eventually bring him to choose these ends as a mature adult.

But more hinges on habituation and training than the transformation of the deficient child into the excellent adult; these tactics are also deployed in order to form the ideal city-state. The aim of the *Ethics*—the formation of the excellent individual—serves

⁸⁵ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 21 (1105a3-8).

⁸⁶ Aristotle, *Politics*, 236 (1340b10-18).

⁸⁷ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 153 (1172a21-26).

as a condition of the possibility for the *Politics* and the excellent political community and constitution.⁸⁸ The excellent individual (the subject of Aristotle's *Ethics*) will inhabit and make possible the excellent city-state (the project of Aristotle's *Politics*). The legislator must understand both the human good and the constitution that best suits this end as a "city-state is excellent...because the citizens who participate in the constitution are excellent."⁸⁹ The excellence of the city-state and the *phronimos* are one and the same—both forms of excellence are composed of "a life of virtue sufficiently equipped with the resources needed to take part in virtuous actions."⁹⁰ Thus, political science—the ruling science for city-states and human action—will seek to "decide" on these ends in the same way:

Decisions about all these matters [deciding on the excellent life and the excellent city-state] depends on the same elements. For if what is said in the *Ethics* is right, and a happy life is the one that expresses virtue and is without impediment, and virtue is a mean, then the middle life, the mean that each sort of person can actually achieve must be the best. These same defining principles must also hold of the virtue and vice of a city-state or constitution, since a constitution is a sort of life of city-state.⁹¹

The greater significance of the discourse on the child now presents itself. In order to discuss the excellent constitution we must first investigate "how a man becomes

⁸⁸ One need only read the last sections of the *Nicomachean Ethics* to see that a primary purpose of this text is to act as ground for Aristotle's work in the *Politics*. The final chapter of the *Ethics* (B.X.8) moves from ethical to political discussion with Aristotle emphasizing the need to examine legislative science and political systems to "complete the philosophy of human affairs" (171 (1181b15)).

⁸⁹ Aristotle, *Politics*, 213 (1332a32). Also see 191-193 (1323a15, 1323b30, 1323b40, 1324a5).

⁹⁰ Aristotle, *Politics*, 193, 217 (1323b40, 1333b35), 100 (1288a38); *Nicomachean Ethics*, 2 (1094a26-1094b10).

⁹¹ Aristotle, *Politics*, 119 (1295a35-40).

excellent.”⁹² But creating the excellent individual begins with investing the child with “good habits” from his earliest years (the habits of the virtuous adult). Thus, the projects of the *Ethics* and *Politics* originate with the child. If the child is finely brought up and habituated he can become an excellent individual who will inhabit the best constitution, thereby carrying out the project of the *Ethics* and, in turn, providing a foundation for the excellent city-state of the *Politics*.

But it is also possible that the child will fail to become the excellent adult. Given this ever-present danger we find an emerging discussion of control centering on the child. In the *Politics* this control begins with education:

Of all the ways that are mentioned to make a constitution last, the most important one...is for citizens to be educated in a way that suits their constitutions. For the most beneficial laws, even when ratified by all who are engaged in politics, are of no use if people are not habituated and educated in accord with the constitution...[and] if weakness of will indeed exists in a single individual, it also exists in a city-state.⁹³

The need to form excellent citizens requires beginning with a focus on children as “from children come those [citizens] who participate in the constitution.”⁹⁴ To the extent that the child fails to achieve the virtue of the citizen—“the capacity to rule and be ruled”⁹⁵—he is regarded as a problem for the adult educator and legislator and a danger for the city-

⁹² Aristotle, *Politics*, 214 (1332a35).

⁹³ Aristotle, *Politics*, 158 (1310a11-20).

⁹⁴ Aristotle, *Politics*, 25 (1260b19).

⁹⁵ Aristotle, *Politics*, 72, 74, 66 (1277a25, 1278a10, 1275a22).

state. In order to avoid this danger the child must be subjected to “corrective treatments.”⁹⁶

These “treatments” extend throughout the child’s life. They begin prior to birth with state supervision of marriage, procreation, and the child in the womb in order to “ensure that the bodies of those who are born are as he [the legislator] wishes.”⁹⁷ Once born, state control over the child intensifies, regulating child nutrition and exercise.⁹⁸ And, as he grows older, “child-supervisors” control the child’s games, stories, and play partners.⁹⁹ Throughout this discussion the child is taken up as a form of danger for the city-state such that “legislators should be particularly concerned with the education of the young, since in city-states where this does not occur, the constitutions are harmed.”¹⁰⁰

Whereas in the *Ethics* the child was taken up in discourse as the deficient being in relation to the (adult) *phronimos*, in the *Politics* the child is discussed as a potential danger to the formation of the excellent city-state. As we have seen, these conceptions of the child—as deficient and dangerous—cannot be separated any more than we can separate the projects of the *Ethics* and the *Politics*: the formation of excellent individuals

⁹⁶ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 169 (1180a10). On this point also see the *Eudemian Ethics*, 1923 (1214b30).

⁹⁷ Aristotle, *Politics*, 220 (1335a5, 1334b30).

⁹⁸ Aristotle, *Politics*, 223 (1336a4-15).

⁹⁹ At *Politics*, 224-225 (1336a39-b15) Aristotle writes, “The child-supervisors should pay careful attention to the children’s way of spending time, taking special care that they are in the company of slaves as little as possible...the legislator must banish shameful talk from the city, for the result of lightly saying whatever is shameful is that one also behaves in a similar way. Therefore it should above all be banished among children, so that they neither say nor hear anything of the sort...it is clear that we should also banish looking at pictures and stories that are unseemly.”

¹⁰⁰ Aristotle, *Politics*, 227 (1337a10-12).

and, in turn, the formation of the excellent city-state. Of key import at this point, however, is the conceptualization of the child as deficient in relation to the excellent adult (the child as non-adult) and the perception of the child as problem and potential danger to the excellent city-state.

2.3: Teleology and the Incomplete Child

A unifying method of investigation in Aristotle's *Ethics* and *Politics* is the search for ultimate ends. In this sense, Aristotle's methodology in the *Ethics* and *Politics* is essentially *teleological*.¹⁰¹ For example, in the *Ethics* Aristotle presents *eudaimonia* as the ultimate end of human life. As the "end of human aims" all other goods (complete and incomplete) are ultimately chosen for and understood in light of their relation to this ultimate end.¹⁰² *Eudaimonia*, then, is the *telos* in virtue of which we can understand the excellence of all other goods: goods are excellent insofar as they promote or serve as components of *eudaimonia*. Likewise, in the *Politics* political goods such as household management and its constituent relations of rule (master over slave, husband over wife, father over child¹⁰³) are understood in reference to an ultimate end, the city-state. The city-state is the ultimate end of all other political communities (such as the husband and wife, the household, and the village):

¹⁰¹ I do not mean to suggest that Aristotle's teleological approach is confined to his ethical and political thought. Most notably, Aristotle's teleological approach can be found in his accounts of causation and the natural world. For example, see Aristotle's discussion of the final cause as an "end" (or *telos*) in the *Metaphysics*, trans. W. D. Ross, in *The Complete Works of Aristotle, Volume Two*, ed. Jonathan Barnes (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), 1571 (994b5-15). Also see Aristotle's *Physics*, trans. R. P. Hardie and R. K. Gaye, in *The Complete Works of Aristotle, Volume One*, ed. Jonathan Barnes (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), 333-334 (194b30-195a1).

¹⁰² Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 162-163 (1176a33, 1176b32).

¹⁰³ Aristotle, *Politics*, 5 (1253b-10).

We see that every city-state is a community of some sort, and that every community is established for the sake of some good...Clearly, then, while every community aims at some good, the community that has the most authority of all and encompasses all the others aims highest, that is to say, at the good that has the most authority of all. This community is the one called a city-state, the community that is political.¹⁰⁴

Aristotle's teleological method is diffuse, extending throughout the *Ethics* and *Politics*. With this methodology comes a distinct mode of understanding: ends and goods that are not "ultimate" are understood in virtue of what they are *not*, in relation to the best end or highest good. Constitutions that are not "correct"—such as tyranny, oligarchy, and democracy—are classified as *deviant* and conceptualized in relation to the best constitutions—kingship, aristocracy, polity.¹⁰⁵ We have an essentially relational mode of understanding between (among other things) constitutions, persons, and their ends.

The child, too, is conceptualized in virtue of a relational mode of understanding. In both the *Politics* and the *Ethics* the child is taken up in discourse in relation to what he is *not*. The child is a *deviant* in relation to the end of human nature:

We say that each thing's nature—for example, that of a human being, a horse, or a household—is the character it has when its coming-into-being has been completed. Moreover, that for the sake of which something exists, that is to say, its end, is best, and self-sufficiency is both end and best.¹⁰⁶

Aristotle maintains that "reason and understanding" constitute the "natural end" of the human being.¹⁰⁷ With the teleological understanding of being in mind—one that

¹⁰⁴ Aristotle, *Politics*, 1 (1252a-7).

¹⁰⁵ For examples of *deviant* constitutions and their relation to *correct* constitutions, see *Politics*, 67, 77 (1275b, 1279a23, 1279a35), 102 (1289a40), 159 (1310b).

¹⁰⁶ Aristotle, *Politics*, 3-4 (1252b30-1253a).

¹⁰⁷ Aristotle, *Politics*, 219 (1334b15).

understands the essential being or good of a thing in terms of its end—the child is encountered as *incomplete*. More specifically, he is *ethically* incomplete insofar he does not possess the virtue and reason of the adult (the complete moral agent). As Aristotle writes, “since a child is incompletely developed, it is clear that his virtue too does not belong to him in relation to himself but in relation to his end and his leader.”¹⁰⁸ The child will have virtue when he attains completion as the adult.

And the child is *politically* incomplete insofar as he is not the adult citizen (the complete political agent). Children are “citizens *of a sort*, but not unqualified citizens. Instead, a qualification must be added, such as ‘incomplete’ or ‘superannuated’...For we are looking for the unqualified citizen, the one whose claim to citizenship has no defect of this sort that needs to be rectified.”¹⁰⁹ The adult is the “unqualified citizen” and the child is a citizen “given certain assumptions,” namely, that he will overcome his deficiencies and become the adult.¹¹⁰ Until then the child is kept from those activities “not appropriate for someone who is incomplete,”¹¹¹ the political activities of the adult practiced in leisure. As we have seen, he is instead subjected to the educational plan of the state.

Imbued with this teleological mode of understanding, Aristotle’s discourse marks a novel mode of knowing the child. Aristotle is not unique in discussing the child as irrational or appetitive, pre-political or pre-moral; these modes of knowing the child can already be found in Plato. Aristotle’s distinction comes with his teleological method and

¹⁰⁸ Aristotle, *Politics*, 24 (1260a30-32).

¹⁰⁹ Aristotle, *Politics*, 66, 74 (1275a15-21, 1278a3-5).

¹¹⁰ Aristotle, *Politics*, 74 (1278a3-5).

¹¹¹ Aristotle, *Politics*, 233 (1339a30-33).

discourse on the natural as applied to the child. When applied to the child, he is necessarily taken up as deficient. For if it is obvious that the rational adult is the natural end and perfection of the human species, it is just as obvious that the child is *not* the adult and, thus, just as obvious that he is deficient. Following Aristotle's teleological discourse on the child, the child's deficiencies are undisguised, exposed for all to see as clearly as they see a child before them. We might now think of the child as the product of the *adult gaze*: a totalizing act of perception that, to the extent it brings a child into view, constitutes this being as less than the adult, as in need of reform. From the moment the child is taken up in this discourse he has no other position than deficiency as the potentially virtuous and potentially complete being.

Section 3: Rousseau

Rousseau's *Emile* represents a shift in the discourse on the child. The child is no longer approached as the Platonic or Aristotelian non-adult. That is to say, the child is not conceptualized negatively in relation to the ideal adult as political and moral agent of the *polis*. Rousseau's ideal adult—the natural adult or savage—is excellent in spite of (not because of) his place in the state and, consequently, Rousseau's discussion of the child in relation to the ideal adult necessarily shifts. Whereas the child was taken up as a being-to-be-transformed with the end of transformation located in the political and moral adult, Rousseau is concerned with the child as one that must be confined to the *natural* state of being as long as possible: innocent, pure, dependant on things (not wills), and devoid of multifarious passions. Dominant conceptualizations of the child fail, Rousseau argues, precisely insofar as they pass over the nature of the child; they are “always seeking the

man in the child without thinking of what he is before being a man.”¹¹² Educators must recall and preserve the natural state of being located in the child, a state of being distinct from the impoverished condition of the adult in civil society.

To situate the child in the discourse of Rousseau, then, requires understanding his place in a broader account of the natural that permeates Rousseau’s educational and political work. Rousseau’s plan of education—as found in *Emile*—stays true to nature by forming the child as the natural being while his account of the “natural” informs his understanding of the child as non-adult in relation to the “savage” (ideal adult) who will “inhabit cities.”¹¹³ The image of the savage or natural adult structures Rousseau’s approach to the child, serving as the end point in virtue of which the child is educated, rigidly controlled, and made docile throughout *Emile*. This end surrounds Rousseau’s child, directing the plans of the educator and serving as the end in virtue of which the child is paradoxically forced to be free.

3.1: The Child and the Discourse on the Natural

Rousseau begins *Emile* with the following claim: “Everything is good as it leaves the hands of the Author of things; everything degenerates in the hands of man.”¹¹⁴ That which is created by the Author of things is *natural*, an original state of being that serves as standard of the pure and good in human beings and, further, that serves as a point of contrast to the degenerate condition of civilization (issuing from “the hands of man”). In his idealization of the natural, Rousseau sets an “incontestable maxim”: “the first

¹¹² Rousseau, *Emile*, preface, 34. Also see, 90, 115, 170.

¹¹³ Rousseau, *Emile*, 205. Also see 255, 327, 333.

¹¹⁴ Rousseau, *Emile*, 37.

movements of nature are always right” and, thus, “there is no original perversity in the human heart.”¹¹⁵ This understanding of the natural has far reaching implications for his political and educational work, informing his understanding of the child, the correct process of education, the formation of man, and the deviant society. It is in comparison to the natural condition of man in the state of nature that all socio-political, moral, or educational “progress” is evaluated. Given the implications of Rousseau’s discourse on the natural we should briefly turn to a primary context for the discussion of nature and the natural man, the *Discourse on the Origin of Inequality*.

In the *Discourse* Rousseau attempts to grasp man in his “original constitution,”¹¹⁶ a task made difficult given the vast separation between civilized man and natural man in the state of nature:

With original man gradually disappearing, society no longer offers to the eyes of the wise man anything but an assemblage of artificial men and factitious passions which are the work of all these new relations and have no true foundation in nature...savage man and civilized man differ so greatly in the depths of their hearts and in their inclinations, that what constitutes the supreme happiness of one would reduce the other to despair.¹¹⁷

The transition away from the state of nature and natural man toward society and civilized man is a shift from a superior to an inferior state of being. Physically, natural man is “the most advantageously organized of all.”¹¹⁸ Nearly devoid of disease, skilled in providing

¹¹⁵ Rousseau, *Emile*, 92.

¹¹⁶ Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Discourse on the Origin of Inequality*, trans. Donald A. Cress, in *Jean-Jacques Rousseau: The Basic Political Writings*, ed. Donald A. Cress (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 1987), 33.

¹¹⁷ Rousseau, *Discourse*, 80.

¹¹⁸ Rousseau, *Discourse*, 40.

for his needs, and located in a state of nature possessed of abundant resources, natural man is in sound condition. By contrast, civilized man is often crippled by illness and has more needs than his own strength, ability and environment can satisfy.¹¹⁹ Having few relations with others, natural man has few passions—those centering on food, rest, and sex—and a settled imagination that does not reach beyond this tranquil state of being.¹²⁰ By contrast, civilized man, in constant dependence on others, is chained by his desires for power, advantage and esteem.¹²¹ If he is a moral being who possesses reason, he is also one who lacks a robust sense of pity and commits vicious acts at every turn.¹²² According to Rousseau, “reason is what engenders egocentrism” and “turns man in upon himself.”¹²³ Relying on reason and a morality of “subtle arguments,” civilized man turns away from the natural “sentiment of humanity,” and, with it, any feeling for the needs of others that do not concern his own.¹²⁴

Concluding his account of man in the natural state, Rousseau writes:

Wandering in the forests, without industry, without speech, without dwelling, without war, without relationships, with no need for his fellow men, and correspondingly with no desire to do them harm, perhaps never even recognizing any of them individually, savage man, subject to few passions and self-sufficient, had only the sentiments and enlightenment appropriate to that state; he felt only his true needs, took notice of only what he believed he had an interest in seeing;

¹¹⁹ Rousseau, *Discourse*, 42-43.

¹²⁰ Rousseau, *Discourse*, 56.

¹²¹ Rousseau, *Discourse*, 53.

¹²² Rousseau, *Discourse*, 54-55, 67-68.

¹²³ Rousseau, *Discourse*, 54.

¹²⁴ Rousseau, *Discourse*, 55.

and...his intelligence made no more progress than his vanity.¹²⁵

Human beings possess an original constitution that is pure and good and the advance of society marks a perversion of this original constitution. The emergence of societal man brings “progress” in the form of new relations with others and, in turn, new needs, desires, and knowledge. With the advent of these “chains” and the development of social relations with others—beginning in small herds and families and ultimately leading to the formation of laws and the state—a new encounter with oneself and others becomes possible. Rousseau writes:

Each one began to look at others and to want to be looked at himself, and public esteem had a value...And this was the first step toward inequality and, at the same time, toward vice. From these first preferences were born vanity and contempt on the one hand, and shame and envy on the other. And the fermentation caused by these new leavens eventually produces compounds fatal to happiness and innocence.¹²⁶

Natural inequality—disparities in age, physical strength, health and mental acuity—which mattered little in the state of nature, takes on a greater import, becoming aligned with moral or political inequality based on one’s honor, power, or esteem in the eyes of others.¹²⁷ Man becomes a “slave” to his vastly expanded needs and desires and “vicious” insofar as he deceives and uses others to compensate for these newly formed chains.¹²⁸ So many steps of ostensible progress “toward the perfection of the individual”—the

¹²⁵ Rousseau, *Discourse*, 57.

¹²⁶ Rousseau, *Discourse*, 64.

¹²⁷ Rousseau, *Discourse*, 38, 67.

¹²⁸ Rousseau, *Discourse*, 67-68.

progress of reason, morality, society, and law—are in fact so many steps “toward the decay of the species.”¹²⁹

In short, in Rousseau’s discourse on the natural, the transition from the natural to the civil state is a disaster for human happiness and innocence. But Rousseau’s discourse on the natural is of particular import for our purposes given his coupling of the natural state of being and the condition of the child. As discussed in the *Discourse*, prior to the advance of society savage man “remained ever a child.”¹³⁰ He was innocent, influenced by few passions, and possessed of no morality, abstract reason or imagination; he was childlike. In *Emile* the link between the natural and the child only becomes more explicit. The common transition from childhood to adulthood can be read as a microcosm of the transition of natural to civilized man as recounted in the *Discourse*. Like the natural man the child begins in a state of innocence, living simply via the use of the senses and possessing no conception of morality. He has needs, but they are few and his happiness is not difficult to secure. Like natural man, the child does not bear the artificial chains of social and moral relations with others and the passions born of these relations. But as he grows in society, the child becomes the societal and moral man, taking on relations with others and multifarious passions and appetites. There is, then, a thematic unity between Rousseau’s account of natural man in the state of nature and the transition to civil society, and his account of the child: both natural man and the child possess a purity that is corrupted in society where “being something and appearing to be something become two

¹²⁹ Rousseau, *Discourse*, 65.

¹³⁰ Rousseau, *Discourse*, 57.

completely different things.”¹³¹ The threat of this corruption of the natural structures Rousseau’s approach to the child throughout *Emile*.

3.2: The Education and Control of Emile

Rousseau’s discourse on the natural and the child come together insofar as the child is conceptualized as the natural being. Like the adult, the child is located in society. But he is still close to nature, only recently delivered from the Author of things and not yet (fully) deformed by the perversions of society. Rousseau’s idealization of nature and the child as representative of natural purity informs a specific mode of approach to the child. As the natural being within an artificial society the child becomes an object of control and constraint in order to ensure that his innocence and purity are preserved. The child must become a *docile* being, one that will yield to the educational strategy of the adult (isolating the child from the impurities of society). A docile child will not resist the control of the adult, nor the coercion intended to prevent the loss of his purity in the midst of an impure society. Thus, ensuring the child’s docility—controlling his every movement and making him reliant on his educator instead of passions and desires—is an integral element in the preservation of his innocence and, in turn, the eventual realization of the adult noble savage (a being that has reached maturity largely unhindered by the multifarious chains of society). To this end, Rousseau’s educator will deploy the natural method of education.

The “systematic part” of the natural educational method is nothing other than the “march of nature.”¹³² But we do not live in a natural state and, thus, nature can no longer unfold in man fully isolated from the effects of society:

¹³¹ Rousseau, *Discourse*, 67.

In the present state of things a man abandoned to himself in the midst of other men from birth would be the most disfigured of all. Prejudices, authority, necessity, example, all the social institutions in which we find ourselves submerged would stifle nature in him and put nothing in its place. Nature there would be like a shrub that chance had caused to be born in the middle of a path and that the passers-by soon cause to perish.¹³³

It is through natural education that the child will gain strength, cultivate his faculties, and maintain the natural state of being (as far as is possible) in the midst of society. Within the artifice of society this education must take a precise form, uniting education by men and by things (those forms of education over which we possess some control) for the benefit of education by nature (over which we do not have control).¹³⁴ In practice, the natural education of Emile (Rousseau's imaginary pupil¹³⁵) takes the form of an "education of things," a choice of method stemming from Rousseau's account of the child's nature and the natural development of our "original dispositions":

We are born with the use of our senses, and from our birth we are affected in various ways by the objects surrounding us. As soon as we have, so to speak, consciousness of our sensations, we are disposed to seek or avoid the objects which produce them, at first according to whether they are pleasant or unpleasant to us, then according to the conformity or lack of it that we find between us and these objects, and finally according to the judgments that we make about them

¹³² Rousseau, *Emile*, 34, 38.

¹³³ Rousseau, *Emile*, 37.

¹³⁴ Rousseau discusses the three basic forms of education—education from nature, from men, or from things—in B.I, 38-39. The education of nature is the "internal development of our faculties and organs." The education of men is "the use we are taught to make of this [natural] development." Finally, the education of things is "what we acquire from our own experience about the objects which affect us." In practice, Rousseau substitutes (or withdraws the distinction between) an education of things for an education of men throughout *Emile*, thereby forming the method of his "natural education."

¹³⁵ Emile is first introduced to the reader at 50-51 of *Emile*.

on the basis of the idea of happiness or of perfection given us by reason. These dispositions are strengthened as we become more capable of using our senses and more enlightened; but constrained by our habits, they are more or less corrupted by our opinions. Before this corruption, they are what I call in us *nature*.¹³⁶

By nature our education begins at birth as we sense and respond to objects (“things”) in our environment. Ideally, the depth of our responses to these objects develops naturally; we maintain sensory engagement with our environment and incorporate other faculties—such as judgment, reason, imagination, and sentiment—as we age, encounter new relations of objects, and develop the requisite knowledge to master them. Through this education by things the child remains a “physical being” (as opposed to a “moral” or “social” being), only feeling the “chains of necessity” in his own needs.¹³⁷ In moving from sensations to more complex ideas based on relations between objects in his environment the child has a natural impetus toward developmental maturity, culminating in the move from purely physical being to “moral being” in understanding one’s “relations with men.”¹³⁸

Thus, to perform education by nature we need not *do* anything, we need only follow “the order of nature” by exposing the child to the bonds of necessity found in the relation between objects, the child’s own needs, and the relative strength he possesses to satisfy them.¹³⁹ Education by nature as deployed in an education by things is a *negative* education; the adult does not attempt positive instruction of the child, but rather, focuses

¹³⁶ Rousseau, *Emile*, 39.

¹³⁷ Rousseau, *Emile*, 203, 207.

¹³⁸ Rousseau, *Emile*, 203, 214.

¹³⁹ Rousseau, *Emile*, 85, 96, 80-81, 166.

on “securing the heart from vice and the mind from error,” thereby allowing nature to unfold in the child as he responds to his environment.¹⁴⁰ Departing from this form of education marks the error of common pedagogy, exposing the child to the vices of society and, in consequence, the corruption of nature. By becoming dependent on others (wills) the child is prematurely introduced to artificial relations of men and society; he no longer develops internally via the unfolding of nature. Worst of all, substituting the education of society for that of nature fosters the premature formation of *amour-propre*.¹⁴¹ To love and preserve oneself (self-love) is the most natural of sentiments, but bound up in social and moral relations we flatter the child’s *amour-propre*, we teach the child to be dependent on wills and to make comparisons between himself and others.¹⁴² Ignoring the demands of nature, we instead plant the seeds of “hateful and irascible passions” born of these comparisons, such as jealousy, vanity, deceit, and vengeance.¹⁴³ In order to avoid this problem the educator must employ a “well-regulated freedom” over the child, exposing him to “the force of things alone without any vice having the occasion to germinate in him.”¹⁴⁴

At the beginning of this section I remarked on the natural educator’s need to control and constrain the child in order to maintain the child as natural being. At this point, however, there seems to be a distinct *lack* of constraint and control on the part of Rousseau’s educator. On the contrary, Rousseau’s educator deploys an education by

¹⁴⁰ Rousseau, *Emile*, 93. Also see 41, 96, 107, 119, 124, 171, 182.

¹⁴¹ Rousseau, *Emile*, 85, 68.

¹⁴² Rousseau, *Discourse*, 35; *Emile*, 92-93.

¹⁴³ Rousseau, *Emile*, 213-214.

¹⁴⁴ Rousseau, *Emile*, 92.

things, a negative education, in virtue of which the child develops naturally and learns through his attempts to master his environment. If anything, Rousseau's discussion of natural education repeatedly stresses the *freedom* of the child:

The first of all goods is not authority but freedom. The truly free man wants only what he can do and does what he pleases. That is my fundamental maxim. It need only be applied to childhood for all the rules of education to flow from it.¹⁴⁵

Rousseau argues against the physical constraint of infants—swaddling, walking-strings, etc.¹⁴⁶—just as he argues against the constraint of the young adult by passions emerging from his premature introduction to the moral and social relations of civilized adults.¹⁴⁷ Each of these constraints—whether physical, moral, or social—is a chain placed on the developing human being and an affront to natural freedom. In order to provide children more true freedom Rousseau keeps the infant and young child on the path of nature, obeying nothing but the necessity of things in their environment. As the child develops into a rational, social, and moral being freedom is maintained insofar as the natural constitution of the child has been preserved. Though not living apart from society, Rousseau writes, “it suffices that, enclosed in a social whirlpool, he not let himself get carried away by either the passions or the opinions of men, that he see with his eyes, that he feel with his heart, that no authority govern him beyond his own reason.”¹⁴⁸

But, in truth, subjection of the child has never been absent from Rousseau's natural education and tactics of constraint and control are inextricably tied to the

¹⁴⁵ Rousseau, *Emile*, 84.

¹⁴⁶ Rousseau, *Emile*, 43-44, 78.

¹⁴⁷ Rousseau, *Emile*, 194, 219.

¹⁴⁸ Rousseau, *Emile*, 255.

educator's deployment of "well-regulated freedom." In order to secure the child in his "original form" we must "preserve it from the instant he comes into the world," we must "take hold of him and leave him no more before he is a man."¹⁴⁹ From the very start of the natural education of the child the discourse on freedom is paralleled by an exhaustive practice of control and coercion:

Let him always believe he is the master, and let it always be you who are. There is no subjection so perfect as that which keeps the appearance of freedom. Thus the will itself is made captive. The poor child who knows nothing, who can do nothing, who has no learning, is he not at your mercy? Do you not dispose, with respect to him, of everything which surrounds him? Are you not the master of affecting him as you please? Are not his labors, his games, his pleasures, his pains, all in your hands without his knowing it? Doubtless he ought to do only what he wants; but he ought to want only what you want him to do. He ought not to make a step without your having foreseen it; he ought not to open his mouth without your knowing what he is going to say.¹⁵⁰

This "perfect subjection" starts from Emile's earliest youth in the education by things. The objects that Emile "naturally" encounters—for example, the garden or the forest—are all carefully presented by the adult, as is the entire surrounding environment in which he will learn.¹⁵¹ As the child matures, gaining reason and sentiments, control continues in channeling the child's own desires to the end of natural education (the adult savage). Whereas the young child was coerced by force (directly controlling the objects and environment of the child), the maturing child and his sentiments present "many new

¹⁴⁹ Rousseau, *Emile*, 48.

¹⁵⁰ Rousseau, *Emile*, 120, 189.

¹⁵¹ Rousseau, *Emile*, 95, 98-99, 112, 180-181.

chains” to “put around his heart.”¹⁵² To deploy these sentiments effectively (for example, sentiments of friendship, gratitude, and self-love), the child is made subject to a continuous surveillance by the adult, “observing him, spying on him without letup and without appearing to do so, sensing ahead of time all his sentiments and forestalling those he ought not to have.”¹⁵³

In essence, Rousseau’s account of the free child entails the child’s docility, and the perfection of natural education is located in large part in the progression of control over the child’s development: beginning with docility via the use of force, progressing to the use of the child’s own emerging passions as tools of control, and ending with Emile willing his own control at the hands of the adult.¹⁵⁴ Reflecting on the perfection of Emile’s subjection, Rousseau writes:

It has taken fifteen years of care to contrive this hold for myself. I did not educate him then; I prepared him to be educated. He is now sufficiently prepared to be docile...It is true that I leave him the appearance of independence, but he was never better subjected to me; for now he is subjected because he wants to be.¹⁵⁵

Perhaps the last words of Emile in Rousseau’s treatise on education speak best to the perfection of his docility: “We [Emile and Sophie] shall be docile. As long as I live, I shall need you. I need you more than ever now that my functions as a man begin.”¹⁵⁶

¹⁵² To see this evolution of modes of control see *Emile*, 91, 316.

¹⁵³ Rousseau, *Emile*, 189.

¹⁵⁴ Rousseau, *Emile*, 233-34.

¹⁵⁵ Rousseau, *Emile*, 332. Also see 234.

¹⁵⁶ Rousseau, *Emile*, 480. My use of this passage and the claim that follows have benefited from the analysis of Julia Simon in “Jean-Jacques Rousseau’s Children,” in *The*

Even in progressing through Rousseau's natural education and achieving the mark of manhood in securing a relationship with a woman, Sophie, (another area of the child's life that has been meticulously orchestrated by the adult¹⁵⁷), Emile is fully docile and always in need of the adult. If Emile is "free," he has never been more controlled.¹⁵⁸

3.3: The Natural Child

Rousseau's natural education and, in turn, the strategy for the control and coercion of the child are directly linked to his conception of the child as a natural being. On Rousseau's account, childhood is a distinct stage of being with "ways of seeing, thinking, and feeling which are proper to it."¹⁵⁹ By nature, childhood is a time of "reason's sleep," with the child's experience of the world being constituted by sensations and simple ideas rather than reason, memory, judgment, and robust imagination.¹⁶⁰ Children are "little innocents," weak and pure, curious and naïve.¹⁶¹ Taken together, Rousseau's normative commitment to the superiority of the natural over the civilized and, further, his idealized conception of the child as a natural being provide for the need to

Philosopher's Child. Critical Perspectives in the Western Tradition, eds. Susan M. Turner and Gareth B. Matthews (Rochester: Rochester University Press, 1998), 114.

¹⁵⁷ Rousseau, *Emile*, 327, 407, 450.

¹⁵⁸ Of course, for Rousseau, the child's constraint *just is* the means of his freedom. To allow the child a greater measure of autonomy (to be "free" in a common sense of the term) in his education or daily life would risk his premature exposure to passions and the artifice of civilization. This exposure would ruin the natural purity of the child and, in turn, the formation of the natural adult (the end of Rousseau's natural education). Thus, on Rousseau's account, the child is "free" through control and coercion given that these tactics prevent him from becoming driven by desires. And, conversely, all those who regard themselves as "free" in society are mistaken as, in fact, they are fully "controlled" by their possessions, needs, and passions.

¹⁵⁹ Rousseau, *Emile*, 90.

¹⁶⁰ Rousseau, *Emile*, 107.

¹⁶¹ Rousseau, *Emile*, 79, 88, 167, 217, 221, 257.

control and coerce those designated as children to preserve this state of being. It is up to the adult to preserve the natural (the child) within the artificial society.

To see the relationship between the discourse on the natural and Rousseau's concept of the child we can look at a parallel case of this discourse as applied to woman in Book V of *Emile*. Again, Rousseau's claim is ostensibly a simple one: "the essential thing is to be what nature made us."¹⁶² I quote at length Rousseau's account of what nature has made woman:

The quest for abstract and speculative truths, principles, and axioms in the sciences, for everything that tends to generalize ideas, is not within the competence of women. All their studies ought to be related to practice. It is for them to apply the principles man has found, and to make the observations which lead man to the establishment of principles. Regarding what is not immediately connected with their duties, all the reflections of women ought to be directed to the study of men or the pleasing kinds of knowledge that have only taste as their aim; for, as regards works of genius, they are out of the reach of women. Nor do women have sufficient precision and attention to succeed at the exact sciences. And as for the physical sciences, they are for the sex which is more active, gets around more, and sees more objects, the sex which has more strength and uses it more to judge the relations of sensible beings and the laws of nature. Woman, who is weak and who sees nothing outside the house, estimates and judges the forces she can put to work to make up for her weakness, and those forces are men's passions. Her science of mechanics is more powerful than ours; all her levers unsettle the human heart. She must have the art to make us want to do everything which her sex cannot do by itself and which is necessarily agreeable to it. She must, therefore, make a profound study of the mind of man.¹⁶³

Paradoxically, within a discourse (on the natural) Rousseau is attempting to place these claims beyond the reach of discourse; ostensibly, these are not claims at all, they are

¹⁶² Rousseau, *Emile*, 386.

¹⁶³ Rousseau, *Emile*, 386-387.

natural attributes of the woman as read from the book of nature.¹⁶⁴ Whereas man is by nature “active and strong,” woman *just is* “passive and weak;” she has been “made to please and to be subjugated.”¹⁶⁵ While man has reason to restrain his desires, woman has modesty and the virtue of chastity to constrain her own.¹⁶⁶ If these attributes seem to disadvantage women it is because, in society, we misunderstand the inherent goodness and purity of the natural order of things.¹⁶⁷ To correct this perversion we should move closer to nature by educating women to embrace the “glory” of their weakness, to learn to “please men, to be useful to them, to make herself loved and honored by them, to raise them when young, to care for them when grown, to counsel them, to console them, to make their lives agreeable and sweet.”¹⁶⁸

I cite this discussion not to establish Rousseau’s sexism (not because I do not find his sexism problematic or worthy of attention, but because the *fact* of his sexism is clear enough on its own) but to point out the role of the concept of the natural in supporting his conception of the natural woman within this discourse. Regardless of his claims, Rousseau is not pointing to *the* natural woman (and whether there even is *a* natural womanhood to point to is certainly not beyond debate), but within *his* discourse on the

¹⁶⁴ Rousseau, *Emile*, 63.

¹⁶⁵ Rousseau, *Emile*, 358, 361.

¹⁶⁶ Rousseau, *Emile*, 359.

¹⁶⁷ Rousseau, *Emile*, 361.

¹⁶⁸ Rousseau, *Emile*, 364-365.

natural he is providing support for a particular conception of woman—as passive, gentle, weak, etc.—already prevalent in his historical era and socio-cultural setting.¹⁶⁹

Likewise, in Rousseau’s discussion of the natural qualities of the child (innocent, pure, naïve, curious) we are seeing a particular concept of the child bound up in the discourse on the natural and presented as the “nature” of the child, as beyond discourse. It is true that the attributes of Rousseau’s natural child—his curiosity, purity, and innocence—are more palatable to the contemporary reader than those traits ascribed to the woman, but Rousseau’s child is no less a result of a particular discourse on the natural. That is to say, if through a greater critical distance it has become obvious to us that Rousseau maintains a particular, sexist conception of woman via his discourse on the natural, it should be no less obvious that he is developing a particular conception of the child via his discourse on the natural. Neither of these beings is “natural,” even on Rousseau’s own terms.¹⁷⁰ He is not finding and reporting on a pre-existent child as found in nature, as given directly by the Author of things. Rather, Rousseau *just is* the “minister

¹⁶⁹ Throughout this chapter, I have attempted to show that the Western philosophical concept of the child (as present in the work of Plato, Aristotle, Rousseau, and Kant) is not simply an objective description of the child’s nature or essential qualities. By providing a reading of the concept of the child within the broader projects of canonical texts, I intend to contest a quasi-Platonic understanding of a concept (one that simply makes intelligible what the child essentially is) by demonstrating that the concept of the child is formed in relation to the broader moral and political concerns of the philosopher in question. These broader moral and political concerns—such as the formation of the *polis*, the ideal adult, or the natural savage—provide the context within which the conceptualization of the child occurs and, I contend, shape the concept of the child at hand.

¹⁷⁰ That is to say, Rousseau is not providing a “natural” account of the woman or child as he presents it (one that describes the woman or child as they essentially are, apart from any normative evaluations or presuppositions). Rather, his own normatively loaded conception of what the woman or child is and ought to be is cloaked in essentialist language on being “what nature made us” (*Emile*, 386).

of nature,”¹⁷¹ determining what is natural and what is not. In *Emile* it is his discourse, bound up, no doubt, with numerous other discussions of his era that determines what it means to be the natural man, woman, and child.

But the natural child will not always remain as such, nor should he on Rousseau’s account. If the child is encountered as a pure being to be preserved he is also a weak being with incomplete freedom insofar as he lacks the strength to satisfy his needs. The child must mature physically, mentally, and emotionally; he must become self-sufficient like the natural adult. Thus, in conjunction with the idealization and preservation of the child in society, we should not forget the *end* of this preservation. The child is approached as the non-adult insofar as he is not and must become the savage adult. A child is, by nature, “made to become a man”¹⁷² and the progression of the natural culminates in savage adulthood. To this end, as stated by Rousseau, education *just is* the “art of forming men”¹⁷³ with this formation requiring the control and coercion so prevalent throughout *Emile*. Rousseau describes this transition—from childhood to adulthood—as a “second birth,” such that “it is now that man is truly born to life and now that nothing human is foreign to him. Up to now our care has only been a child’s game. It takes on true importance only at present.”¹⁷⁴

This is not to say that Rousseau maintains the same approach to the child as his predecessors. Unlike Plato and Aristotle, Rousseau does not regard the child as in need of control insofar as he is a deficient being, lacking the qualities of the adult. Rousseau pays

¹⁷¹ Rousseau, *Emile*, 317.

¹⁷² Rousseau, *Emile*, 178, 95.

¹⁷³ Rousseau, *Emile*, preface, 33.

¹⁷⁴ Rousseau, *Emile*, 212.

a great deal of attention to the distinctive goods of the child (for example, his purity and innocence) and, in this regard, his engagement with the child is novel in the history of Western philosophy. Given his conception of the pure, natural child, Rousseau deploys a controlling pedagogical strategy for the child's own preservation and betterment. That is, Rousseau's controlling approach is not intentionally *set against* the child as an animalistic, appetitive being that must be reformed. However, the fact remains that insofar as the child fails to realize the end of adulthood he is presented as a problem, as a threat to the natural who must be corrected via Rousseau's education. In this sense, the child—despite Rousseau's regard for his distinctive goods—is also treated as an instrumental being, one that is valued by the adult insofar as he makes possible greater moral and political projects (whether the formation of the *Kallipolis* or the formation of the natural adult in the midst of an artificial society). For Rousseau, the figure of the natural savage remains the *telos* of human existence and, thus, the child is often taken up insofar as he must *become* this adult. In this sense, the need to control and coerce the child is not only grounded in an attempt to preserve the goods of the young child, but also, to provide for the formation of the “man of nature,”¹⁷⁵ the ideal adult as savage.

Section 4: Kant

Kant's educational, political, and moral work presents us with familiar themes as embedded in the discourse on the child in the history of Western philosophy. As in the work of Plato and Aristotle before him, Kant's child often surfaces as a deficient being in relation to the rational, moral, and political adult. And, like Rousseau, Kant develops a systematic educational treatise to ensure a proper pedagogical approach to the child, a

¹⁷⁵ Rousseau, *Emile*, 255.

sustained education that will (as far as is possible) ensure the realization of ideal adulthood. Encountered as the non-adult, the child is approached as a being-to-be-transformed within strategies of education and control.

But Kant also presents a novel form of approaching the problem of the child insofar as he is bound up in the specificities of his own educational, political, and moral concerns. Kant's moral philosophy allows for the child to be encountered as one who is not a *full* member of humanity, as a *person* lacking the freedom from nature to self-legislate in accord with the autonomy of his own *will*. Kant's political philosophy provides for the child to be encountered as a "passive" member of the commonwealth in opposition to the full or "active" membership of the adult (male). Within the broader framework of Kant's political and moral philosophy we can recognize the child as always outside the gates of the kingdom of ends (or the moral realm as such) and the commonwealth. The child's potential for full moral and political status requires that he not be mistreated by those inside (or, those *ideally* "inside" in the case of the kingdom of ends), but he cannot enter until his deficiencies—his undeveloped reason and animalistic nature—have fallen away. In order to become an "active" member of the moral and political realm—that is to say, in order to become a moral and political agent—the child's original, appetitive nature must first change into that of the rational, self-determining adult. By nature, then, the child is a moral and political agent (adult) in waiting, a becoming that must learn to yield to the "commands of reason" or remain forever in the deficient state of childhood.

4.1: Educating the Child for Moral and Political Adulthood

In *On Education* Kant claims that “the greatest and most difficult problem to which man can devote himself is the problem of education.”¹⁷⁶ The greatness of this problem stems, in part, from the fact that “man can only become man by education. He is merely what education makes him.”¹⁷⁷ There is a tremendous responsibility on the part of the adult educator to determine the formation of man through the cultivation of the “germs” or “natural gifts” lying undeveloped in the child.¹⁷⁸ If executed poorly, education will fail to lead the child to moral and political adulthood; if executed properly, the child “fulfills his destiny” and becomes the moral and political adult.¹⁷⁹ The contours of the problem of education expand insofar as Kant views this discipline as *the* key element in improving humanity as a whole:

With education is involved the great secret of the perfection of human nature. It is only now that something may be done in this direction, since for the first time people have begun to judge rightly and understand clearly, what actually belongs to a good education. It is delightful to realize that through education human nature will be continually improved, and brought to such a condition as is worthy of the nature of man. This opens out to us the prospect of a happier human race in the future.¹⁸⁰

Succeeding in this task requires the work of “the whole human race,” with the pedagogical efforts of each generation improving on those of the past while informing

¹⁷⁶ Immanuel Kant, *On Education*, trans. Annette Churton (Mineola: Dover Publications, 2003), 11.

¹⁷⁷ Kant, *On Education*, 6.

¹⁷⁸ Kant, *On Education*, 9.

¹⁷⁹ Kant, *On Education*, 9.

¹⁸⁰ Kant, *On Education*, 7-8.

those of the present and future.¹⁸¹ Education, which is an *art*, must become a *science* toward the end of advancing “the human race towards its destiny.”¹⁸²

This rather ambitious plan of education cannot begin at once with the whole human race. The educator must begin more modestly with the undeveloped material at hand, the child, and a pedagogical strategy that we can read as a microcosm of the greater ambition to improve the human race. As Kant writes, “Children ought to be educated, not for the present, but for a possibly improved condition of man in the future; that is, in a manner which is adapted to the *idea of humanity* and the whole destiny of man.”¹⁸³ To achieve this dual end—improvement of the child and, in turn, the human race—the child is first preserved by techniques of *nurture* (basic elements of feeding and tending to the young child) and corrected by techniques of *discipline*. Discipline is a *negative* education (as opposed to *positive* instruction) with the aim of counteracting the child’s “natural unruliness.”¹⁸⁴ The “unruliness” of the child largely consists of the determination of his will by “animal impulses” and, consequently, a life lived in “independence of law.”¹⁸⁵ Discipline is deployed by the adult to counter the child’s animalistic state of being, preventing the child from “being turned aside by his animal impulses from humanity, his appointed end.”¹⁸⁶ In practice, this strategy takes the form of subjecting the child to laws

¹⁸¹ Kant, *On Education*, 10-11, 13.

¹⁸² Kant, *On Education*, 11, 13-14.

¹⁸³ Kant, *On Education*, 14.

¹⁸⁴ Kant, *On Education*, 3.

¹⁸⁵ Kant, *On Education*, 3.

¹⁸⁶ Kant, *On Education*, 3.

(of mankind, of school, etc.) and punishment at an early age as once habits and a certain character are formed they are extremely difficult to change:

Men should therefore accustom themselves early to yield to the commands of reason, for if a man be allowed to follow his own will in his youth, without opposition, a certain lawlessness will cling to him throughout his life.¹⁸⁷

As the child advances in age discipline is united with *physical education* of the body and mind, an aspect of Kant's educational plan that is heavily influenced by Rousseau's *Emile*.¹⁸⁸ In its early stages, physical education (like discipline) is classified as a *negative* education, "that is, we have not to add anything to the provision of Nature, but merely to see that such provision is duly carried out."¹⁸⁹ Thus, like Rousseau, Kant rejects "artificial instruments" of education—such as swaddling, leading strings, and excessive clothing—that inhibit the freedom of children and contribute to their dependence on others.¹⁹⁰ The key here is to provide the child only with "natural opposition" and to avoid the introduction of new passions and sentiments that will stoke the child's animalistic nature (as happens, for example, when the adult caters to the crying child).¹⁹¹ Taken together, discipline and negative physical education make his will "docile" for positive educational training.¹⁹²

¹⁸⁷ Kant, *On Education*, 4, 7.

¹⁸⁸ For more on the influence of Rousseau on Kant's educational theory see Joseph R. Reiser's "Kant and Rousseau on Moral Education," in *Kant and Education*, eds. Klas Roth and Chris W. Suprenant (New York: Routledge, 2012). Also see Phillip Scuderi's "Rousseau, Kant, and the Pedagogy of Deception," in *Kant and Education*.

¹⁸⁹ Kant, *On Education*, 39, 56-57.

¹⁹⁰ Kant, *On Education*, 38, 41-42, 44.

¹⁹¹ Kant, *On Education*, 40-42, 47, 49, 51.

¹⁹² Kant, *On Education*, 57.

Building on early physical education, *positive* physical education (*culture*) concerns the exercise of the child's mental faculties with a continuing emphasis (like Rousseau) on dispensing with "artificial aids" in the training of mental acuity.¹⁹³ The physical cultivation of the mind involves both the development of the "superior" (understanding, judgment, reason) and "inferior" faculties (cognition, senses, imagination, memory, attention, intelligence) and occurs primarily via child's play or in work ("scholastic culture").¹⁹⁴ In this form of education—especially in play—the child naturally develops his body and mind and sets the ground for denying his animal impulses as a moral adult:

For the sake of these games the boy will deny himself his other wants, and thus train himself unconsciously for other and greater privations...for that very reason these games must not be mere games, but games having some end and object. For the more a child's body is strengthened and hardened in this way, the more surely will he be saved from the ruinous consequences of over-indulgence.¹⁹⁵

Having outlined the basic elements and ends of nurture, discipline, and physical education we can turn to the primary aim of Kant's education: *moral training* and practical education.¹⁹⁶ The basic distinction between Kant's strategies of education is clear: whereas much of physical education is *passive*, with the child being subjected to

¹⁹³ Kant, *On Education*, 58.

¹⁹⁴ Kant, *On Education*, 78-79, 71, 67.

¹⁹⁵ Kant, *On Education*, 64. Kant's emphasis on the need for games to have an "end and object" should be read alongside his general conception of games as means of child training. The child enjoys games, but he also must deny himself other "wants" in order to select and play a game. Through game play, the child learns to accept certain privations in order to seek an end (playing the game). This is a primitive form of the ability adult moral actors must have in order to deny their impulses and pursue moral ends.

¹⁹⁶ Kant, *On Education*, 20-21.

the adult's plan of education, moral training must be *active* for the child. That is to say, in his moral education the child must understand his actions as principled (not merely assigned to him by an adult) and related to the idea of duty.¹⁹⁷ Moral training:

depends not upon discipline, but upon 'maxims.' All will be spoilt if moral training rests upon examples, threats, punishments, and so on. It would then be merely discipline. We must see that the child does right on account of his own 'maxims,' and not merely from habit; and not only that he does right, but that he does it because it is right. For the whole moral value of actions consists in 'maxims' concerning the good.¹⁹⁸

For moral training to be successful more is required than obedience or prudent action on the part of the child. The child must also learn to "act according to 'maxims,' the reasonableness of which he is able to see for himself."¹⁹⁹ This lawful existence—so foreign to the child in his original condition—requires the gradual "formation of character" (character being "readiness to act in accordance with 'maxims'"), a process that begins with the child feeling the necessity of duty to law as he is subjected to rules by the adult and culminates (ideally) with the child exercising his practical freedom by subjecting his actions to the law of his own will.²⁰⁰

The child embodies a problem for this educational strategy insofar as it is unclear how the adult can educate a deficient being—necessarily using methods of submission and restraint—to be a free, autonomous adult. As Kant writes, "one of the greatest problems of education is how to unite submission to the necessary *restraint* with the

¹⁹⁷ Kant, *On Education*, 66-67, 77.

¹⁹⁸ Kant, *On Education*, 77.

¹⁹⁹ Kant, *On Education*, 83.

²⁰⁰ Kant, *On Education*, 84-91, 98.

child's capability of exercising his *freewill*—for restraint is necessary. How am I to develop the sense of freedom in spite of this restraint?"²⁰¹ In educating a child who is animalistic, who is pre-moral, pre-political, and not fully rational, restraint is necessary.²⁰² But to be successful Kant's educational strategy must provide for the child to move beyond motivation based on restraint to the recognition of freedom and humanity as determining the will. Ultimately, Kant's solution is to prove to the child that "restraint is only laid upon him that he may learn in time to use his liberty aright, and that his mind is being cultivated so that one day he may be free."²⁰³ But it is not clear exactly when the child will make this transition, shedding his deficient nature and coming to act as a practically free, autonomous individual.²⁰⁴ Nor, given Kant's numerous warnings about the lasting effects of early habituation, is it clear that an early education in constraint and external discipline will not act as a lasting hindrance to the child's ability (as he progresses toward adulthood) to act as a free and autonomous moral agent.

But my aim here is not to debate the merits or empirical problems of Kant's pedagogy. Rather, I want to disclose the child's location in Kant's account of education and moral and political agency. To this end, it is of greater import that we recognize what now sits plainly in view—the child's emergence as a *problem* in the first place (*prior to*

²⁰¹ Kant, *On Education*, 27.

²⁰² Kant, *On Education*, 3-4, 26.

²⁰³ Kant, *On Education*, 28.

²⁰⁴ Kant maintains that this transition is "generally reached" at the age of sixteen. See *On Education*, 26.

any practical discussion on solving the problem that the child embodies).²⁰⁵ The child is presented as a problem given, first, Kant's emphasis on moving the child from his deficient condition to ideal adulthood and, second, the emergence of obstacles to this transition as located in the child's deficient nature. Much hinges on the solution to this problem: the plan of *On Education* presents us with the most systematic discussion of the formation of Kant's moral and political agent. By nature the child is not disposed to these conditions and this is precisely why a systematic plan of education is both necessary and problematic when unable to rectify his deficiencies.

4.2: The Child of the Commonwealth and the Kingdom of Ends

The location (and absence) of the child in Kant's moral and political work reinforces the child's location as deficient being in *On Education*. For example, consider Kant's discussion of the attributes of the political agent, the citizen, in *The Doctrine of Right*:

In terms of rights, the attributes of a citizen, inseparable from his essence (as a citizen), are: lawful *freedom*, the attribute of obeying no other law than that to which he has given his consent; civil *equality*, that of not recognizing among the *people* any superior with the moral capacity to bind him as a matter of right in a way that he could not in turn bind the other; and third, the attribute of civil *independence*, of owing his existence and preservation to his own rights and powers

²⁰⁵ The child's status as a problem is not unique to Kant. Recall that for Plato the child is regarded as a problem insofar as he is a potential threat to the *polis*. The child is *new* and, thus, does not grasp the norms of the adult and traditions of the state. The child must be compelled (through various strategies of control) to seek these ends. In a similar fashion, the child also surfaces as a problem in Aristotle's ethical and political work. The condition of the child is problematic insofar as it is inhospitable to the excellent life, and, in turn, constitutes a potential threat to the formation of the excellent *polis* (which requires an excellent citizenry). Finally, although Rousseau does not primarily regard the child as a problem, the child is potentially problematic to the extent he fails to develop toward the end of the natural adult. This explains, in part, Rousseau's contention that the child must be controlled and made docile by the adult educator. Only through precise measures of control can the child be kept separate from the corrupting influence of society and realize the end of the natural adult.

as a member of the commonwealth, not to the choice of another among the people. From his independence follows his civil personality, his attribute of not needing to be represented by another where rights are concerned.²⁰⁶

It is clear that the child is *not* the citizen, or, more precisely, he is a *passive* as opposed to an *active* citizen of the state.²⁰⁷ The child's inability to act as a full member of the commonwealth (as the *active* citizen) is explained, in part, by his deficiencies as outlined in *On Education*: his undeveloped reason and animalistic nature. In the political realm these attributes take on new relevance; they prevent the child from securing his independence from nature and from the adult to take on a "civil personality."²⁰⁸

The child does possess limited rights in the commonwealth. The child *qua* "human being" must not be violated in his "freedom and equality," he must not be grossly mistreated or subjected to laws that violate his status as a *person*.²⁰⁹ But the child lacks all of the substantive attributes of the adult citizen (lawful freedom, civil equality, and civil independence). Insofar as he is deficient in this regard he must be treated as a passive "part" of the state as opposed to an active "member" with the standing to participate in political activity (voting, cooperation in drafting laws, etc.).²¹⁰ The child's existence in the commonwealth is "only inherence" and he—in a similar fashion to other "mere underlings," women and common laborers—must be tolerated by and depend on

²⁰⁶ Immanuel Kant, *The Doctrine of Right*, trans. Mary J. Gregor, in *The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Immanuel Kant. Practical Philosophy*, ed. Mary J. Gregor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 458 (6: 314).

²⁰⁷ Kant, *Doctrine of Right*, 458 (6: 314).

²⁰⁸ Kant, *Doctrine of Right*, 458 (6: 314).

²⁰⁹ Kant, *Doctrine of Right*, 458 (6: 315).

²¹⁰ Kant, *Doctrine of Right*, 458 (6: 314).

the good will of the active citizen until he reaches maturity and can participate fully in the commonwealth.²¹¹

In discussing Kant's citizen (the political agent), then, we are discussing the independent, propertied adult male. The child is understood in relation to this adult as deficient, as the *passive* citizen until he becomes the *active* adult. If we want to approach the concept of the child in Kant's political discourse we should look to the most primary political union: the family. Within the family (parents and their children) children are understood on a property model as a *possession* of their parents.²¹² This is not to say that the child—brought into the world without his consent by the choice of his parents—is a mere *thing* lacking rights as a *person* against his parents. On the contrary, through the act of procreation parents take on an obligation to their children. The child has an “original innate (not acquired) right” to the care of his parents until he reaches independence.²¹³

From this obligation:

there must necessarily arise the right of parents to *manage* and develop the child, as long as he has not yet mastered the use of his members or of his understanding: the right not only to feed and care for him but to educate him, to develop him both *pragmatically*, so that in the future he can look after himself and make his way in life, and *morally*, since otherwise the fault for having neglected him would fall on the parents. They have the right to do all this until the time of his emancipation...when they renounce their parental right to

²¹¹ Kant, *Doctrine of Right*, 458-459 (6: 314-6: 315).

²¹² Kant, *Doctrine of Right*, 430, 408 (6: 282, 6: 254). On Kant's concept of *possession* in general, including his distinction between *sensible* (empirical, physical) and *intelligible* (recognized by right) possession, see *Doctrine of Right*, 401, 403, 407-409 (6: 245, 6: 249, 6: 253-6: 255).

²¹³ Kant, *Doctrine of Right*, 429 (6: 280).

direct him as well as any claim to be compensated for their support and pains up till now.²¹⁴

The pragmatic and moral obligations of parents to the child *qua* possession involve a unique kind of right: “a right to a person *akin to a right to a thing*” (as opposed to a right to a *thing*, as the child is not a mere thing; and, as opposed to a right against a *person*, as the child is not just a person but also a *possession* of his parents).²¹⁵ Insofar as I have a right to a person akin to a right to a thing I can “make direct use of a person *as of* a thing, as a means to my end, but still without infringing upon his personality.”²¹⁶ In the case of the child the extension of this right is diffuse, covering the child’s obligation to not run away from home, the parent’s right to take the child back from anyone who attempts to take their “possession” and, in general, to “parents’ being justified in taking control of them [children] and impounding them as things (like domestic animals that have gone astray).”²¹⁷

The child’s political status as possession, as akin to a thing and lacking (active) citizenship, runs parallel to his location (or, rather, his *absence*) in the moral realm. The same features that prevent the child’s active citizenship in the commonwealth—his lack of independence, his primitive rationality, and animalistic nature—exclude his full or active presence in Kant’s moral realm. To understand this exclusion more precisely, let us briefly review some of the fundamental elements of Kant’s moral system. As will be familiar from texts such as *Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals* and *Critique of*

²¹⁴ Kant, *Doctrine of Right*, 430 (6: 281).

²¹⁵ Kant, *Doctrine of Right*, 430 (6: 282).

²¹⁶ Kant, *Doctrine of Right*, 493-494, 430 (6: 358-6: 359, 6: 282).

²¹⁷ Kant, *Doctrine of Right*, 430, 495 (6: 282, 6: 360).

Practical Reason, authentic morality (as opposed to *popular* morality predominately composed of hypothetical imperatives or precepts of prudence) is grounded in moral obligations derived from indubitable law holding for all rational beings. Such moral obligation, as *duty*, lies in objective necessitation of the free will by the categorical imperative.²¹⁸ The human will is taken to be practically free or autonomous precisely insofar as it is subject to a purely formal determination by the moral law.²¹⁹ For the moral agent—the active member of Kant’s moral realm—the subjective recognition of this determination provides the consciousness of his freedom and dignity as an end in itself. In turn, this full member of humanity is fit for (ideally) taking part as sovereign and subject in the kingdom of ends, that concept inhering in rational wills completely determined by the categorical imperative. Kant writes:

A rational being belongs to the kingdom of ends as a member when he legislates in it universal laws while also being himself subject to these laws. He belongs to it as sovereign, when as legislator he is himself subject to the will of no other...A rational being must always regard himself as legislator in a kingdom of ends rendered possible by freedom of the will, whether as member or as sovereign.²²⁰

²¹⁸ Immanuel Kant, *Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals*, trans. James W. Ellington (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 1993), 30 (4: 421); Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*, trans. Mary J. Gregor, in *The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Immanuel Kant. Practical Philosophy*, ed. Mary J. Gregor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 155-161, 164-165 (5: 22-5: 27, 5: 31-5: 32).

²¹⁹ Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*, 162-163 (5: 29-5: 30).

²²⁰ Kant, *Grounding*, 40 (4: 433-4: 434).

The kingdom of ends is an ideal concept, a union of moral agents that will not be realized in the sensible world. Nonetheless, as moral agents and intelligible beings, human beings are to think of themselves as legislating members and subjects of such a kingdom.²²¹

Children are not mentioned in Kant's discussion of the kingdom of ends, nor, for that matter, are they substantively discussed in *any* of Kant's moral works. If we consider the fundamental elements of Kant's moral system and reflect back on the discussion of the child in Kant's political and educational discourses—the animalistic child of undeveloped reason and autonomy—his absence from the moral realm should, at this point, be expected. The child's state of being runs directly counter to the fundamental elements of Kantian moral agency: the child's will *just is* one determined by the impulses of nature and, thus, he lacks a will determined by reason. The child's sensible determination ties him to action from animalistic inclination as opposed to action from *duty* and recognition of the moral law. The obstacles to the child's participation in the moral realm are substantive enough that he is largely dismissed; he is acknowledged as *passively* moral—a *person* who is not to be morally violated through treatment as a *mere thing*—but he has no *active* place in the moral realm as practical agent or (ideally) potential member of the kingdom of ends. Rather, where we *do* see the child emerge is, again, in connection with education by the adult for moral agency, as in Kant's discussion of the “moral *catechism*” in *The Doctrine of Virtue*.²²² The emphasis here (as in *On Education*) is a familiar one: forming the child into the moral adult via training that will

²²¹ Kant, *Grounding*, 40 (4: 433-4: 434).

²²² Immanuel Kant, *The Doctrine of Virtue*, trans. Mary J. Gregor, in *The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Immanuel Kant. Practical Philosophy*, edited by Mary J. Gregor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 591-596 (6: 477-6: 484). Also see *Critique of Practical Reason*, 263-264 (5: 154-5: 163).

bring him to shed his animalistic nature and recognize human dignity in practical necessitation (duty) of the will by the moral law.²²³

At this point in our examination, then, we might pause and consider the near *absence* of the child in Kant's moral realm as significant in itself. It becomes tiresome to focus attention solely on fragments, to look for a more substantive account of the child where there is none. Another option before us is to sit with the *silence* surrounding the child. We can recognize an immense silence constituted by all that is *not* said about the child, by a moral realm nearly devoid of children. If Kant provides us with little substantive discussion of the child, he provides an abundance of silence; in it we can see the child as covered over, emerging only when called by the adult, educational strategy in hand.

4.3: The Ideal Adult and the Deficient Child

Having sought out the location of the child in Kant's educational, political, and moral work we can now take full account of Kant's conception of the child. As we have seen, in the realm of education the child is subjected to strategies of education in order that he shed his animalistic nature and gain the rational, political and moral nature of the adult. In turn, he is located as a problem insofar as his original, deficient nature prevents response to the educational strategies of the adult, leaving open the possibility of the child's failure to reach his necessary educational, political, and moral end. In the political and moral realms, the child possesses a passive status, only becoming active (if at all) once reaching adulthood. Taken together, these discourses form a clear account of the child and warrant a specific response by the adult—in educational, political and moral

²²³ Kant, *Doctrine of Virtue*, 595-596 (6: 482-6: 484). The catechetical method is also discussed in *On Education*, 81, 103-104.

realms the child inhabits a state of deficiency that must, at first, be tolerated and, ultimately, turned toward adulthood. As soon as is possible, the child's deficiency calls for a transformative response—whether in the form of restraint, discipline, or positive instruction—from the adult educator, citizen, and moral agent.²²⁴

This general trajectory—from childhood, to adulthood—is not novel, nor is the location of the child as non-adult and, in turn, being-to-be-transformed. In various forms all of the figures considered in this chapter have taken up the child as deficient in relation to the adult. If Kant's account of the child is of particular interest it is, in part, due to the child's relation to a particular form of the ideal adult, one that has taken on significant relevance in contemporary philosophical and psychological approaches to the child.

Kant's moral work is "ideal" (at least) insofar as it systematically abstracts away from

²²⁴ As discussed above, Plato, Aristotle and Rousseau are also committed to transforming the child into the adult. However, the proposed means of this transformation are not uniform in the work of these authors. Differences between their accounts of the child's transformation are explained, in part, by differences in their broader accounts of the human being and his capacities. For example, in the work of Plato (and to a lesser extent, Aristotle) the child is guided to adulthood and citizenship through precise measures of control deployed by the legislator and educator. These measures of control are developed in light of Plato's broader account of the human being as possessed of a tripartite soul (composed of rational, spirited, and appetitive parts). Insofar as the child is governed by the appetitive part of the soul he will not respond to reasoned arguments or dialectic. The educator and legislator must control and shape the child's appetites until the rational element of his soul becomes prominent. Given that Rousseau and Kant share a different account of the human person, their accounts of transforming the child into the adult do not correspond to Plato's account. Both Rousseau and Kant maintain a concept of the child as a natural being and present early education as *negative*, allowing for nature to unfold in the child (to see Rousseau's influence on Kant in this regard, see *On Education*, 28, 34, 39-44). Ultimately, Kant maintains an account of the complete human being (the end of development) as rational and autonomous in both moral and political realms of human activity. In order to realize this conception of the human being the child must learn to subject his will to the determinations of moral law and his appetites to the laws of the commonwealth. Insofar as Rousseau maintains a primary focus on the natural adult (as opposed to the civilized moral and political adult), the child's education and control is directed toward preserving this natural state of being. Thus, rather than advocating a positive control and discipline of the child (as is found in varying degrees in the work of Plato, Aristotle, and Kant), Rousseau focuses on allowing the child's natural capacities to develop in relation to his own needs, the challenges he faces in his environment, and, eventually, his occupation in society.

experience and, further, does not purport to set moral ends achievable for actual moral agents.²²⁵ The kingdom of ends is an ideal end that the rational adult must aspire to inhabit, though he will never actually do so. The pure determination of the will by the moral law is the ideal standard for morality, though this determination will never be realized in the human will. Kant writes:

Nothing can protect us from a complete falling away from our ideas of duty and preserve in the soul a well-grounded respect for duty's law except the clear convictions that, even if there never have been actions springing from such pure sources, the question at issue here is not whether this or that has happened but that reason of itself independently of all experience commands what ought to happen. Consequently, reason unrelentingly commands actions of which the world has perhaps hitherto never provided an example.²²⁶

In effect, the child is deficient in relation to a conception of moral agency that is not *actually* realized by the adult.²²⁷ The adult, however, *is* in a position to aspire to this end; he can strive to act in accord with a rationalistic morality by overcoming his sensible

²²⁵ I will discuss ideal theory in Kant and other figures (John Rawls, Tamar Schapiro, and Lawrence Kohlberg) more substantively in Chapter II of this work. Kant's final practical work, *The Metaphysics of Morals* (which is composed of *The Doctrine of Right* and *The Doctrine of Virtue*) does acknowledge human nature and experience in relation to his moral theory. Kant writes, a "metaphysics of morals cannot dispense with principles of application, and we shall often have to take as our object the particular *nature* of human beings" (372 (6: 217)). However, the foundational elements of Kant's moral theory (and the primary elements taken up by the figures discussed in Chapter II below) remain ideal, rational concepts—the categorical imperative, the kingdom of ends, Transcendental Freedom, etc.—applied to human nature in parts of *The Metaphysics of Morals*.

²²⁶ Kant, *Grounding*, 20 (4: 408).

²²⁷ More specifically, I contend that the child is understood as deficient in relation to Kant's ideal adult (insofar as he lacks the rational constitution and autonomy of this being) and adults in general given that they are capable of pursuing this ideal (even if they never realize ideal moral and political agency). As discussed in the canon, the child's condition is such that he is not capable of pursuing this ideal, let alone realizing it in action in moral and political realms. Kant himself does not explicitly classify the child as deficient in relation to the ideal adult, but I take this view to be implicit in his lack of discussion of children in moral and political realms and his adoption of the rational and autonomous adult as the *telos* of human development.

inclinations and, as far as is humanly possibly, by subjecting the maxims of his will to the concept of the moral law.

It is this form of the ideal adult—the adult who conquers his inclinations, who is (or is assumed to be) autonomous in possession of a rational will—that has come to be extremely influential in philosophical and psychological approaches to the child. We can see this influence in developmental psychology (in the work of Lawrence Kohlberg) and contemporary moral and political philosophy (in the work of John Rawls and Tamar Schapiro) insofar as they feature the Kantian ideal adult as the standard by which the child is evaluated as deficient and in need of reform.²²⁸ I have identified the presence of this adult and shown the deficiency of the child in Kant's own work. In future work we can examine the Kantian ideal adult and ideal theory as they structure prominent forms of contemporary educational, political, and moral accounts of the child.

Conclusion

I began this chapter with the following aim: to draw attention to the place and significance of the child in the history of Western philosophy via an examination of the child's location in the work of Plato, Aristotle, Rousseau, and Kant. To orient my analysis of the child as discussed by these figures, I approached their texts with three primary questions in mind: First, what are the primary contexts for the discussion of the child? Second, what concerns does the child raise for these philosophers? Finally, what conception of the child is at issue? Having completed my analysis I will now return to

²²⁸ See Jean Piaget, *The Moral Judgment of the Child*, trans. Marjorie Gabain (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1997); Lawrence Kohlberg, *Essays on Moral Development, Volume 1. The Philosophy of Moral Development: Moral Stages and the Idea of Justice* (San Francisco: Harper & Row Publishers, 1981); John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 1971); Tamar Schapiro, "What Is a Child?" *Ethics* 109 (1999).

these questions in order to provide a summative understanding of the child as represented within the discourse on the child in the history of Western philosophy.

As evident in the work of Plato, Aristotle, Rousseau, and Kant, the child is most commonly (though not exclusively) taken up in discussions of education. Though differing substantially in their method of approach, each of these figures delimits a precise educational plan such that, in some form, education centers on the child's development toward the achievement of broader moral and political objectives. The child is located in these texts as a being to be shaped and reformed, educated and developed, such that he can play an integral part in the formation of Plato's *Kallipolis* and Kant's commonwealth, or become Aristotle's *eudaimon* and Rousseau's noble savage. In order to understand the child's location in the history of Western philosophy, then, we must move beyond a focus on fragmentary encounters with the child (often confined to the educational realm) and instead read these discussions alongside the broader moral and political aims at play in these texts. As I have shown throughout this chapter, child education and development constitutes an essential part of achieving these aims, as well as the ethical and political work of these figures as such.

In turn, the concerns raised by the child are bound up with the child's instrumental role within the moral and political objectives of these figures. The child is born into the world as a *problem*; he enters a pre-existent world devoid of the moral and political norms of the adult. He is a *new* being and his novelty is potentially *dangerous* (as is his animality and appetitive nature) insofar as it threatens to subvert extant moral and political ends. For this reason, a concern to *control* the child runs parallel to discussions of his education and development. For Plato and Aristotle, control of the

child is explicit, taking the form of specific legislation and authorities empowered to supervise and direct the child's development. For Kant and Rousseau, control of the child is often subtle, though certainly no less present. As we saw in *Emile*, although Rousseau stresses the natural freedom of the child, his child is directed to *docility*, gradually taking on the pre-determined shape of the adult noble savage.²²⁹

Taken together, the context and concerns surrounding the child lead to his conceptualization as the *non-adult* and, in turn, the *being-to-be-transformed*. The child emerges in these texts to be led to adulthood and it is the adult in possession of ideal traits—virtue or reason, autonomy or agency—that conditions the conceptualization of the child. Thus, we find a dominant (but not uniform) conceptualization of the child as deficient, as lacking (or possessing in primitive form) idealized characteristics of the adult. And given that the broader moral and political aims of these thinkers require ideal adults, the child cannot be left to his deficient condition. Rather, he must shed his deficiencies and take on these ideal traits. In this sense, the child is not only conceptualized as the non-adult, but also, as the being-to-be-transformed who must preserve the moral and socio-political norms of the adult.

²²⁹ Though, for Rousseau, the natural educator's control over the child *just is* the means of his freedom. For more on this point see footnote 158 above.

CHAPTER II

LIBERALISM AND THE HEGEMONY OF ADULTHOOD: THE DISCOURSE ON THE CHILD IN CONTEMPORARY WESTERN PHILOSOPHY

Introduction

In the previous chapter we examined the concept of the child as it appears in the work of major figures in the history of Western philosophy. Focusing on the work of Plato, Aristotle, Rousseau, and Kant, it became clear that the child has been conceptualized primarily as a deficient being in relation to the ideal adult. The child has been regarded as the non-adult and, in turn, as a being-to-be-transformed. But for all of his¹ deficiencies, the child is nonetheless a figure of great importance in the history of Western philosophy. Children embody the starting point for the larger ethical and socio-political projects of the philosophers in question; they must become the ideal adults who will realize the ethical and socio-political ends of these philosophers. It is with these ends in mind—the ideal *polis* or the ideal moral and political agent—that children are encountered as objects of control, coerced or forced into taking on the norms of the adult. To the extent that the child subverts this process due to his deficient nature he is a problem or, what is more, a danger.

In this chapter I will turn to contemporary accounts of the child in the philosophical work of John Rawls and Tamar Schapiro and the moral developmental work of Jean Piaget and Lawrence Kohlberg (work that is highly influential for Rawls and Western accounts of the moral agency of children generally). My departure from the history of Western philosophy is not complete, however, as the figures considered here

¹ Where necessary I will use the masculine pronoun in place of “child.” I adopt the masculine pronoun in order to avoid confusion and to remain congruent with this use by the majority of figures discussed in this chapter (Kant, Rawls, Jean Piaget, and Lawrence Kohlberg).

are heavily influenced in their accounts of the child by Kant (and, to a lesser degree, by Aristotle and Rousseau). In the work of Rawls, Schapiro, and Kohlberg the Kantian moral and political adult serves as the end of the child's moral and political development. The child, poor in reason and lacking autonomy, sheds his deficient nature to the extent he takes on the Kantian ideal.

As in the preceding chapter I will orient my discussion of these figures and their accounts of the child at the level of discourse. I do not undertake a critique of the empirical validity of the moral developmental accounts in question. Nor do I reject outright the moral and political ends of the philosophers under examination. Rather, my aim is to uncover the place of the child in the texts under investigation, to locate him in the larger ethical and political projects of these figures and, ultimately, to reveal the impoverished conceptualization of the child at hand.

Section 1: Rawls

John Rawls is widely recognized as the preeminent political philosopher of the 20th century in the Analytic tradition. His work in *A Theory of Justice* revitalized the social contract tradition in liberal political thought and has become a source for continuing scholarship on political justice throughout the 20th and 21st centuries. In the Preface to the *Theory* Rawls describes his work as an attempt to “generalize and carry to a higher order of abstraction the traditional theory of the social contract as represented by Locke, Rousseau, and Kant” with a result that is “highly Kantian in nature.”² In addition to his many novel contributions to Western conceptions of political justice, then, Rawls is influenced by and is working within a well-defined tradition: liberalism and social

² Rawls, *Theory*, preface, viii, 11.

contract theory.³ Working within this tradition yields the basic concerns and questions of the *Theory* concerning the liberty of citizens, the nature of political justice, and the establishment of the well-ordered society.

But Rawls also develops the *Theory* in light of a tradition we have seen represented in the work of Plato, Aristotle, Rousseau, and Kant. Like these philosophers, Rawls devotes attention to the moral and political development of children. In order to provide a comprehensive account of the formation of a just individual and, in turn, a just society, Rawls and his predecessors identify children as those beings who will become the virtuous adults inhabiting the just city (or, for Rawls, inhabiting the well-ordered society). In the *Theory*, as in the *Republic* and *Politics*, children are the raw material from which the ideal political union is fashioned.

For Rawls and his predecessors the child in his native state is conceptualized as the non-adult, a being always confronted by the adult with clear ends of moral and political transformation in mind. Only by devoting adequate attention to the process of moral and political development can a just society be understood as “stable,” inhabited by fully formed adults willing to support and participate in its institutions. In order to ensure the stability of his conception of justice Rawls approaches the child as the subject of an account of moral development that will lead him to take on the role of the ideal adult, thereby shedding his deficient nature.

³ Rawls writes, “I must disclaim any originality for the views I put forward. The leading ideas are classical and well known. My intention has been to organize them into a general framework by using certain simplifying devices so that their full force can be appreciated” (*Theory*, preface, viii).

1.1: The Well-Ordered Society and the Child

Before we turn to Rawls's discussion of children it is necessary for us to review some of the fundamental elements of his project. Doing so will allow us to grasp the primary motivation and aims of Rawls's work and, eventually, to understand the child's location within the ethical and political ends of the *Theory*.

In the *Theory* Rawls's primary concern is to develop a theory of social justice, outlining a scheme of distributive justice for society conceived as "a cooperative venture for mutual advantage."⁴ As made evident by traditional contract theories—those of Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau, and Kant—there are multiple "conceptions of justice."⁵ First, there are differing ways of envisioning the best form of cooperation to achieve a just society and, second, there are differing conceptions of the ends to be promoted in a society such that it will be just (thereby creating conditions for the just or good life of its citizens). In any society there is bound to be both an "identity" and "conflict" of interests.⁶ There is an identity (or unity) of interests insofar as individuals desire the mutual benefits made possible from coexisting in society. But there is a conflict of interests insofar as disagreements arise as to how these benefits, in conditions of moderate scarcity of resources, should be redistributed in society.⁷

The role of justice is to adjudicate these conflicts and establish a fair, non-arbitrary division of rights, advantages, and burdens to the individuals composing a

⁴ Rawls, *Theory*, 4, 84.

⁵ Rawls, *Theory*, 5-8.

⁶ Rawls, *Theory*, 4.

⁷ Rawls, *Theory*, 4.

society.⁸ In the face of the circumstances of justice (conflicting conceptions of justice and conditions of moderate scarcity of resources) principles of justice are required to “provide a way of assigning rights and duties in the basic institutions of society and...[to] define the appropriate distribution of the benefits and burdens of social cooperation.”⁹ The *Theory* departs from traditional social contract theory insofar as the principles of justice are not applied, in the first instance, to a particular society or form of government, nor are they applied directly to laws or the attitudes and actions of individuals. Rather, the primary subject of justice is the “basic structure of society,” or “the way in which the major social institutions distribute fundamental rights and duties to determine the division of advantages from social cooperation.”¹⁰ The major social institutions—the political constitution and the primary economic and social arrangements—will determine more than anything else the “life prospects” of individuals in a given society.¹¹ Given that individuals are born into different social positions of greater or lesser advantage within this structure (due to no merit or deficiency on their part), principles of justice are required to rectify these inequalities and provide for a just assignment of rights and economic and social opportunities by regulating the selection of a just political constitution and socio-economic system.

⁸ Rawls, *Theory*, 10.

⁹ Rawls, *Theory*, 4, 58.

¹⁰ Rawls, *Theory*, 7. Rawls writes, “By major institutions I understand the political constitution and the principal economic and social arrangements. Thus the legal protection of freedom of thought and liberty of conscience, competitive markets, private property in the means of production, and the monogamous family are examples of major social institutions.”

¹¹ Rawls, *Theory*, 7.

The essential elements for regulating the basic structure—the two principles of justice—are determined by a hypothetical “original agreement” between contracting parties envisioned as “free and rational persons concerned to further their own interests...in an initial position of equality.”¹² The general concept of an original agreement or contract between rational agents will be familiar from the contract theories of Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau, and Kant. In those theories rational parties came together by contract to form a mode of government, a vision of social union, and to determine citizens’ rights within a particular society. Rawls’s conception of the procedure for choosing principles of justice—*justice as fairness*—distinguishes his contract theory from that of his predecessors.¹³

Justice as fairness calls for the selection of principles of justice via an original agreement that is fair. The fairness of this choice is determined by the nature of the original position and the process through which contracting parties arrive at the principles of justice. Key to this process is the implementation of a heuristic device—the “veil of ignorance”:

Among the essential features of this situation is that no one knows his place in society, his class position or social status, nor does any one know his fortune in the distribution of natural assets and abilities, his intelligence, strength, and the like. I shall even assume that the parties do not know their conceptions of the good or their special psychological propensities. The principles of justice are chosen behind a

¹² Rawls, *Theory*, 11. Rawls goes on to write, “The idea here is simply to make vivid to ourselves the restrictions that it seems reasonable to impose on arguments for principles of justice, and therefore on the principles themselves...The aim is to rule out those principles that it would be rational to propose for acceptance, however little the chance of success, only if one knew certain things that are irrelevant from the standpoint of justice” (*Theory*, 18). Also see 21, 120.

¹³ Rawls, *Theory*, 118-119, 11, 17.

veil of ignorance. This ensures that no one is advantaged or disadvantaged in the choice of principles by the outcome of natural chance or the contingency of social circumstances. Since all are similarly situated and no one is able to design principles to favor his particular condition, the principles of justice are the result of a fair agreement or bargain.¹⁴

Behind the veil of ignorance contracting parties cannot rely on “specific contingencies” (such as class position, social status, and natural assets) that would bias their choice of principles and place them in opposition to those with recognized greater or lesser advantages.¹⁵ In the absence of these conditions, individuals must choose principles in light of “general facts about human society” (principles of economic theory and political science as well as laws of human psychology) and in virtue of their general preferences as free, rational and moral persons capable of effective deliberation toward ends.¹⁶ Given their “mutually disinterested rationality” parties to the original agreement will seek to promote their ends as much as possible, namely, by trying to secure “social primary goods” (rights and liberties, powers and opportunities, income and wealth).¹⁷ Upon

¹⁴ Rawls, *Theory*, 12. Rawls writes, “It may be helpful to observe that one or more persons can at any time enter this position, or perhaps, better, simulate the deliberations of this hypothetical situation, simply by reasoning in accordance with the appropriate restrictions... To say that a certain conception of justice would be chosen in the original position is equivalent to saying that rational deliberation satisfying certain conditions and restrictions would reach a certain conclusion” (*Theory*, 138).

¹⁵ Rawls, *Theory*, 136.

¹⁶ Rawls, *Theory*, 137. Rawls presents an additional heuristic device that is key to choosing a just conception of the original position: we must seek a “reflective equilibrium” between potential principles of justice adopted in the original position and our “considered convictions of justice” (for example, that racism and religious intolerance are not acceptable in a just society). Rawls writes, “By going back and forth, sometimes altering the conditions of the contractual circumstances, at others withdrawing our judgments and conforming them to principle, I assume that eventually we shall find a description of the initial situation that both expresses reasonable conditions and yields principles which match our considered judgments duly pruned and adjusted” (*Theory*, 20).

¹⁷ Rawls, *Theory*, 62.

leaving the initial situation these goods will enable the contracting parties to “promote their conception of the good” and pursue their rational plan of life, whatever this turns out to be.¹⁸

Taken together, the methodological restrictions of the original agreement prevent biases and arbitrary contingencies from entering into the choice of the parties, while their mutually disinterested rationality leads them to “acknowledge principles which advance their system of ends as far as possible.”¹⁹ Provided with a list of conceptions of justice (including utilitarian, egoistic, and teleological conceptions) in the original position so conceived, Rawls contends that parties to the original agreement would make a definitive choice. The contracting parties cannot know their social position in the basic structure of society (which they will take up once the veil of ignorance is lifted) and, thus, it is only rational for them to choose principles of justice that will provide for the greatest possible liberty to pursue their ends while ensuring that they will not be unfairly disadvantaged by their starting position in the basic structure of society, whatever it may be. As Rawls argues, the two principles of justice—the principle of greatest equal liberty and the difference principle (prefaced by the principle of fair equality of opportunity)—present the best means for these agents to secure their ends in light of the competing demands of others.²⁰ Once chosen these principles ensure, first, “equality in the assignment of basic rights and duties” and, second, that “social and economic inequalities...are just only if

¹⁸ Rawls, *Theory*, 144.

¹⁹ Rawls, *Theory*, 144.

²⁰ Rawls, *Theory*, 119.

they result in compensating benefits for everyone, and in particular for the least advantaged members of society.”²¹

The principles of justice are born of a narrowly defined initial situation and a resulting problem of choice taken up by rational parties apart from the “contingencies” of the world.²² Once chosen they are to be implemented within a “perfectly just,” “well-ordered society,” in which “everyone is presumed to act justly and to do his part in upholding just institutions.”²³ Justice as fairness, then, produces principles of justice under the assumption of “strict compliance” and, in turn, a methodological disregard for the nonideal “pressing and urgent matters” of everyday life.²⁴ Only after a conception of justice has been chosen under the assumption of ideal conditions do the envisioned parties consider principles of justice for, as Rawls puts it, “less happy conditions.”²⁵ In effect, Rawls’s work on justice is that of ideal theory—developing principles of justice for a perfectly just society under the assumption of strict compliance—with the added assumption that these principles of justice will provide for a “systematic grasp” of

²¹ Rawls, *Theory*, 14-15. For the first full formulation of the two principles of justice see *Theory*, 60-61. For the final formulation of the two principles of justice see *Theory*, 302.

²² Rawls, *Theory*, 88. Rawls writes, “the acceptance of the two principles of justice constitutes an understanding to discard as irrelevant as a matter of social justice much of the information and many of the complications of everyday life.” Thus, questions of justice centering on issues such as race and racism, conflict between nations, and the nonideal rationality of actual citizens are not considered in Rawls’s *Theory*.

²³ Rawls, *Theory*, 8-9, 245.

²⁴ Rawls, *Theory*, 8-9, 245.

²⁵ Rawls, *Theory*, 246. Considerations of “less happy conditions” are very limited in the *Theory*, comprised of brief discussions of civil disobedience and conscientious refusal (*Theory*, Ch.6). Even in these cases society is conceived as “nearly just” (*Theory*, 351, 363). Rawls writes, “the only question of nonideal theory examined in any detail is that of civil disobedience in the special case of near justice. If ideal theory is worthy of study, it must be because, as I have conjectured, it is the fundamental part of the theory of justice and essential for the nonideal part as well. I shall not pursue these matters further” (*Theory*, 391).

nonideal problems in everyday society (though Rawls does not devote significant attention to these problems).²⁶

If we have not mentioned children up to this point it is because they are given no place in the first, fundamental part of the *Theory*: the original position and the selection of the principles of justice.²⁷ Rawls's ideal theory extends not only to the nature of society or the principles of justice, but also to the agents choosing these principles and inhabiting the well-ordered society. They are ideal agents, or, more specifically, ideal *adults*. To recognize this we need only consider Rawls's description of the agents in the original position: they are "moral persons" and "rational beings with their own ends and capable...of a sense of justice."²⁸ The rational person:

knows the general features of his wants and ends both present and future, and he is able to estimate the relative intensity of his desires, and to decide if necessary what he really wants. Moreover, he can envisage the alternatives open to him and establish a coherent ordering of them: given any two plans he can work out which one he prefers or whether he is indifferent between them, and these preferences are transitive. Once a plan is settled upon, he is able to adhere to

²⁶ Rawls, *Theory*, 9. See Section 1.3 below for more on Rawls's methodological dismissal of nonideal problems for the just society.

²⁷ More is at stake here than the child's absence from the text of the *Theory*; namely, Rawls's failure to consider questions of the moral status of children and, in turn, adult obligations toward children. Rawls is silent on the rights of children and what justice requires of adults in their interactions with children, whether in the public sphere or in the private realm of the family. This lack of consideration is explained, in large part, by the child's absence from the original position and social contract (as discussed in Part One of the *Theory*). Given that children are excluded from the original position and social contract, contracting parties do not consider justice for children in their deliberations. For more on this problem see Samantha Brennan and Robert Noggle's, "John Rawls's Children," in *The Philosopher's Child. Critical Perspectives in the Western Tradition*, eds. Susan M. Turner and Gareth B. Matthews (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 1998), 210-212.

²⁸ Rawls, *Theory*, 12.

it and he can resist present temptations and distractions that interfere with its execution.²⁹

Parties to the original agreement must be rational in this sense. The “time of entry” for contractors to the initial agreement is noted specifically by Rawls as occurring “during the age of reason” and once the veil of ignorance is lifted it is assumed contractors will return to society as “rational and able to manage their own affairs.”³⁰ What is more, the parties to the original agreement are described as “heads of families” and assumed to represent family lines.³¹ Even behind a veil of ignorance, then, the remaining attributes of the parties to the original agreement are those of the adult of liberalism: they are principled, ideally rational and moral beings.

By contrast, there are numerous “contingencies of childhood” which preclude their status as rational and moral beings and, thus, prevent their participation in the moral and political realm of the *Theory*. Children are beings whose “powers are undeveloped” and that “cannot rationally advance their interests.”³² The child possesses a “primitive

²⁹ Rawls, *Theory*, 418-419.

³⁰ Rawls, *Theory*, 146, 248.

³¹ Rawls, *Theory*, 128. Rawls adopts the heads of families assumption to ensure “justice between generations.” In *Political Liberalism* Rawls changes this characterization of contracting parties to “representatives of citizens.” See *Political Liberalism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), 20 (n.22), 274 (n.12), 305. For our purposes, this change is significant in that it provides the possibility of child advocates within the Rawlsian system (though Rawls does not address this possibility in the *Theory* or *Political Liberalism*). Even if children are not parties to the original position and social contract, on the “representatives” model of contractors we could imagine contracting parties acting as child advocates, taking into account the child’s welfare and interests in the well-ordered society. For more on this possibility in the Rawlsian system, see Brennan and Noggle’s “John Rawls’s Children,” 212-213.

³² Rawls, *Theory*, 249, 514. In these ways the condition of childhood is presented as similar to the condition of the “seriously injured or mentally disturbed” (*Theory*, 249). For more on this comparison as taken up in contemporary Western liberal philosophy, see Section 2.3 below.

understanding” and “lacks the concepts for understanding moral distinctions.”³³ Children are subject to irrational passions; they are “often envious and jealous” with “moral notions...so primitive that the necessary distinctions [between competing conceptions of justice and the good] are not grasped by them.”³⁴

These characterizations are significant in that, as Rawls notes, they are used “to single out the kinds of beings to whom the chosen principles apply.”³⁵ The principles of justice hold for all moral persons under the assumption that “each can understand these principles and use them in his deliberations.”³⁶ But it is clear that Rawls presents children as lacking moral agency and incapable of rational deliberation. It is confusing, then, that Rawls presents the principles of justice as “universal in application”;³⁷ that is, unless the moral and political “universe” under consideration is limited to ideally rational and moral adults. It is to these adults—the contracting parties and moral and political agents of the *Theory*—that the principles of justice apply to in the first instance. Children are subject to the principles of justice insofar as they have the *potential* to become these rational and moral adults and insofar as they are the wards of full agents.³⁸ Like Aristotle before him,

³³ Rawls, *Theory*, 461, 465, 467.

³⁴ Rawls, *Theory*, 540.

³⁵ Rawls, *Theory*, 505.

³⁶ Rawls, *Theory*, 132.

³⁷ Rawls, *Theory*, 132.

³⁸ Rawls, *Theory*, 505, 509, 463. Rawls acknowledges that “those more or less permanently deprived of moral personality may present a difficulty” to his conception of full equality in the initial agreement and the well-ordered society. However, he does not devote substantive attention to this problem. Instead, Rawls “assume[s] that the account of equality would not be materially affected” (*Theory*, 510).

Rawls envisions children as possessing the *capacity* for moral and political agency.³⁹

Until this capacity is actualized the child is not a full citizen, nor a moral actor; his rights are guaranteed as a future adult, a potential moral and political agent. Prior to his realizing this potentiality, ideally rational and moral adults will unfailingly choose what is in the best interests of the child. They will choose principles that are best for children as a class of beings incapable of ideally advancing their interests, just as they do for others left outside the gates of the original agreement, the “seriously injured or mentally disturbed.”⁴⁰

If children are not parties to the original position, play no part in determining the principles of justice, and, further, are not full citizens capable of acting on the ideal conception of justice once chosen, why, we might ask, does Rawls even consider them in the *Theory*? In truth, Rawls *does not* consider children in great detail, with the descriptions above serving as some of his most focused accounts of children. The well-ordered society is administered and populated by rational and moral adults and, thus, Rawls’s work on the formation and application of the two principles of justice is overwhelmingly applied to a world of ideal adults.

Nonetheless, children *do* play a crucial role in the *Theory*. Specifically, children are essential in determining the *stability* of Rawls’s two principles of justice. Discussing the stability of a conception of justice, Rawls writes:

It is an important feature of a conception of justice that it should generate its own support. That is, its principles should be such that when they are embodied in the basic structure of

³⁹ Rawls, *Theory*, 509.

⁴⁰ Rawls, *Theory*, 249. For Rawls’s description of the family in the well-ordered society see *Theory*, 105 and Ch. 8, Sections 70-72.

society men tend to acquire the corresponding sense of justice. Given the principles of moral learning, men develop a desire to act in accordance with its principles. In this case a conception of justice is stable.⁴¹

Recall that the parties to the original position choose principles of justice for the basic structure of society in light of “general facts” about human nature, including laws of human psychology. In making their decision contractors must determine whether the two principles of justice are compatible with laws of human psychology such that it is feasible that human persons would develop a corresponding “sense of justice,” a strong disposition to adopt and support a conception of justice. Thus, demonstrating that free, rational and moral persons would choose the two principles of justice in an original position of equality is not sufficient. Rawls must also argue that, once chosen, the two principles of justice will generate support from the citizens of a well-ordered society and, further, that these principles will advance (or be “congruent” with) the good of rational agents.⁴² Moreover, the desire to support and act on these principles must outweigh human propensities toward injustice.⁴³ No matter how ideally just, a conception of justice (such as the two principles of justice) is not stable if rational individuals would not willingly support its precepts.⁴⁴

⁴¹ Rawls, *Theory*, 138. See *Theory*, 6, for Rawls’s discussion of other “prerequisite[s] for a viable human community,” most notably, the possession of “coordinated” and “efficient” conceptions of justice by contractors to the well-ordered society.

⁴² A conception of justice is “congruent” with a person’s rational plan of life (a person’s good) insofar as it is rational “for those in a well-ordered society to affirm their sense of justice as regulative of their plan of life” (*Theory*, 567).

⁴³ Rawls, *Theory*, 454.

⁴⁴ Rawls, *Theory*, 6, 145, 454-455.

Ultimately, the stability of the two principles of justice hinges on children, the subjects of moral development in the perfectly just society. Rawls must show that children raised within a well-ordered society will develop to be rational and moral adults with the requisite sense of justice to support the principles of justice as fairness.⁴⁵ If the moral development of children can be shown to culminate in an adherence to rational principles of justice Rawls can argue that his conception of justice is not only rational and fair, but also, stable. To this end, Rawls's discussion of moral development sketches the development of the appropriate sense of justice in children and the psychological principles that guide this development.⁴⁶

The distinctive morality of the child is the "morality of authority," a temporary morality born of the child's "peculiar condition and limited understanding."⁴⁷ Unlike the rational and moral adult the child is deficient in reason and lacks autonomy; his actions are guided by his original, appetitive inclinations and desires.⁴⁸ Thus, in his original

⁴⁵ Rawls, *Theory*, 461.

⁴⁶ Rawls's account of moral development is heavily indebted to the moral and cognitive developmental accounts of Jean Piaget and Lawrence Kohlberg. For Rawls's acknowledgment of his intellectual debt to Piaget and Kohlberg in this regard, see *Theory*, 460 (n.6), 461 (n.8). For more on this point see Section 3.1 below.

⁴⁷ Rawls, *Theory*, 462, 467.

⁴⁸ Rawls, *Theory*, 466. Here we see a similar account of the child as is found in Kant's work. The child is deficient in reason and lacks independence, or, autonomy. Further, the child is governed not by reason, but by animalistic impulse. Given this characterization of the child it is unclear whether or not the child possesses a *will* at all for these thinkers. On the one hand, Kant defines the will as follows: "the will is a faculty of choosing only that which reason, independently of inclination, recognizes as practically necessary, i.e., as good" (*Grounding*, 23 (4: 412)). On this definition, the child (as described by Kant) seems to be devoid of will insofar as his choices (to the extent he is capable of choice) are not determined by reason, but by inclination. However, in *On Education*, Kant suggests that the child *does* possess a will, albeit a will that is not determined by reason (for example, see *On Education*, 54, 77, 86). Rawls does not reference the child's will directly, instead characterizing the child in terms of limited understanding, deficient reason, and appetitive nature. Given these qualities, the child is incapable

condition the child lacks a substantive morality and is not a moral actor, but rather, is *acted upon* by his environment and appetites.

It is through the child's relationship with his family that his path to adulthood and moral agency truly begins. The child's world is largely a product of his relation to his parents as they expose him to new experiences, model correct conduct, and care for his well being at every turn. In the well-ordered society parents possess "unconditional" love for their child, "expressed in their evident intention to care for him" and "displayed by their taking pleasure in his presence and supporting his sense of competence and self-esteem."⁴⁹ According to Rawls's first psychological principle, the manifest love of his parents brings the child to love them in return. Given this "new desire" the child:

will tend to accept their [the parents'] injunctions. He will also strive to be like them, assuming that they are indeed worthy of esteem and adhere to the precepts which they enjoin. They exemplify, let us suppose, superior knowledge and power, and set forth appealing examples of what is demanded. The child, therefore, accepts their judgment of him and he will be inclined to judge himself as they do when he violates their injunctions.⁵⁰

This first stage of development is crucial for Rawls and his account of the just society.

Without doubt, the child is still a primitive being and is not yet close to the ideal of adulthood. But within the morality of authority the first seeds of the appropriate sense of justice are in place. Through love and trust in his parents he has gained basic moral precepts to which he feels some obligation (evidenced by feelings of guilt when

of rationally advancing his interests (*Theory*, 249). For both Rawls and Kant, then, there is some ambiguity as to whether or not the child possesses a will at all. But it is at least clear that the child does not possess a *rational* will. That is, for these authors, to the limited extent the child can make choices or choose ends, he is not governed by reason, but by impulse and appetite.

⁴⁹ Rawls, *Theory*, 463.

⁵⁰ Rawls, *Theory*, 464-465.

transgressing these precepts) and is no longer completely governed by his own appetitive nature. Further, he has developed a limited capacity for fellow feeling that will eventually lead to communication and participation with others in a just association (the well-ordered society structured by the two principles of justice).

It is during the next stage of moral development—the “morality of association”⁵¹—that the child develops the necessary intellectual skills for participating in a just society with moral and political actors. In contrast to the child’s early morality in which he obeyed an ostensibly arbitrary assortment of rules handed down and modeled by his parents, the morality of association finds the child coming to understand “the moral standards appropriate to the individual’s role in the various associations to which he belongs.”⁵² The child first learns these standards through the approval or disapproval of those governing and participating in the association in question. Thus, we can imagine the child coming to learn what it means, say, to be a good student from interactions with his teacher or learning good sportsmanship through interaction with his peers in sport.

But there is a more significant development at play here. The child does not merely obey an authority figure but, more significantly, comes to understand himself as occupying a role in an association (a classroom or sports team) with others who, like him, have interests and desires. In order to understand his role in various associations and to treat others fairly the child must develop the “intellectual skills” to adopt the viewpoint of

⁵¹ Rawls, *Theory*, 467.

⁵² Rawls, *Theory*, 467.

others.⁵³ Through the development of these skills, the child is able to “regard things from a variety of points of view and to think of these together as aspects of one system of cooperation.”⁵⁴ In turn, through intellectual simulation the child’s developing “moral sensibility” is affected by the recognition of the wants and ends of others; he becomes attached to “fellow associates” who, like him, have wants and ends, and, ultimately, seeks to promote the “social arrangements” that provide for the realization of these ends.⁵⁵ With this simulative ability in place and following the first psychological principle, Rawls posits his second psychological law:

Once a person’s capacity for fellow feeling has been realized by his acquiring attachments in accordance with the first psychological law, then as his associates with evident intention live up to their duties and obligations, he develops friendly feelings toward them, together with feelings of trust and confidence.⁵⁶

Given the child’s understanding of his role in an association (an understanding that presupposes the intellectual skills for adopting the viewpoints of others and, in turn, recognizing their wants and ends) and his comprehension of the good intentions of others within this association, he is driven to act with good intent toward his associates in turn

⁵³ Rawls, *Theory*, 468-469. Rawls characterizes simulative ability in terms of a variety of “intellectual skills”: “First of all, we must recognize that...different points of view exist, that the perspectives of others are not the same as ours. But we must not only learn that things look differently to them, but that they have different wants and ends, and different plans and motives; and we must learn how to gather these facts from their speech, conduct, and countenance. Next, we need to identify the definitive features of these perspectives, what it is that others largely want and desire, what are their controlling beliefs and opinions. Only in this way can we understand and assess their actions, intentions, and motives. Unless we can identify these leading elements, we cannot put ourselves into another’s place and find out what we would do in his position.”

⁵⁴ Rawls, *Theory*, 468.

⁵⁵ Rawls, *Theory*, 469-470.

⁵⁶ Rawls, *Theory*, 470.

and, further, to support the very association that has provided for the well-being of all involved. Although the child's associations are relatively simple the intellectual skills developed in these cases start the child on his path to the associations of adulthood (for example, between just citizens in society or the good parent and his family).⁵⁷ The culmination of this stage of development occurs in the well-ordered society "in which the members of society view one another as equals, as friends and associates, joined together in a system of cooperation known to be for the advantage of all and governed by a common conception of justice."⁵⁸

At the later stages of the morality of association the individual has relinquished the primitive nature of the child. As the adult, he now has an understanding of the principles of justice and regulates his conduct in light of the desire to perform his role as an equal citizen and to gain the approval (and avoid the disapproval) of his associates.⁵⁹ But the individual does not reach the final stage of moral development until he "becomes attached to the highest order principles themselves," deriving motivation for just action

⁵⁷ Rawls, *Theory*, 468.

⁵⁸ Rawls, *Theory*, 472. Rawls's discussion of the stages of morality brings out the reciprocal relation or unity between morality and justice in the *Theory*. Although morality and justice are distinct in the *Theory*, Rawls contends that "justice as fairness and goodness as rationality are congruent" (*Theory*, 513). Just institutions will allow persons to pursue their good (their rational plan of life). Rawls contends that "human beings have a desire to express their nature as free and equal moral persons, and this they do most adequately by acting from the principles they would acknowledge in the original position [the principles of justice]" (*Theory*, 528). But just institutions are not possible if individuals in society lack a "sense of justice." Thus, Rawls's discussion of moral stages is devoted, in large part, to demonstrating that children's moral development (in the well-ordered society) culminates in a sense of justice. Although the sense of justice is not fully realized by children, it is achieved in the adult stage of the morality of principles. Prior to this stage it is possible for children to engage in de facto relations of justice (as described in Rawls's discussion of the morality of association), but the child lacks the necessary understanding and experience (achieved in adulthood) for de jure relations of justice.

⁵⁹ Rawls, *Theory*, 472-473.

not primarily from emotional attachments to others, but rather, from a conception of justice and desire to advance just institutions.⁶⁰ This transition occurs with the final stage of moral development in the well-ordered society—the “morality of principles”⁶¹—and the third psychological law:

Once the attitudes of love and trust, and of friendly feelings and mutual confidence, have been generated in accordance with the two preceding psychological laws, then the recognition that we and those for whom we care are the beneficiaries of an established and enduring just institution tends to engender in us the corresponding sense of justice. We develop a desire to apply and to act upon the principles of justice once we realize how social arrangements answering to them have promoted our good and that of those with whom we are affiliated. In due course we come to appreciate the ideal of just human cooperation.⁶²

At this stage the sense of justice necessary for the stability of the well-ordered society is achieved. The individual recognizes that just social arrangements (the basic structure) have benefitted him and others and, in turn, he desires to set up and support these institutions.⁶³ Further, if he violates a given moral precept or social value his feelings of guilt are determined “by reference to the principles of justice” (as opposed to the rules of an authority figure or emotional attachments within a given association).⁶⁴ A crucial feature of Rawls’s moral picture, then, is the developmental advance from the child’s appetites and an emotionally driven adherence to moral precepts, to moral and political action informed by abstract moral principles. Ultimately, what distinguishes the ideal just

⁶⁰ Rawls, *Theory*, 473.

⁶¹ Rawls, *Theory*, 472.

⁶² Rawls, *Theory*, 473-474.

⁶³ Rawls, *Theory*, 474.

⁶⁴ Rawls, *Theory*, 475.

agent is his ability to make decisions and act in virtue of the principles of justice, irrespective of the “contingencies” and “accidental circumstances of our world.”⁶⁵

Rawls began the *Theory* by arguing that free and equal moral persons in the original position would adopt the two principles of justice as fairness as regulative for the basic structure of the well-ordered society. By turning to the moral development of children Rawls has attempted to establish that the two principles of justice are not only rational and ideally just, but also psychologically viable for human persons. To this end, Rawls’s account of moral development presents a sense of justice as “the normal outgrowth of natural human attitudes within a well-ordered society.”⁶⁶ With the care of a loving family and participation in supportive friendships children will gain strong attachments to individuals, associations and, eventually, to the complex of just institutions that provide for the good of society as a whole. The citizen of the well-ordered society will recognize the justice of the institutions around him and their beneficial consequences for his own rational plan of life (his good).⁶⁷ Therefore, Rawls concludes, the well-ordered society structured by the principles of justice as fairness would be stable and practicable for human persons.

My primary concern is not to critique the principles of justice as fairness, nor Rawls’s argument for the stability of this conception of justice. Under the assumption of

⁶⁵ Rawls, *Theory*, 475. Rawls writes, “it follows that in accepting these principles on this basis we are not influenced primarily by tradition and authority, or the opinions of others. However necessary these agencies may be in order for us to reach complete understanding, we eventually come to hold a conception of right on reasonable grounds that we can set out independently for ourselves” (*Theory*, 516).

⁶⁶ Rawls, *Theory*, 490.

⁶⁷ For Rawls’s discussion of the equivalence of a person’s “good” and a person’s “rational plan of life” see *Theory*, 92-93, 395.

ideal agents strictly complying with principles of justice in a perfectly just society the principles of justice as fairness could very well be psychologically viable and best suited to promote the good of rational agents.⁶⁸ My concern, instead, is the place of the child in Rawls's discourse of the just and stable society. In the *Theory* we see an approach to the child familiar to us from the work of Plato, Aristotle, Rousseau, and Kant: the child is conceptualized as the non-adult and, in turn, as a being-to-be-transformed. Rawls chooses to characterize the child in terms of deficiencies—his limited rationality, lack of moral agency and appetitive nature. These deficiencies are stark in contrast to the qualities of the Rawlsian adult—an ideally autonomous, rational and moral being. It is clear that the child of the *Theory* is *not* autonomous, rational, and moral, and thus that he represents a problem for the perfectly just society. In order to substantiate Rawls's vision of the just society the child must somehow *become* what he is not; he must be transformed into the adult, a rational being, capable of possessing a sense of justice.⁶⁹

⁶⁸ Though it is would be problematic to apply psychological principles derived from the study of actual (nonideal) human beings to the condition of the ideally rational beings of the *Theory*. For the purposes of the perfectly just society and its idealized inhabitants it seems we would also need to develop an “ideal psychology” of some sort.

⁶⁹ In the idealized social ontology of Rawls's *Theory*, adults (contracting parties in the original position and full citizens of the well-ordered society) are rational, devoid of envy and possess a sense of justice (*Theory*, 142-146). Even if we assume that there are some nonideal adults in Rawls's well-ordered society (for example, those with mental illnesses), the fact remains that, for Rawls, *only* adults (not children) are capable of possessing a sense of justice and acting rationally. Thus, in the *Theory*, being an adult is a necessary condition for having a sense of justice or being fully rational, even if some adults fail to realize these qualities. It is my contention that this idealization of the adult informs an understanding of the child as a problem insofar as he is *not* the adult. Some Rawlsians will disagree with me on this point. However, I regard this general approach to the child—as a problem to be solved—to be evident in the complete lack of discussion of the child as a unique being with concerns and interests of value in their own right. Instead, when the child is discussed at all, the discussion always centers on his deficiencies or his development such that the well-ordered society and its population of ideal adults can be realized.

We have seen the emergence of this problem along with a similar response in Plato's *Kallipolis*, Aristotle's city-state, and Kant's commonwealth. In those cases, too, the child had to shed his deficient nature and become the adult in order for the ideal political union to be realized. In approaching the child Rawls does not use the same methods of control and coercion as his predecessors but the mode of understanding the child and the end of transformation set out before the child remain the same.⁷⁰ Rawlsian moral education and development engages with children insofar as they are potential adults, deploying these methods to move the child away from his deficient nature toward autonomy and a sense of justice that expresses "men's nature as free and equal rational beings."⁷¹ Throughout this discussion, then, the adult of liberalism is the primary concern, serving both as the end of the child's transformation and measure of his deficient nature.

1.2: Kant, the *Theory*, and the Child

The impact of Kant's moral and political thought on Rawls's *Theory* is significant. Rawls goes so far as to describe his work as an attempt to "present a natural procedural rendering of Kant's conception of the kingdom of ends, and of the notions of autonomy and the categorical imperative."⁷² Methodological features of the *Theory*—such as the original position and the veil of ignorance—are directly informed by these

⁷⁰ For both Kant and Rawls, the child is deficient in reason and autonomy and must be transformed into the rational and autonomous adult. For Kant, this transformation marks the emergence of the moral and political adult and makes possible the commonwealth (populated by *active* citizens). For Rawls, this transformation marks the emergence of the moral and political adult and makes possible the well-ordered society (populated by ideal adults possessed of a sense of justice).

⁷¹ Rawls, *Theory*, 516, 478.

⁷² Rawls, *Theory*, 264.

concepts. Most importantly for our purposes, we will see that Kant's account of moral and political agency influences Rawls's discussion of the child, contributing to the conceptualization of the child as a politically and morally deficient being.

To provide a full account of Kant's influence on the *Theory* would require a recapitulation of much of the text in conjunction with an analysis of relevant aspects of Kantian moral and political theory. For the purposes of this work I will narrow my focus to some of the most significant areas of Kant's influence, those impacting Rawls's basic methodology and his conception of moral and political principles in the first, fundamental part of the *Theory*: the original position and the selection of principles of justice. Taken together, the restrictions of the veil and the rationality of the contracting parties in the initial situation ensures that the principles of justice are applicable to all "moral persons" or "rational beings with their own ends and capable...of a sense of justice."⁷³ Like Kant, then, Rawls is concerned with the elucidation and adoption of categorical (as opposed to hypothetical or heteronomous) moral and political principles, i.e., principles that are universally binding insofar as they apply to persons in virtue of their inalienable rational and autonomous nature. Rawls contends that the principles of justice fulfill this qualification; they are "categorical imperatives" given that they are binding for all rational beings and, further, they "manifest in the basic structure of society men's desire to treat one another not as means only but as ends in themselves."⁷⁴ This is to say, the principles of justice provide for respectful treatment of others as rational, autonomous

⁷³ Rawls, *Theory*, 12.

⁷⁴ Rawls, *Theory*, 253, 179. However, we can question the general relevance of Rawls's discussion here for nonideal (actual) societies. Only persons raised in the ideal society and developing the proper sense of justice would always have this desire (to treat one another not as means only but as ends in themselves).

beings (ends in themselves) in accordance with precepts they themselves would adopt in an initial situation of equality.⁷⁵

So understood, the perfectly just society resembles the kingdom of ends. Kant describes the kingdom of ends as follows:

By 'kingdom' I understand a systematic union of different rational beings through common laws. Now laws determine ends as regards their universal validity; therefore, if one abstracts from the personal differences of rational beings and also from all content of their private ends, then it will be possible to think of a whole of all ends in systematic connection (a whole both of rational beings as ends in themselves and also of the particular ends which each may set for himself); that is, one can think of a kingdom of ends.⁷⁶

Like the members of this kingdom, Rawlsian contractors abstract away from their accidental qualities and differences in order to select laws as essentially rational and autonomous beings. The principles chosen on this basis do not require heteronomous motivation for their acceptance. Rather, they issue from the autonomous nature of all members of the well-ordered society, each of whom is equally capable of adopting the deliberative procedure of the original position and, thus, can take up the position of sovereign (or subject) in relation to these principles. Just as Kantian moral principles are understood as those that "define the moral law that men can rationally will to govern their conduct in an ethical commonwealth," so, too, Rawls's principles of justice are those that citizens can rationally will to govern their conduct in an ideal political union.⁷⁷

⁷⁵ Rawls, *Theory*, 180.

⁷⁶ Kant, *Grounding*, 39 (4: 433).

⁷⁷ Rawls, *Theory*, 251-252.

Adopting the Kantian interpretation of the original position and the principles of justice necessitates a further methodological assumption in the *Theory*. The citizens of the perfectly just society must be assumed capable of formulating and acting on moral and political principles as rational agents. In other words, a Kantian interpretation of justice as fairness is only viable in conjunction with an idealized conception of agents. As we have seen, Rawlsian citizens *are* capable of developing and supporting the Kantian-inspired state; they are possessed of features familiar to us from *The Doctrine of Right* and the *Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals* insofar as they are adults of liberalism—ideally rational, autonomous, and moral agents. In Kantian terms, they are *active* citizens and full members of both the moral and political realms.

The child of the *Theory* is conceptualized as a deficient being in relation to these ideal adults (just as he is conceptualized as a *passive* moral and political actor by Kant). We can identify this conceptualization of the child in at least two ways: first, the Kantian adult provides Rawls with a standard in reference to which the child can be regarded as a deficient being. This same standard serves as the ideal end point of Rawls's account of moral development. Rawls contends that “moral education is education for autonomy” and the culmination of moral development—the morality of principles—is achieved with the moral agent basing his actions and attitudes on general principles of justice, acceptable and binding for all rational agents.⁷⁸ As Rawls writes, the morality of principles:

defines the last stage at which all the subordinate ideals are finally understood and organized into a coherent system by suitably general principles. The virtues of the other moralities receive their explanation and justification within the larger

⁷⁸ Rawls, *Theory*, 516.

scheme; and their respective claims are adjusted by the priorities assigned by the more comprehensive conception.⁷⁹

Insofar as the child *is not* at this stage he is a deficient being. His task is to escape the “contingencies of early childhood” and progress to the end of adulthood.⁸⁰ To this end, the process of moral development is understood teleologically, beginning with a deficient, “subordinate” being and culminating in the moral agency of the rational and autonomous adult. As taken up in this process, the child’s moralities of authority and association are understood as subordinate elements of the morality of principles and are valued insofar as they lead to this highest stage. Likewise, the child is understood as a subordinate being in relation to the moral and political adult and is valued insofar as he will reach adulthood and become an active member of the well-ordered society.⁸¹

Second, the child’s deficient status is disclosed in his near absence in the *Theory*. Given that the child is not rational and autonomous there is little need to discuss him, except insofar as he must be directed toward adulthood (as was the case in Kant’s moral and political realms). The child is covered over by his deficient moral and political status and, as a result, Rawls often fails to *see* children at all. We can understand, then, why he experiences no conflict in claiming that the principles of justice are universal and objectively valid for *all* persons (as categorical imperatives) *and* that they only cover “persons with a rational plan of life.”⁸² For both Rawls and Kant, only those possessed of a rational and autonomous nature are persons in the full sense of the term; they are

⁷⁹ Rawls, *Theory*, 478.

⁸⁰ Rawls, *Theory*, 514.

⁸¹ Rawls, *Theory*, 478.

⁸² Rawls, *Theory*, 505, 254.

complete beings capable of selecting and promoting a conception of justice. Conversely, those who lack reason and autonomy (or who possess it in a deficient form) belong to “a lower order;” they are deficient beings “whose first principles are decided by natural contingencies.”⁸³ Such beings take no part in the political and moral deliberations relevant to complete persons. Given that children *just are* beings whose deliberation is dominated by natural contingencies (emotions, family ties, desires, etc.) they are “creatures” of this lower order and are largely dismissed from discussions of political justice in the *Theory*.

1.3: Ideal Theory and the Nonideal Child

Much as Kant did in his own work, Rawls presents us with moral and political realms composed exclusively of ideal adults. We are again left with a vast *silence* surrounding the child. The ostensible exception to this silence—the discussion of the child as the subject of moral development—finds the child encountered exclusively as a being-to-be-transformed. The child remains within the shadow of a liberal adult serving as both his end and the measure of his current deficiency as the non-adult. We have seen that this account of the child is developed in relation to the Kantian interpretation of ideally rational agents. But to fully understand the deficient status (and, in turn, the absence) of children we must consider a foundational element of Rawls’s discourse; namely, his systematic assumption of ideal theory. This mode of understanding permeates Rawls’s work, directly informing his methodology and determining the problems relevant to the formation of a theory of justice. Insofar as the child is

⁸³ Rawls, *Theory*, 256.

understood as a *nonideal* being his fate is that of all other nonideal concerns in the *Theory*—he is largely irrelevant to the project of developing an ideal theory of justice.

Rawls's commitment to ideal theory is grounded in two related claims: first, a complete theory of justice cannot be achieved unless we take a simplified approach to the problem of justice. Rather than attempting to account for all of the contingencies of the everyday world (an impossible task) we adopt idealizing assumptions as to the nature of society and its citizens. For example, we posit a fully rational and autonomous citizenry strictly complying with principles of justice in society conceived as “a closed system isolated from other societies.”⁸⁴ Accommodating actual persons' propensities for injustice and varying cognitive abilities would hopelessly complicate a theory of justice, as would considering the problem of justice apart from society so conceived. By bracketing these nonideal contingencies and assuming ideal social conditions a “coherent and manageable theory” becomes possible.⁸⁵

Second, Rawls contends that an ideal theory of justice in turn provides for a “systematic grasp” of injustice in our world.⁸⁶ The well-ordered society acts as a comprehensive standard by which we can assess the basic structure of our own society and its deviations from “perfect justice.”⁸⁷ These deviations comprise the subject matter of nonideal theory and are divided into two basic classes: first, in any society there are necessary restrictions of liberty arising from “natural limitations” and “permanent

⁸⁴ Rawls, *Theory*, 8, 140-141, 351.

⁸⁵ Rawls, *Theory*, 96.

⁸⁶ Rawls, *Theory*, 9.

⁸⁷ Rawls, *Theory*, 246, 391.

conditions” of human life.⁸⁸ The liberty of persons (such as children or the intellectually disabled) lacking the intellectual abilities to participate in a just society must be restricted in various ways, as must the scope of majority rule when in conflict with a chosen political constitution and the priority of equal liberty for all. Second, in any society there are problems of “partial compliance”—violations of the principles of justice in “social arrangements or in the conduct of individuals” such as civil disobedience and conscientious refusal, intolerant behavior between individuals of conflicting religious beliefs, or a racially motivated withholding of voting rights.⁸⁹

Nonideal problems such as these represent the “pressing and urgent matters” of actual societies and, as such, Rawls acknowledges the need to consider how the principles of justice “apply to institutions under less than favorable conditions, and whether they provide any guidance for instances of injustice.”⁹⁰ Given that these principles are chosen by ideal agents for application in a perfectly just society it is not clear that they are relevant to problems of injustice in the everyday, nonideal world. But for whatever reason, Rawls never pursues these questions. Instead, he offers the following:

These [nonideal problems of actual societies] are among the central issues of political life, yet so far the conception of justice as fairness does not directly apply to them. Now I shall not attempt to discuss these matters in full generality. In fact, I shall take up but one fragment of partial compliance theory: namely, the problem of civil disobedience and conscientious refusal. And even here I shall assume that the context is one of a state of near justice, that is, one in which

⁸⁸ Rawls, *Theory*, 244, 246.

⁸⁹ Rawls, *Theory*, 245, 351.

⁹⁰ Rawls, *Theory*, 9, 245.

the basic structure of society is nearly just, making due allowance for what it is reasonable to expect in the circumstances.⁹¹

Rawls's substantive consideration of nonideal problems of injustice is confined to a focus on civil disobedience and acts of conscientious refusal in the nearly perfectly just society.⁹²

There is a clear tension here: Rawls acknowledges the need to consider the relevance of ideal principles of justice for the injustices faced by nonideal citizens and societies and, yet, he fails to follow through with this consideration.⁹³ I do not intend to resolve this tension. Rather, having noted it here I want to focus on Rawls's failure to attend to nonideal theory and its relevance for the deficient place of the child in the *Theory*. In comparison to the ideal adult the child is a nonideal being.⁹⁴ The adult is a rational, autonomous, and moral being, capable of actively participating as citizen in the

⁹¹ Rawls, *Theory*, 351, 245.

⁹² See Ch.6, Sections 55-59 of the *Theory*.

⁹³ For more on the failure of Rawls (and ideal theory as such) to seriously consider nonideal problems in moral and political theory, see Charles Mills's "Ideal Theory' as Ideology," *Hypatia* 20 (2005).

⁹⁴ But if Rawls is relying on ideal theory throughout the *Theory*, why, then, is the child also not ideal? There are at least two reasons for the nonideal status of the child in the *Theory*. First, given the limitations of childhood, Rawls simply does not consider the child an ideal being in his own right (as opposed to the adult citizen). This is clear in Rawls's discussion of constraints on his use of ideal theory, including "natural limitations" of human persons and "partial compliance" to principles of justice (*Theory*, 244-247). Within this discussion, Rawls specifies children as a primary example of human persons possessed of "natural limitations" that constrain an ideal theory of justice. Given their limitations children have "lesser liberty" and must be subjected to "principles of paternalism" (*Theory*, 244, 248-249). Second (and perhaps more importantly), the child cannot be ideal because there is a structural equivalence in the *Theory* between ideal agency and adult agency. To see this, consider the following: What would the ideal child be in well-ordered society if not the adult (or a very "adult-like" child)? The list of idealized qualities of the human being in the *Theory*—reason, autonomy, agency, etc.—are understood as *adult* qualities. Thus, the child is structurally excluded from the discussion by the very fact that he is not an adult.

well-ordered society. Taken together, Rawls's focus on ideal theory and the differential moral and political status of the adult and child—the former, ideal; the latter, nonideal—helps to explain the impoverished account of the child in the *Theory*. Recall that Rawls maintains that ideal theory provides a “systematic grasp” of nonideal problems of injustice. We gain a “deeper understanding” of nonideal problems by first developing an account of a perfectly just society.⁹⁵ With this ideal account in hand we can then turn to actual institutions and recognize them as unjust to the extent they depart from the perfectly just conception.⁹⁶ In turn, Rawls contends that we have “a natural duty to remove any injustices, beginning with the most grievous as identified by the extent of the deviation from perfect justice.”⁹⁷

In the case of children and adults a similar relation takes shape. By focusing on the ideal adult Rawls provides a systematic grasp of the human person as citizen, one who is rational, autonomous, and moral. This account of the adult also provides a deeper understanding of the problems of the child. The child is problematic insofar as he lacks the rational and moral agency of the adult and cannot act as a citizen. The child—like the actual society in relation to the perfectly just—is here understood as nonideal. As taken up in Rawls's ideal theory one is classified as a child to the extent he has not yet reached the perfectly just state of adulthood. In turn, the adult approaches the child with a clear duty in mind—to remove his “most grievous” deficiencies, to advance the child toward the perfection of adulthood via moral education and development. In effect, the discourse

⁹⁵ Rawls, *Theory*, 9.

⁹⁶ Rawls, *Theory*, 246.

⁹⁷ Rawls, *Theory*, 246.

of ideal theory has been applied to the human life cycle, delimiting ideal adults, deficient children, and the requisite response to the child as nonideal citizen.⁹⁸

Section 2: Tamar Schapiro

It is fitting that we turn to Tamar Schapiro's work on the child as in significant ways it represents a continuation of the Kantian and Rawlsian discourse on the child. Schapiro's child retains the status of the non-adult and is approached by the adult as a being-to-be-transformed.⁹⁹ This is not to say, however, that Schapiro adopts all of the concerns of her predecessors. For one, Schapiro is not concerned with providing an account of an ideal commonwealth and, thus, she does not take up the child within the contours of this problem. Nor does Schapiro provide a lengthy account of the moral development of children, explicitly marking their advance from deficient to ideal existence (as we find to varying degrees in *On Education* and the *Theory*). Rather, Schapiro is primarily concerned with the ethics of adult-child relations in contemporary Western society as grounded in the markedly different moral and political status of the child and the adult.

It is in Schapiro's account of the adult-child distinction that the influence of Kant and Rawls becomes clear. Schapiro synthesizes significant elements of the Kantian and Rawlsian discourse on the child, uniting them in a contemporary account of the deficient

⁹⁸ For a related, insightful discussion on this point, see Ashis Nandy's "Reconstructing Childhood: A Critique of the Ideology of Adulthood," in *Traditions, Tyranny, and Utopias. Essays in the Politics of Awareness* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1987). Nandy writes, "to the extent adulthood itself is valued as a symbol of completeness and as an end-product of growth or development, childhood is seen as an imperfect transitional state on the way to adulthood, normality, full socialization and humanness. This is the theory of progress as applied to the human life cycle. The result is the frequent use of childhood as a design of cultural and political immaturity or, it comes to the same thing, inferiority" ("Reconstructing Childhood," 57).

⁹⁹ I discuss two of Schapiro's essays here (though I primarily focus on the latter): "Childhood and Personhood," *Arizona Law Review* 45 (2003) and "What Is a Child?"

moral status of the child. The adult *qua* adult is the Kantian moral and political agent, a person possessed of a self-legislating will and capable of rational, autonomous deliberation.¹⁰⁰ Conversely, the child is a “predicament,” a human person needing, but lacking a rational will or voice of his own.¹⁰¹ Insofar as the child lacks the reason and autonomy of the adult he is “nonideal,” his state of being is “an obstacle to morality, a condition which in principle ought to be eliminated.”¹⁰² Given the child’s deficient status we are presented with a familiar conception of adult-child relations: the adult must “eliminate” the deficient condition of the child by moving the child—via education in autonomy—into the ideal realm of adulthood.

2.1: The Child as Predicament

In our daily lives we often apply the adult-child distinction without much reflection; there are *children* and there are *adults*. In contrast to the adult the child is generally thought of as “a person who in some fundamental way is not yet developed, but who is in the process of developing.”¹⁰³ Given their lack of development we often feel it appropriate to treat children in a manner deemed unsuitable for most adults—we approach children as beings in possession of a secondary moral and political status. We often treat children paternalistically, taking on special obligations to nurture, protect, and raise them (irrespective of their consent or objection to this treatment). Further, we regard

¹⁰⁰ Schapiro, “Childhood and Personhood,” 588.

¹⁰¹ Schapiro, “What Is a Child?,” 716, 729.

¹⁰² Schapiro, “What Is a Child?,” 735.

¹⁰³ Schapiro, “What Is a Child?,” 716.

the consent or dissent of children as lacking the “moral significance” of the adult’s and we do not hold children responsible for their actions in the way that we would an adult.¹⁰⁴

In “What Is a Child?” Schapiro moves beyond these practical observations, offering philosophical justification for the adult-child distinction and its consequences for adult-child relations. Schapiro begins with a question: “what is a child, such that it could be appropriate to treat a person like one?”¹⁰⁵ At first glance we might regard the answer to this question as a simple, empirical matter: “child” just is a nonnormative, biological concept best articulated within the natural sciences. But notice that biological features alone underdetermine the contrasting positions of the adult and the child in Western moral and political realms. That is to say, just as biological features underdetermine a person’s classification as, say, a “citizen,” so do they underdetermine a person’s classification as a “child” or “adult” (as well as the experiential consequences of these classifications). In these cases we are not *only* pointing to empirical facts, but are also making normative judgments as to *which* facts are relevant for a given *status* (citizen, adult, child). In the case of citizenship status this could be one’s birthplace or age; in the case of adult or child status, Schapiro contends, we do well to focus on a person’s agency and whether it is “developed” or “undeveloped.”¹⁰⁶

The import of Kant for Schapiro’s account of the child now presents itself. In order to flesh out a distinction between (adult) developed and (child) undeveloped agency Schapiro relies on Kant’s account of the child in the *Doctrine of Right*. We will recall that

¹⁰⁴ Schapiro, “What Is a Child?,” 716; “Childhood and Personhood,” 575-577.

¹⁰⁵ Schapiro, “What Is a Child?,” 715.

¹⁰⁶ Schapiro, “What Is a Child?,” 718.

Kant classified children (as well as women, servants, and domestic laborers) as “passive citizens” and adult (males) as “active citizens” with the distinction between active and passive citizenship primarily hinging on the quality of *independence*.¹⁰⁷ Unlike the servant or domestic laborer, the child is “naturally” dependent on others due to his deficient reason and inability to act from choice with others. By contrast, the adult—the full “member” of the commonwealth possessed of voting rights and political liberties—is not dependent in these ways. From the adult’s independence “follows his civil personality, his attribute of not needing to be represented by another where rights are concerned.”¹⁰⁸

Schapiro appropriates the Kantian conception of the child, arguing that in the moral realm, too, we can understand the child’s status as “passive” and “dependent.” The child lacks autonomy and is incapable of exercising “the distinctively human capacity for self-determination independent of nature.”¹⁰⁹ That is to say, children lack the ability to choose their own path, to regulate impulse and instinct on the basis of a self-chosen principle. Instead, “alien forces” in the form of desires and animalistic impulses guide children.¹¹⁰ Seen in this light Schapiro regards the child as inhabiting an existential state of nature. The child is beset by motivational impulses and as a minimally reflective being he experiences some measure of conflict between them. Like persons in a pre-political condition, however, he lacks the normative authority to arbitrate between impulses (or

¹⁰⁷ Schapiro, “What Is a Child?,” 719-720; Kant, *Doctrine of Right*, 457-458 (6: 314-6: 315).

¹⁰⁸ Kant, *Doctrine of Right*, 457 (6: 314).

¹⁰⁹ Schapiro, “What Is a Child?,” 723.

¹¹⁰ Schapiro, “Childhood and Personhood,” 591.

claims).¹¹¹ Such persons require a common political authority to provide their provisional claims with normative authority. In similar fashion, the child requires a normative ground from which he can adjudicate and authoritatively choose between his multifarious desires and motivational claims. But this is precisely what the child lacks. He is devoid of “an established constitution, that is, a principled perspective which would count as the law of his will.”¹¹² He exists within “nature’s rule” whereas the adult, having “completed the task of liberation from nature,” is “fully subject to her own authority.”¹¹³

To return to Schapiro’s question (What is a child?), then, the child is a being without a rational will, determined by natural impulse and dependent on others. Insofar as the child lacks autonomy and independence (and the adult possesses them) we can “draw something like a distinction in kind” between dependent children and rational, independent adults.¹¹⁴ This distinction provides for the differential moral regard and treatment of adults and children. First, the presence (or absence) of a rational will provides a basis for the adult-child distinction in moral status. Unlike the child, the adult possesses a rational will and maintains an “authoritative relation to the various motivational forces within her.”¹¹⁵ Developed, adult agents can resolve their motivational conflicts and act from rational, moral principles while undeveloped, child agents cannot. As a result, we rightly regard adults (and conversely dismiss children) as proper subjects

¹¹¹ Schapiro, “What Is a Child?,” 726; Kant, *Doctrine of Right*, 456 (6: 312).

¹¹² Schapiro, “What Is a Child?,” 729.

¹¹³ Schapiro, “Childhood and Personhood,” 588-589.

¹¹⁴ Schapiro, “What Is a Child?,” 724-725.

¹¹⁵ Schapiro, “What Is a Child?,” 729.

of moral praise and blame, holding them responsible for claims as representative of their will.

Second, given that the child lacks an established constitution he faces a “predicament”—he cannot resolve the conflicts within him until he “pulls herself [himself] together” into the normative stability of adulthood.¹¹⁶ But the child lacks the very normative foundation (the rational will) needed to *choose* a path out of nature’s rule into the rational realm of adulthood. Until this transition occurs the adult is justified in subjecting children to the paternalistic action common to Western adult-child relations. For if the child lacks a rational will, then the primary objection to paternalism—a violation of the will of a rational agent—loses all force.¹¹⁷ And, given the child’s animalistic condition, failing to subject the child to paternalistic action is tantamount to abandoning him to the dominion of nature.

2.2: Correcting the Nonideal Child

How, then, does the child escape his predicament and reach the normative stability of adulthood? The separation between these two states of being is vast. In a sense, we face the problem of accounting for how *something* (adulthood and rational agency) can come from *nothing* (childhood and the absence of rational agency).¹¹⁸ On the one hand, it seems clear that the child cannot will himself (via a one-off *act*) into adulthood as he is devoid of the very constitution needed to do so (the established deliberative perspective of the adult). The child is not a rational agent and, thus, he is

¹¹⁶ Schapiro, “What Is a Child?,” 716, 729.

¹¹⁷ Schapiro, “What Is a Child?,” 730-731; “Childhood and Personhood,” 594.

¹¹⁸ Schapiro, “What Is a Child?,” 731 (n.35).

incapable of choosing *any* state of being, including his own animalistic existence. On the other hand, the child's achievement of adulthood cannot be understood solely as a *process*. If it were, Schapiro notes, we would not "even try to help children learn how to see and conduct themselves in more mature ways."¹¹⁹ The distinction between children and adults is not a mere matter of procedural degree; the achievement of adulthood represents a "new normative order," a state of being that is wholly distinct from that of the child.¹²⁰

Given the tension between these two accounts—the *act* and the *process* of achieving adulthood—Schapiro offers a different option. The transition from the child to the adult can be usefully understood as occurring through the concept of *play*:

It may make sense to see play as a strategy—perhaps *the* strategy—for working through the predicament of childhood. By engaging in play, children more or less deliberately 'try on' selves to be and worlds to be in. This is because the only way a child can 'have' a self is by trying one on. It is only by adopting one or another persona that children are able to act the part of full agents, to feel what it must be like to speak in their own voices and to inhabit their own worlds.¹²¹

On Schapiro's account children are emerging persons, not yet capable of action in a robust sense of the term (action as representative of one's will). But children can "play-act," adopting various personas and experimenting with the representative actions of the rational adult.¹²² In doing so, children provisionally transcend their deficient status and rehearse for life as rational adults; they "try on principles in the hope of developing a

¹¹⁹ Schapiro, "What Is a Child?," 732.

¹²⁰ Schapiro, "What Is a Child?," 725, 731.

¹²¹ Schapiro, "What Is a Child?," 732.

¹²² Schapiro, "What Is a Child?," 731-732.

perspective they can endorse as their own.”¹²³ Eventually the trial and error of play-action gives rise to advances in autonomy and rational deliberation in various “domains” of life such that children gain increased sovereignty over their natural impulses and desires. As children learn to “carve out a space between themselves and the forces within them” they escape from the dominion of nature and “become themselves.”¹²⁴

But notice that “becoming oneself” is equivalent to becoming the rational, autonomous adult. Being a full person *just is* being an adult with childhood regarded negatively as a “temporary deviation from adulthood.”¹²⁵ Thus, if the child has a positive identity at all it is that of a *problem* to be solved with the achievement of adulthood serving as resolution. This mode of approach is not without precedent; it is familiar to us from Kant’s political philosophy (and as discussed in Chapter 1 it can be seen in various forms in the work of Plato, Aristotle, and Rousseau). In the *Doctrine of Right* the child is problematic insofar as his deficiencies threaten the achievement of the ideal commonwealth. Until he becomes the active citizen the child cannot support the civil condition by “acting from choice...in community with others.”¹²⁶ The child must become the rational, autonomous adult in order to act and regard others within a conception of public right. In Schapiro’s account the child represents a similar problem insofar as he lacks the established deliberative perspective to author representative actions. The child is incapable of acting in a moral commonwealth with others; he is instead fit to be acted upon by the adult.

¹²³ Schapiro, “What Is a Child?,” 735.

¹²⁴ Schapiro, “What Is a Child?,” 732, 735.

¹²⁵ Schapiro, “What Is a Child?,” 735.

¹²⁶ Kant, *Doctrine of Right*, 458 (6: 314).

Fortunately, the problem of the child is *temporary*—given time and the concerted effort of the adult, childhood will pass. As we have seen, the play-action of children promotes the transition of children out of their deficient condition. But if the child’s condition is an “obstacle to morality”—impeding the child’s moral actions and, in turn, the achievement of a community of moral actors—the adult must take an active role in removing this hindrance. The adult must help children to eliminate the impediments they face on the path to full personhood. In the first instance, adults can help children simply by refraining from hindering the developmental process. The child’s deficiencies, numerous as they are, will fall away as he makes advances in reason and autonomy. As long as the adult does not treat children “as if they belonged to a distinct and permanent underclass”—disregarding his potential for moral agency and discouraging his rehearsals of autonomous action—he will make progress on his own.¹²⁷ In turn, as the child gradually frees himself from the grasp of natural impulse and desire adults can take on an increasingly positive role in his transformation: modeling autonomy and action based on moral principles and explaining their choices and deliberative procedure to children while encouraging them to formulate their own maxims for action.¹²⁸

As noted above, Schapiro accepts the Kantian account of the child as passive citizen and mere part (as opposed to full member) of the moral and political realms. Given this conception of the child the adult is obligated to care for the child (in part, through paternalistic action) and, most importantly, to “help children work their way out

¹²⁷ Schapiro, “What Is a Child?,” 735.

¹²⁸ Schapiro, “What Is a Child?,” 736.

of childhood.”¹²⁹ But our understanding of Schapiro’s account of the child and the adult response is incomplete if we fail to account for the influence of Rawlsian ideal theory. Schapiro moves beyond a mere recapitulation of the Kantian discourse on the child, adding a Rawlsian “two-level, ideal/nonideal” analysis of moral agency.¹³⁰ On the ideal level we find the adult—an independent being capable of actively participating in the moral and political commonwealth alike. The adult possesses an agential “basic structure” (analogous to the basic structure of the *Theory*), a “critical perspective” that organizes “the fundamental constituents of the agent’s motivational world.”¹³¹ In virtue of his basic structure the adult can adjudicate between personal impulses and desires and act in concert with others in a moral or political commonwealth.

By contrast, on the nonideal level we find the child—a dependent being devoid of a voice in moral and political realms as “there is no voice which counts as hers.”¹³² The child lacks a voice until he develops a basic agential structure, or, what is the same, until he becomes the adult. Prior to this achievement the adult must cope with and correct the nonideal child.¹³³ Taken together, the child’s nonideal status and the adult’s need to cope with his deficiencies yield the adult’s responsibilities to the child (as discussed above):

¹²⁹ Schapiro, “What Is a Child?,” 734.

¹³⁰ Schapiro, “What Is a Child?,” 716.

¹³¹ Schapiro, “What Is a Child?,” 729.

¹³² Schapiro, “What Is a Child?,” 721.

¹³³ Discussing her adoption of ideal theory, Schapiro writes: “I have argued that the adult-child distinction has a place in the egalitarian world of modern moral theory, although it is appropriately an unstable one. Kantian ideal theory does indeed presuppose that the social world is made up exclusively of developed agents. But in doing so, the theory provides a standard relative to which certain agents can count as undeveloped. It is by defining this deviant status more precisely and by working out its implications that we come to see what an ethic of adult-

These obligations, both positive and negative, all stem from the idea that in order not to abuse our privilege as adults, we must make children's dependence our enemy. Call this a principle of Kantian nonideal theory. In the spirit of Rawls's nonideal theory, this principle helps us to find the least immoral way of coping with an obstacle to morality. The condition of childhood poses an obstacle to morality insofar as it prevents people from being agents in the full sense. The kingdom of ends must be a place in which every person's voice counts, but childhood prevents some from having voices of their own. Nonideal theory shows us how to acknowledge this fact without fully accepting it. It tells us to accord children a special status while striving to make them unworthy of it.¹³⁴

In Schapiro we see an explicit application of ideal theory to the human life cycle, yielding an account of the child as a nonideal being in relation to the ideal, liberal adult. If Schapiro's attempted synthesis of the Kantian and Rawlsian approaches to the child is unique, her account of the child most certainly is not. For Schapiro, as for her predecessors, the child inhabits a deficient state of being, regarded as an "enemy" of morality that is overcome by the guidance of the adult.

2.3: The Hegemony of Adulthood

Throughout this chapter I have attempted to draw attention to the *silence* surrounding children in the Western philosophical canon. To listen for the child's voice

child relations would entail...Ideals can provide a clear standard with reference to which important types of deviation can be defined. Once they are defined, ideals can tell us what is involved in treating deviant conditions as the deviations they are. They can tell us, in other words, what virtue demands when conditions happen to be inhospitable to virtue itself ("What Is a Child?," 737). But the ideal in question here *just is* the adult and the condition "inhospitable to virtue" *just is* that of the child. As with Rawls, Schapiro assumes a structural equivalence between ideal agency and adult agency such that the child (given that he is not the adult) is nonideal. The attributes of the ideal moral and political agent—reason, autonomy, etc.—are understood as *adult* qualities and, thus, the child is necessarily assigned a "deviant status." Given the structural equivalence between adult agency and ideal agency, there can be no ideal child. The adoption of ideal theory and, in turn, the assumption of the adult as the ideal in question structurally excludes the child from consideration as an ideal being, as well as consideration of the adult as a nonideal being.

¹³⁴ Schapiro, "What Is a Child?," 737.

in the moral and political realms of philosophers such as Kant and Rawls is to listen in vain. And, yet, this silence is significant; we should take notice of it as it presents an additional means of understanding the place (or, rather, the *lack* of place) of the child in Western philosophy. Of course, we do well to pay heed to the explicit characterizations of the child put forward by these philosophers—the child as animalistic, appetitive, irrational, etc. Characterizations such as these are straightforward, unambiguously revealing the classification of the child as a deficient being. But the overwhelming silence of children reveals that even when children are *not* explicitly discussed as “animals” or appetitive “creatures,” even when they are formally *acknowledged* as persons (as they are by Kant and Rawls), they are still not actively *recognized* as such. This is clear, for example, in considerations of the rights and interests of persons in political and moral realms (such as Rawls’s well-ordered society and Kant’s commonwealth). In these discussions children go missing or simply are not seen as relevant factors for consideration. The child does not surface in these discussions as a person worthy of consideration and respect in his own right, but rather, as a being-to-be-transformed. Covered over by strategies of control, he is a *totalized* child, always approached by the adult as a *problem* to be solved.

Schapiro’s work is not novel for its silencing of the child—she follows a well trodden path in the Western philosophical canon. Rather, Schapiro’s contribution comes in the form of a more refined explanation for the child’s silence:

Childhood as I have described it is a condition in which the personhood of the person, her capacity to have a mind and a voice of her own, is as yet ill constituted. On this view, the idea that children are people who have to be *raised* does not simply mean that they need to be trained and informed; it means, quite literally, that they need to be brought out of the

animal state in which they begin their lives...Children need, in other words, to establish the constitutions on the basis of which the words and deeds they produce will come to count as exercises of their own wills.¹³⁵

If the child *qua* child does not possess a rational will, if he has no authoritative *voice* to be heard, then his silence in moral and political realms necessarily follows. Having no voice of his own the child cannot be consulted in matters concerning his own education and development, nor can he contribute to the moral and political deliberations of the adult (that being who unquestionably *does* possess a rational will or voice). Rather, the adult must relate to the child as he would to any other being lacking a rational will, such as the mentally ill or clinically depressed.¹³⁶ He must choose on the child's behalf in paternalistic fashion, acting in accord with what his wishes would be if he were a rational and autonomous adult. The condition of the child is akin to these deficient conditions insofar as it, too, is an "alienating condition," one in which a person lacks the ability to make fully autonomous choices and, thus, in an important sense, lacks a "self."¹³⁷

Conceiving of childhood as akin to a mental illness, as a form of madness or *disease* (as can be found in the work of philosophers ranging from Aristotle and Plato to

¹³⁵ Schapiro, "Childhood and Personhood," 589. Prior to establishing this constitution, the "motivational apparatus" in children is "governed largely by instinct, and...this prevents them from establishing their own perspective" ("Childhood and Personhood," 591). The child is not devoid of will insofar as he can "produce" actions and, from an early age, "has the capacity to form and express very definite opinions" ("Childhood and Personhood," 586, 583). But these actions and opinions are not fully representative of the child insofar as his will is not fully liberated from "nature's rule." Until the child gains a rational will (and is fully liberated from nature's rule), adults view the child's claims as possessing only a "provisional" force ("Childhood and Personhood," 590).

¹³⁶ For a discussion of the place of mental and physical disability in liberal political philosophy see Barbara Arneil's "Disability, Self Image and Modern Political Theory," *Political Theory* 37 (1999).

¹³⁷ Schapiro, "Childhood and Personhood," 584-585.

Rawls and Schapiro) prescribes a specific mode of approach to the child; namely, just as the diseased require treatment to be cured, so, too, the child must receive treatment from the adult. In the case of the child these treatments come in the form of education for autonomy and various strategies of control, progressively curing the child of his deficient condition. In comparison to the severely mentally retarded and severe forms of mental illness, the child is fortunate—he can be *cured* of his condition, he can become the adult and abandon his deficient condition.

We have arrived, then, at an account of childhood as a deficient state of being akin to a disease, “an obstacle to morality” fit for elimination by the adult.¹³⁸ This characterization can be placed alongside the account of childhood as an animalistic state of being. As we have seen, the child is often discussed as a creature that remains close to nature, not yet free from the grasp of natural impulse and desire. Taken together, the condition of childhood as disease or animalistic state calls for the intervention of the ideally moral and political adult, the human person that has mastered his animalistic impulses and no longer suffers from an ill-constituted autonomy:

The adult, *qua* adult, is already governed by a constitution, so to speak—a unified, regulative perspective which counts as the expression of her will...An adult, in other words, is one who is in a position to speak in her own voice, the voice of one who stands in a determinate, authoritative relation to the various motivational forces within her.¹³⁹

This ideal conception of the adult—one possessing unhindered autonomy and unidirectional control over impulses and desires—serves as “a standard relative to which certain agents can count as undeveloped” and guides us in “treating deviant conditions

¹³⁸ Schapiro, “What Is a Child?,” 735, 737.

¹³⁹ Schapiro, “What Is a Child?,” 729.

[childhood] as the deviations they are.”¹⁴⁰ Unlike the child, the law of the adult’s will is firmly in place such that he possesses the “requisite critical perspective” (or “basic structure”) to arbitrate between his desires and act in accord with political and moral obligations.¹⁴¹

At this point, I want to turn critical attention to Schapiro’s ideal conception of the adult and her consequent estimation of the child as a deficient being. It is important to recognize Schapiro’s equivocation between the *ideal* adult and the *actual* adult (those classified as adults in the everyday world). On Schapiro’s account “our everyday concept of an adult...just is that of a full person in Kant’s sense.”¹⁴² That is, those persons classified as adults in the everyday world (actual adults) are classified as such in virtue of their developed rationality, autonomy, and ability to act as the “ultimate source” of their “words and deeds” (the qualities of ideal adults).¹⁴³ Thus, Schapiro is not simply developing an ideal concept of the adult that lacks relevant application to adults in the world. Rather, Schapiro’s discussion assumes that adults *just are* human persons that realize the qualities of this ideal conception. Schapiro’s adult (both as the ideal and in the world) is “governed” by a rational constitution, possesses a “unified, regulative

¹⁴⁰ Schapiro, “What Is a Child?,” 737. For Schapiro, our “everyday concept of an adult” and Kant’s ideal concept of the “full person” are congruent. Schapiro writes, “our everyday concept of an adult, I want to claim, just is that of a full person in Kant’s sense. To treat someone like an adult is to treat her as the ultimate source of her words and deeds, as the final authority to whom those words and deeds are attributable...an adult is the *source* of her beliefs and actions in the sense that she *authorizes* them” (“Childhood and Personhood,” 588).

¹⁴¹ Schapiro, “What Is a Child?,” 729-730.

¹⁴² Schapiro, “Childhood and Personhood,” 588.

¹⁴³ Schapiro, “Childhood and Personhood,” 588.

perspective,” and “stands in a determinate, authoritative relation” to impulses and desires as they arise.¹⁴⁴

It is in relation to this dual conception of the adult (one that equivocates between the ideal and the actual) that Schapiro classifies the child as a deficient being. Unlike the adult, Schapiro notes, the child inhabits early stages of development and is less mature in relation to the mature adult.¹⁴⁵ But the deficient status of the child is not limited to biological or developmental immaturity. Rather, as compared to Schapiro’s concept of the adult, the child’s deficiencies also cross over into moral, educational and socio-political realms. Developmental distinctions between adults and children, then, are but one factor among many taken up in support of the *hegemony of adulthood*, a broader thread of discourse that presents adulthood not merely as one life phase among others, but rather, as an ideal, as a distinct value-end in reference to which the existence of all other persons is explained and deemed valuable (insofar as they are “steps” toward this end state). Here, the adult-child distinction does not act as a mere dividing line for the ontological or biological division between the child and the adult. Adulthood is not merely that condition which is not childhood; rather, adulthood is as much a normative evaluation as an ontological classification. In effect, adulthood is presented as a state of being that conditions and is superior to all others.

¹⁴⁴ Schapiro, “What Is a Child?,” 729.

¹⁴⁵ See “Childhood and Personhood, 588-590. For more on biological distinctions between children and adults, see David Kennedy’s “Empathic Childrearing and the Adult Construction of Childhood: A Psychohistorical Look,” *Childhood* 5 (1998). Also see Herant A. Katchadourian’s “Medical Perspectives on Adulthood,” in *Adulthood*, ed. Erik H. Erikson (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., Inc., 1978).

Within this discourse adulthood is presented as a *static* end, a state of being achieved by the human person once and for all such that growth and development cease. Adulthood is a state of being free of existential upheaval, identity crises, or unresolved motivational conflicts, characterized instead as a time of completed development, independence, unhindered autonomy, and rationality. This conception brackets (or simply ignores) plausible interpretations of “child” and “adult” as fluid categories, present within a person to various degrees throughout one’s development in the human life cycle.¹⁴⁶ Instead, searching for an identity (or a “voice”) and forming a deliberative perspective is presented as the exclusive work of the child, whereas the adult has (assumedly) already completed these tasks. Fully secure in identity and deliberative perspective, the adult can devote himself to other activities such as participation in moral and political affairs. In effect, adulthood and childhood are presented as rigidly separate, fixed phases of the human life cycle, with philosophers such as Rawls and Schapiro presenting the achievement of adulthood as equivalent to ascending to the pinnacles of humanity, never to look back again—freedom, rationality and autonomy have been achieved and the developmental cycle has ended. By uncritically accepting this conception of adulthood a vast expanse is opened between those who are classified as adults and, conversely, all *Others*—beings who have yet to (or that never will) achieve this ideal status, such as the non-human animal, the mentally ill, and the child.

Within the hegemony of adulthood we do not understand adulthood as one life phase among others, replete with modes of being both unique to it and shared within the

¹⁴⁶ For example, see Erik H. Erikson’s “The Eight Ages of Man,” in *Childhood and Society* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., Inc., 1963). Also see Piaget, *Moral Judgment*, 85. Piaget rejects a rigid separation between adulthood and childhood, a separation that, I contend, is assumed by liberal philosophers such as Rawls and Schapiro.

continuum of the life cycle¹⁴⁷; rather, we are presented with an adulthood that is wholly distinct from childhood, a superior end state toward which all development aims. Given this evaluative sense of adulthood, the child is imbued with a negative value, “developing” to the extent he takes on the (assumedly) exclusive traits of the adult— independence and autonomy, rationality and morality. Childhood is not a robust state of being, comprised of unique interests and concerns or significant modes of engagement with the world. Rather, childhood is simply *not* adulthood. Out of numerous potential modes of conceptual approach to this state of being childhood is presented as *best* understood by analogy to non-human animals and mentally ill adults, conditions that depart from the normative ideal of adulthood. Within the hegemony of adulthood such a characterization of childhood is obvious, even a matter of common sense. If adulthood is uncritically accepted as a wholly distinct, ideal condition then it follows without question that non-adults (in all forms) are deficient beings.¹⁴⁸ We need only determine the extent of the deficiency at hand.

¹⁴⁷ Like other developmental models, conceptions of the human life cycle can be informed by a normative teleology. One could develop a conception of the human life cycle that presents the child as a deficient start to the cycle and the adult as the ideal completion of the cycle. Constructed in this fashion, a conception of the human life cycle would not radically depart from the stage model of moral developmental as presented by Lawrence Kohlberg (see Section 3.1 below). However, unlike a stage model of moral development, a conception of the human life cycle can avoid drawing rigid, linear boundaries between the conditions of the child and adult. For example, on many psychoanalytic accounts of the human life cycle (as evident to some extent in Erik H. Erikson’s “The Eight Ages of Man”) the condition of adulthood is never fully separated from the condition of childhood. Rather, the adult must refer back to and continue to develop in light of the formative experiences of childhood. Thus, on this conception the adult *qua* adult has not completed his development once and for all, but rather, is still in the process of developing (whereas for Kohlberg the child is in need of development and the adult is the end of development).

¹⁴⁸ This is not to say that philosophers such as Rawls and Schapiro reject any form of continuity between the adult and the child. To varying degrees, both discuss moral and political development as a gradual transition from the state of the child to the state of the adult. However,

Section 3: Jean Piaget and Lawrence Kohlberg

In the previous section I began to outline a discourse on the child and the adult-child distinction emerging from contemporary Western liberal philosophy. As present in the work of Rawls and Schapiro a discursive *hegemony of adulthood* presents adulthood as an ideal, fully developed state of being that is rigidly distinct from childhood (and other forms of non-adulthood such as the non-human animal, the mentally retarded, and the mentally ill). Adulthood is presented as a value-end, an optimal end-point for human development in relation to which childhood is deemed deficient. Biological distinctions between adults and children—primarily in terms of cognitive maturity—are taken up within this account as supporting sharp political and moral divisions between adults and children.¹⁴⁹ Further, the adult is discussed as one possessing the unhindered autonomy,

once achieved, adulthood is treated as if it is a distinct kind, as rigidly separate from all conditions prior to it. On the basis of this hard distinction, Rawls and Schapiro can claim that adults are moral and political agents, while children are not; that adults have been liberated from the rule of nature, whereas children are still within its grasp; that adults are possessed of rational wills, while children are irrational. In the work of Rawls and Schapiro, similar distinctions are made between the adult and the mentally ill (for example, see *Theory*, 249, 510, and “Childhood and Personhood,” 584-585) and, we can assume, would hold between the adult and aged persons to the extent they are “not themselves,” i.e., no longer in possession of a rational will.

¹⁴⁹ Although Rawls does not discuss the child’s biological development in detail, his account of moral development “takes up” (that is, “discusses” or “adopts a discussion of”) a thin account of the child’s biological growth and development. To say that the child is “not in a position to reject precepts on rational grounds” (*Theory*, 464), that he “cannot comprehend the larger scheme of right and justice” (*Theory*, 466), and that he lacks “the intellectual skills required to regard things from a variety of points of view” (*Theory*, 468-469) is to say (among other things) that he is lacking cognitive maturity (a biological category that, in turn, is deployed in the service of normative distinctions between the adult and child). Ultimately, the child’s lack of cognitive maturity informs his exclusion as a moral and political agent in the *Theory* (*Theory*, 249). It is also important to note that Rawls’s account of moral development is largely influenced by the moral and cognitive developmental work of Piaget and Kohlberg. Schapiro’s concern with empirical, biological elements of the child’s development is evident in the following passage: “it helps to notice a very general empirical fact about the way human beings develop. Our capacity to reflect upon our perceptual and motivational impulses develops gradually. Thus, those at the very beginning of human life, infants, are in an important respect more like nonhuman animals than they are like adult human beings...But somewhere along the way between infancy and adulthood, or perhaps at every point along the way, human beings develop the capacity to

the will (or “voice”) required for political and moral agency, whereas the child, in his animalistic or “diseased” state, lacks these traits (or, at most, possesses them in impoverished form).

It is here that developmental psychology comes to play a significant role in the discourse on the child as located in contemporary Western liberal philosophy. There is a reciprocal or mutually reinforcing relationship between, on the one hand, the account of the child in the developmental psychology of canonical figures such as Jean Piaget and Lawrence Kohlberg and, on the other, the ethical and political work of Kant, Rawls, and Schapiro. Piaget and Kohlberg provide scientific legitimacy (with all the epistemological strength this entails in contemporary Western society) for the liberal philosopher’s account of deficient children and ideal adults. Regarding the child as morally (as well as intellectually and politically) deficient, Kohlberg describes moral development in terms of a continuum of naturally occurring *stages*. The child is associated with early, deficient stages of moral agency whereas the adult is associated with higher, optimal stages. In turn, this cognitive developmental, stage-based account of moral maturation hinges on philosophical, normative conceptions of moral agency. Kohlberg characterizes the “highest” stage of moral development as the realization of the ideal moral agency of the Western liberal philosophical tradition (especially as presented by Kant and Rawls)—the rational, autonomous orientation of the adult acting from general, universalizable moral principles.

demand reasons of themselves and of others—both reasons for belief and reasons for action” (“Childhood and Personhood,” 588-589). I take it that, like Rawls, Schapiro is here referring to biological processes in the child’s growth and development and his eventual achievement of the human capacity for reason. Until the child develops in this sense, he is excluded from moral and political realms of activity, as is evident throughout Schapiro’s work in her discussion of the child as deficient in reason (“Childhood and Personhood,” 575).

Taken together, these psychological and philosophical discourses present a formidable regime of truth, a psycho-philosophical account of moral development as originating with the deficient child and *naturally* proceeding to the liberal adult.¹⁵⁰ On this account liberal adulthood is not simply a desirable state of being, it is the universal end point of moral evolution. Failure to achieve this end is a failure to follow a natural, universal course of development. Thus, this psycho-philosophical account of development strengthens the historically grounded place of the child in Western philosophy as a deficient being, ostensibly offering scientific justification for his classification as deficient and calling for a necessary relationship of reform to the child through moral education.

3.1: A Naturalistic Account of the Deficient Child

Although my primary focus in this section is the moral developmental work of Kohlberg and its reciprocal relationship to the discourse on the child in Western liberal philosophy, we should begin with a discussion of Piaget's work in *The Moral Judgment of the Child*. Piaget was immensely influential for Kohlberg and the fields of developmental and educational psychology as such insofar as he pioneered cognitive developmental investigations of the child.¹⁵¹ What is more, Piaget provides a substantive link between Western liberal philosophy and developmental psychology. Heavily influenced by Kant's moral theory, Piaget discusses morality in terms of respect for rules

¹⁵⁰ Note the reemergence of the *natural* in relation to the child and his development. I will not pursue a detailed comparison here, but the reader will recall the prevalence of this concept in discussions of the child's development in Rousseau's *Emile*, and, to a lesser extent, in Aristotle's *Ethics*.

¹⁵¹ See Valerie Walkerdine's "Developmental psychology and the child-centred pedagogy: the insertion of Piaget into early education," in *Changing the Subject. Psychology, social regulation and subjectivity* (London: Methuen & Co., 1984).

and persons with his empirical account of children's moral development terminating in the achievement of a "sense of justice" and "rational mentality."¹⁵² In conjunction with his increasingly rational and moral orientation the child comes to prioritize autonomy, equality, and reciprocity in his engagement with others.

Piaget's greatest contribution to the field of moral development came in the form of identifying the origins of moral obligation in children (primarily male children¹⁵³) and the evolution of this moral sense through natural "stages" of development. "Morality," Piaget contends, "consists in a system of rules, and the essence of all morality is to be sought for in the respect which the individual requires for these rules."¹⁵⁴ Piaget locates the origin of children's respect for moral rules in their experience of the juridical complexity of games (specifically, the game of marbles). Like the system of morality (as Piaget defines it), children's games are constituted by a formal system of rules in relation to which children take on evolving modes of judgment and relations of respect:

The rules of the game of marbles are handed down, just like so-called moral realities, from one generation to another, and are preserved solely by the respect that is felt for them by individuals. The sole difference is that the relations in this case are only those that exist between children. The little boys who are beginning to play are gradually trained by the older ones in respect for the law; and in any case they aspire

¹⁵² Piaget, *Moral Judgment*, 315-318, 324.

¹⁵³ Piaget's child research subjects are male in the vast majority of cases. Ch.1, Section 7 of *Moral Judgment* contains Piaget's most extensive discussion of moral development in female children. Piaget notes, "the most superficial observation is sufficient to show that in the main the legal sense is far less developed in little girls than in boys. We did not succeed in finding a single collective game played by girls in which there were as many rules and, above all, as fine and consistent an organization and codification of these rules as in the game of marbles examined above [played by boys]" (*Moral Judgment*, 77). For more on Piaget's (and Kohlberg's) exclusion of females from moral developmental research see Carol Gilligan's *In A Different Voice. Psychological Theory and Women's Development* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993).

¹⁵⁴ Piaget, *Moral Judgment*, 13.

from their hearts to the virtue, supremely characteristic of human dignity, which consists in making correct use of the customary practices of a game. As to the older ones, it is in their power to alter the rules. If this is not 'morality,' then where does morality begin? At least, it is respect for rules, and it appertains to an enquiry like ours to begin with the study of facts of this order.¹⁵⁵

By analyzing children's practice and consciousness of game rules in conjunction with their broader moral judgments (in response to hypothetical moral dilemmas) Piaget uncovers a parallel between the child's sense of obligation to game rules and moral rules (for example, obligation to abide by rules against playing out of turn and rules against lying or cheating).¹⁵⁶ In both cases, the child's development can be schematized in virtue of distinct stages. Beginning with a deficient mode of understanding all rules as emanating from adults and akin to physical laws—as external to the individual and unchangeable—the child advances to developed agency as he takes on an increasingly rational and autonomous mental orientation toward rules and, in turn, a progressive respect for rules as the product of autonomous deliberation and cooperative discussion between peers. In short, with advances in age, cognitive development, and increased role-taking opportunities in social interactions, the early provisional morality of the child gives way to higher forms of reasoning, respect, and moral judgment, moving the child from a *morality of heteronomy* to a *morality of autonomy*.¹⁵⁷ It is to the significant (and disparate) elements of these moralities that I now turn.

¹⁵⁵ Piaget, *Moral Judgment*, 14. Also see 50-51, 53, 100.

¹⁵⁶ Piaget's research focuses on the child's theoretical moral judgments in relation to hypothetical dilemmas (as opposed to a child's practical moral thought or his affective response to hypothetical dilemmas). Piaget acknowledges the limitations of his research given its narrow focus on theoretical moral judgments. For example, see *Moral Judgment*, 112, 135, 174-177, 274.

¹⁵⁷ Piaget, *Moral Judgment*, 194-195, 197, 228.

In early infancy the child is not consciously aware of rules as such. The infant is primarily engaged in individualistic motor activity, developing basic habits and ritualized schemas of action.¹⁵⁸ At this developmental stage factors essential for rule formation—reciprocal imitation, consciousness of obligation, and “submission to something superior to the self”—are absent.¹⁵⁹ But with the advance of age the child enters the social realm, the dominant focus on individualistic motor schemas yielding to engagement with others in the child’s environment. Outside of familial interactions, the social realm is particularly prominent for the young child in the form of game play with peers and the external constraint of rules within these institutions.¹⁶⁰ At this stage of development the child’s mental orientation toward rules is thoroughly *heteronomous*, an orientation that pervades his sense of moral obligation as well—game rules and injunctions against lying, cheating, and stealing alike are completely external to the child, perceived as “sacred and untouchable” laws emanating from adults (or older peers).¹⁶¹ This morality of heteronomy is the product of two primary factors: the child’s primitive mental orientation and his inherently unequal interactions with adults. Given the young child’s limited cognitive development he fails to distinguish between the subjective contents of his mind and external, objective realities. For the young child these distinct realities are conflated, resulting in the contents of consciousness being mistaken for (or understood as akin to)

¹⁵⁸ Piaget, *Moral Judgment*, 26, 28, 51-53. The child is “engaged here upon purely personal and individual ritual acts. The child, enjoying as it does any form of repetition, gives itself schemas of action, but there is nothing in this that implies an obligatory rule” (*Moral Judgment*, 53).

¹⁵⁹ Piaget, *Moral Judgment*, 33, 35, 52-53.

¹⁶⁰ Piaget, *Moral Judgment*, 54, 89.

¹⁶¹ Piaget, *Moral Judgment*, 54.

realities independently existing in the physical or social world.¹⁶² What is more, the child's unequal interactions with the adult—interactions of constraint and unilateral respect—reinforce his spontaneous realism, causing it to carry over into his understanding of moral rules. The rules laid down by the adult are external to the child and are interpreted as part of the world-order, as indubitable and obligatory as the law of gravity.¹⁶³ Having little understanding or internal motivation to follow these rules the child simply accepts them as objective realities of the world:

Being therefore a realist in every domain, it is not surprising that the child should from the first 'realize' and even 'reify' the moral laws which he obeys. It is forbidden to lie, to steal, to spoil things, etc.—all, so many laws which will be conceived as existing in themselves, independently of the mind, and in consequence independently of individual circumstances and intentions...The child, up to the age of about 7-8, always regards the notion of law as simultaneously moral and physical.¹⁶⁴

But the child is not forever confined to this primitive mentality and deficient understanding of obligation. The child evolves, progressing beyond a “morality of external rules” to a morality of autonomy and “sense of justice,” thereby setting the

¹⁶² Piaget, *Moral Judgment*, 187-190.

¹⁶³ Piaget, *Moral Judgment*, 111, 188-189, 256. Piaget notes that for the child “the universe is permeated with moral rules; physical regularity is not dissociated from moral obligation and social rule...It is only natural, therefore, that the moral rule should retain something physical about it. Like names, it is a part of things, a characteristic feature, and even a necessary condition of the universe” (*Moral Judgment*, 189). For the young child, then, the act of lying necessarily incurs punishment in the same sense an object necessarily falls to the ground due to the law of gravity.

¹⁶⁴ Piaget, *Moral Judgment*, 188.

ground for the development of full moral agency in adulthood.¹⁶⁵ This evolution is constituted by the child’s advancing cognitive abilities—the ability to reason formally and understand general principles—as well as his increased social interaction with peers in the form of cooperation and mutual respect (as opposed to the constraint and unilateral respect characteristic of early adult-child relations).¹⁶⁶ These interactions are imbued with *reciprocity* between peers and, in turn, the emergence of autonomy as the “fruit of a mutual engagement” in children’s societies.¹⁶⁷ Piaget writes:

From henceforward a rule is conceived as the free pronouncement of the actual individual minds themselves. It is no longer external and coercive: it can be modified and adapted to the tendencies of the group. It constitutes no revealed truth whose sacred character derives from its divine origin and historical permanence; it is something that is built up progressively and autonomously...it is from the moment that it replaces the rule of constraint that the rule of cooperation becomes an effective moral law.¹⁶⁸

This transition—from the primitive to the precipice of full morality—can be tracked as a “law of evolution in the moral development of the child”:¹⁶⁹ the young child experiences obligation as external constraint based in foreign, coercive laws authored by the adult.

But as he grows older, developing in reason and accumulating social interaction, the child

¹⁶⁵ Piaget, *Moral Judgment*, 190-191, 196. Piaget uses the phrase - “sense of justice” - numerous times, one that is taken up by Rawls in the *Theory*. See *Moral Judgment*, 198, 218, 229-230, 305.

¹⁶⁶ Piaget, *Moral Judgment*, 46-47, 74.

¹⁶⁷ Piaget, *Moral Judgment*, 110, 88.

¹⁶⁸ Piaget, *Moral Judgment*, 70, 28.

¹⁶⁹ Piaget, *Moral Judgment*, 227. Also see 263-264, 277, 284, 313.

begins to resemble the autonomous adult, acting both as “sovereign and legislator” in the formation of rules and guided by a rational “inner law.”¹⁷⁰

We see, then, that heteronomy and autonomy act as opposing poles of the child’s moral evolution.¹⁷¹ From a primitive morality and understanding of the world the child *naturally* evolves to the borders of adult morality, advancing toward a rational, autonomous condition that characterizes moral agency in Western liberal ethical theory (as found, for example, in the work of Kant and Rawls). Piaget’s task is not that of discussing adult, fully formed moral agency, but rather, that of tracing the “psychological origins” of this morality, one that culminates in the values of justice, equality, and reciprocity in the adult.¹⁷² As Piaget writes, “if we want to form men and women, nothing will fit us so well for the task as to study the laws that govern their formation.”¹⁷³ At the conclusion of *The Moral Judgment of the Child* the biological and social origins of the morality of autonomy have been located—we now have an understanding of the child as naturally progressing to a morality of autonomy through cognitive and moral stages. Normal children will advance to a sense of justice and understanding of rational moral laws; “backward children” are those who fail to advance along these rational, liberal lines.¹⁷⁴

¹⁷⁰ Piaget, *Moral Judgment*, 71, 93.

¹⁷¹ Piaget, *Moral Judgment*, 102.

¹⁷² Piaget, *Moral Judgment*, 317-318.

¹⁷³ Piaget, *Moral Judgment*, foreword, 12.

¹⁷⁴ For Piaget’s use of the term – “backward” – to describe children with a deviant developmental status see *Moral Judgment*, 209, 253.

In the *Theory* Rawls leans heavily on Piaget's account of cognitive and moral development, adopting significant elements of Piaget's work in his own discussion of the child's transition from a morality of authority (or in Piaget's terms, the morality of heteronomy) and association to that of a morality of principles (the morality of autonomy). Through Piaget's work (in part), Rawls inherits an empirical, naturalistic foundation for his claims of the stability of his conception of justice—children *just do* develop toward rational and autonomous agency such that, as adults, they would adopt and support the two principles of justice.¹⁷⁵

But despite his influence on Rawls (and Western liberal accounts of child development more generally) Piaget's work does not substantiate the hegemony of adulthood on its own. For one, Piaget's project is incomplete insofar as he does not devote substantive attention to the *telos* of moral development in Western liberal theory—the morality of the adult. Piaget's analysis does not depart from the realm of the child, focusing instead on development within “children's societies” and “the point of view, not of the adult conscience, but of child morality.”¹⁷⁶ It is true that Piaget's work provides the resources to identify the biological and social *origins* of Western liberal moral agency, but it is left to others to provide detailed analysis of the finished product—the rational, autonomous adult with a fully developed sense of justice. Second, the

¹⁷⁵ Assumedly, Rawls need not worry about the “backwards child” in the well-ordered society. At any rate, he does not consider any cases of children incapable of developing into the rational adult possessed of a sense of justice. The absence of this consideration is in line with Rawls's general failure to theorize the place of the mentally ill or disabled in the just state. Rawls writes, “the problem of those who have lost their realized capacity temporarily through misfortune, accident, or mental stress can be regarded in a similar way [as dealt with via principles of paternalism]. But those more or less permanently deprived of moral personality may present a difficulty. I cannot examine this problem here, but I assume that the account of equality would not be materially affected” (*Theory*, 510).

¹⁷⁶ Piaget, *Moral Judgment*, 102, 14.

naturalistic foundation provided by Piaget is not sufficient to ground the hegemony of adulthood. Simply put, Piaget fails to mark the rigid conceptual and developmental distinction between the adult and child required within this discourse. As Piaget writes, “there is an adult in every child and a child in every adult” with the main difference being that “there exist in the child certain attitudes and beliefs which intellectual development will more and more tend to eliminate.”¹⁷⁷

Piaget does discuss moral and cognitive development in terms of distinct “stages” and these structural reorganizations of the child’s cognitive, social, and moral orientations are presented as marking the child’s progress toward the agency of the adult.¹⁷⁸ But despite his reliance on a stage model of development Piaget wavers on the ontological status of stages and calls into question the possibility of a stage functioning as a rigid point of separation between the adult and the child. Piaget openly questions whether stages are objective features of human development or, rather, subjective analytical devices for divining conclusions from empirical data on the child. Ultimately, Piaget adopts a stage model conception of development for methodological purposes but he is forthcoming about the limitations of his approach:

These stages must of course be taken only for what they are worth. It is convenient for the purposes of exposition to divide the children up in age-classes or stages, but the facts

¹⁷⁷ Piaget, *Moral Judgment*, 85. Also see 96, 257. Of course, Piaget is not concluding that the adult and child are one and the same. Rather, he is using “adult” and “child” to refer to elements of their shared moral psychology. Piaget writes, “after having tried to describe the child’s mentality as distinct from the adult’s we have found ourselves obliged to include it in our descriptions of the adult mind in so far as the adult still remains a child. This happens particularly in the case of moral psychology, since certain features of child morality always appear to be closely connected with a situation that from the first predominates in childhood...but which may recur in adult life, especially in the strictly conformist and gerontocratic societies designated as primitive” (*Moral Judgment*, 84-85).

¹⁷⁸ Piaget, *Moral Judgment*, 26-28.

present themselves as a continuum which cannot be cut up into sections. This continuum, moreover, is not linear in character, and its general direction can only be observed by schematizing the material and ignoring the minor oscillations which render it infinitely complicated in detail.¹⁷⁹

But where Piaget wavers, Kohlberg does not, advancing an account of culturally universal and invariant stages of cognitive and moral development.¹⁸⁰ Kohlberg begins from the foundation set by Piaget in *The Moral Judgment of the Child*, adopting a focus on moral development as development in moral judgment (as opposed to an emotional state or behavior).¹⁸¹ For both Piaget and Kohlberg moral judgments evince an underlying logical structure, a *form* that can be discerned (for the purposes of their research) by focusing on an individual's responses to hypothetical moral dilemmas and conflict situations.¹⁸² In turn, these forms of judgment can be evaluated for moral and logical adequacy and classified within a stage of moral development. Adopting a Kant-inspired formalism, Kohlberg classifies moral judgments as deficient when issuing from situated, heteronomous concerns centering on punishment and reward, affective ties

¹⁷⁹ Piaget, *Moral Judgment*, 27-28. Also see 85, 87, 130, 156, 267. In some cases Piaget uses the term "process" (*Moral Judgment*, 124, 175, 195-196) or "attitude" (*Moral Judgment*, 160, 284) in place of "stage," though he does not abandon characterizing the child's moral and cognitive development in terms of stages.

¹⁸⁰ I will focus on two volumes of Kohlberg's work: *Essays on Moral Development, Volume 1. The Philosophy of Moral Development: Moral Stages and the Idea of Justice*; and *Essays on Moral Development, Volume 2. The Psychology of Moral Development: The Nature and Validity of Moral Stages* (San Francisco: Harper & Row Publishers, 1984).

¹⁸¹ For Kohlberg's focus on moral development in terms of the development of moral judgment see *Essays, Vol. 1*, 136-138, 145; *Essays, Vol. 2*, 282. For Kohlberg's discussion of Piaget's influence on his own work see *Essays, Vol. 1*, preface, xvii, 16, 116, 145; *Essays, Vol. 2*, 225. Like Piaget, Kohlberg also focuses his research on male subjects (see *Essays, Vol. 1*, 16; *Essays, Vol. 2*, 188).

¹⁸² Kohlberg, *Essays, Vol. 1*, 136; *Essays, Vol. 2*, 171-2, 245, 248.

within relationships, and approbation within a given community.¹⁸³ By contrast, advanced forms of moral judgment reveal an internal, principled orientation to moral conflict, imbued with higher-order reasoning, impersonality, universality and ideality in the evaluation of moral conflict.¹⁸⁴ For both Piaget and Kohlberg, the advanced moral agent evaluates moral situations (that is, unresolved conflicting claims between persons) in a formalistic, rational manner, authoring moral judgments informed by the logic of *justice*:

The most essential structure of morality is a justice structure. Moral situations are ones of conflict of perspectives or interest; justice principles are concepts for resolving these conflicts, for giving each his or her due...Justice is the normative logic, the equilibrium, of social actions and relations.¹⁸⁵

Just as cognitive development is indicated by an agent's logical reasoning ability and application of concepts such as reciprocity, reversibility, and equality in scientific domains of understanding, moral development is evidenced by an agent's logic of justice and the application of these same concepts to conflicts in the moral realm.¹⁸⁶ There is a "*parallelism or isomorphism* between the development of the forms of logical and ethical judgment" such that an individual's moral judgments (governed by a justice and role-taking orientation) presuppose parallel stages of intellectual development (governed by a

¹⁸³ For Kohlberg's discussion of Kant's influence on his work and conception of developed moral agency see *Essays, Vol. 1*, 164, 170-171; *Essays, Vol. 2*, 183, 225, 248, 251, 253.

¹⁸⁴ Kohlberg, *Essays, Vol. 1*, 170.

¹⁸⁵ Kohlberg, *Essays, Vol. 2*, 184.

¹⁸⁶ Kohlberg, *Essays, Vol. 2*, 245.

logico-mathematical orientation).¹⁸⁷ In the moral realm these forms of development collectively culminate in the rational, autonomous agent who grasps the “core of justice”—the achievement of social and moral equilibrium in conflicts by applying an equal and reciprocal distribution of rights and duties.¹⁸⁸

By uniting his account of moral development with Piaget’s account of cognitive development, Kohlberg attempts to identify a parallel, *natural* trajectory of moral evolution, an “invariant” and “culturally universal” path of development.¹⁸⁹ Prior to Kohlberg’s work on moral development Piaget argued that advanced logical reasoning is the culminating point of cognitive development in all fully developed human persons. Beginning with primitive forms of reasoning in early childhood—sensorimotor and concrete operational thought—the human person advances to the formal operational thought of adolescence and adulthood, expressed in its highest form in the Western scientific orientation to the world (as opposed to the mystical and superstitious mental orientation of “lower grades of civilization” and “primitive societies”).¹⁹⁰ Building on Piaget’s work, Kohlberg points to a parallel, universal process of development in the moral realm: human persons begin with logically deficient, heteronomous forms of moral

¹⁸⁷ Kohlberg, *Essays, Vol. 1*, 136; *Essays, Vol. 2*, 171-2, 245, 248.

¹⁸⁸ Kohlberg, *Essays, Vol. 2*, 184.

¹⁸⁹ Kohlberg, *Essays, Vol. 1*, 20, 23-25, 122-3, 126; *Essays, Vol. 2*, Ch. 8-9. Kohlberg contends that “anyone who interviewed children about moral dilemmas and who followed them longitudinally in time would come to our six stages and no others” (*Essays, Vol. 2*, 195.) Part of Kohlberg’s support for this claim—and his discussion of culturally universal, invariant stages of moral development in general—comes from his longitudinal moral developmental studies in the United States of America, Mexico, Taiwan, Turkey, the Yucatan, and Israel.

¹⁹⁰ For Piaget’s discussion of “primitives” see *Moral Judgment*, 251, 262. For the influence of Piaget’s theory of cognitive developmental on Kohlberg’s theory of moral development see *Essays, Vol. 1*, 136-138, 145.

judgment and advance toward the ideal traits of the Western liberal adult (as represented in the work of Rawls and Kant).¹⁹¹ This developmental process is schematized in three distinct levels of moral reasoning and judgment—the *preconventional* (Stages 1 and 2), the *conventional* (Stages 3 and 4) and the *postconventional* (Stages 5 and 6)¹⁹²—forming a moral developmental trajectory that, Kohlberg contends, is “universal for all children.”¹⁹³ Advanced moral agents are rational, autonomous adults, capable of abstracting away from their situated condition and interpersonal relationships to deploy “universal and impersonal” principles of moral judgment:

At Stage 6 people have disentangled judgments of—or language about—human life from status and property values (Stage 1); from its uses to others (Stage 2); from interpersonal affection (Stage 3); and so on; they have a means of moral judgment that is universal and impersonal. Stage 6 people answer in moral words such as *duty* or *morally right* and use them in a way implying universality, ideals and impersonality. They think and speak in phrases such as ‘regardless of who it was’ or ‘I would do it in spite of punishment.’¹⁹⁴

Regardless of race, culture, or class, all children begin with a primitive understanding of morality in terms of heteronomous concerns, such as the preconventional interpretation of justice as punishment and reward or the conventional understanding of justice as equivalent to the will of an authority figure. But given the advance of age and, with it, the progress of cognitive development and increased exposure to moral conflicts, children

¹⁹¹ Kohlberg, *Essays, Vol. 1*, 164-165, 192, 197, 201.

¹⁹² Discussion of these moral developmental levels and corresponding stages can be found in numerous sections of Kohlberg’s work. For examples, see *Essays, Vol. 1*, 16-19; *Essays, Vol. 2*, 172-177.

¹⁹³ Kohlberg, *Essays, Vol. 1*, 95. Also see 75, 91, 106.

¹⁹⁴ Kohlberg, *Essays, Vol. 1*, 22. Also see *Essays, Vol. 2*, 178, 184.

develop into models of Western liberal adulthood, fully realizing a conception of justice in terms of universal ethical principles.¹⁹⁵

This is not to say that *all* individuals will realize a fully developed morality of autonomy (postconventional morality). On the contrary, in his later work Kohlberg acknowledges that few individuals reach the highest, principled stages of moral development.¹⁹⁶ Nonetheless, the “Universal Ethical Principle Orientation” (Stage 6) remains as the ideal *telos* of Kohlberg’s account of moral development, conditioning the moral quality of all prior stages and demarcating the morally deficient child from the morally advanced adult (one who, even if never achieving Stage 6, is closer than the child to the ideal moral state of being).¹⁹⁷ Although the child may never reach the apex of moral development he must, as far as is possible, be led to this ideal end:

A very genuine although four-year old sense of justice...contains within it the Stage 6 sense of justice in shadowy form. The problem is to draw the child’s perceptions of justice from the shadows of the cave step by step toward the light of justice as an ideal form...Children who turn from the dark images of the cave toward the light are at first still convinced that the dark images best represent the truth. Like Meno’s slave, children are initially quite

¹⁹⁵ Kohlberg cites the categorical imperative as a primary example of a universal ethical principle (*Essays, Vol. 1*, 17-19).

¹⁹⁶ Although he does not abandon Stage 6 morality as the standard and measure for all other moral stages (as well as the moral agency of individuals classified by those stages), Kohlberg drastically scales back his claims of individuals actually achieving this highest stage of morality. Whereas in *Essays, Vol. 1*, Kohlberg references numerous examples of individuals at Stage 6 (22, 27, 207) in *Essays, Vol. 2*, Kohlberg backs away from these claims. Kohlberg writes, “we no longer claim that our empirical work has succeeded in defining the nature of a sixth and highest stage of moral judgment. The existence and nature of such a stage is, at this moment, a matter of theoretical and philosophical speculation and further empirical data collection” (215). Also see *Essays, Vol. 2*, 224, 270, 273.

¹⁹⁷ Kohlberg, *Essays, Vol. 1*, 19; *Essays, Vol. 2*, 221, 271-272.

confident of their moral knowledge, of the rationality and efficacy of their moral principles.¹⁹⁸

Whatever confidence children place in their moral principles and concerns is misplaced as authentic, fully developed moral agency only comes with the “eventual adult attainment of the highest stage.”¹⁹⁹ To become a moral agent the child must depart from a “shadowy” state of intellectual and moral deficiency (childhood) and ascend to the moral agency of the rational, autonomous adult.

Within Kohlberg’s developmental model both the ideal standards of adult moral agency and the ideal form of morality as justice are appropriated from the normative moral theory of Kant and Rawls.²⁰⁰ Serving as the standard and measure of Kohlberg’s empirical account of moral development, liberal normative accounts of moral agency directly inform the conceptualization of the child as a deficient being and, in turn, the conceptualization of the adult as the ultimate end of moral development. In turn, the hegemony of adulthood—a discourse permeating the Western philosophical tradition—has now (ostensibly) gained epistemological strength within the Western scientific realm: the liberal philosopher is *empirically* justified in dismissing the moral agency of children

¹⁹⁸ Kohlberg, *Essays, Vol. 1*, 47. Kohlberg contends that the process of cognitive and moral development is invariant and universal, but it can be advanced or hindered by social conditions and certain forms of education for moral development. For example, see *Essays, Vol. 1*, 27.

¹⁹⁹ Kohlberg, *Essays, Vol. 1*, 91.

²⁰⁰ For Kohlberg there is an *isomorphic* relationship between the projects of Western liberal moral philosophy and developmental psychology: “Our work on ethical stages has taken a philosophical notion of adequate principles of justice (represented especially in the work of Kant and Rawls) to guide us in defining the direction of development...The isomorphism assumption is a two-way street. Moral philosophical criteria of adequacy of moral judgment help define a standard of psychological adequacy or advance, and the study of psychological advance feeds back and clarifies these criteria” (*Essays, Vol. 1*, 194). For more on the reciprocal relationship between the normative philosophical work of Kant and Rawls and the empirical psychological work of Kohlberg see *Essays, Vol. 1*, 165, 192, 195, 197.

and in classifying the child as a deficient being. Following Kohlberg, this classification is no longer primarily bound up with the broader political and moral interests of philosophers; rather, it is an objective classification, stemming from the child's *natural* place within the cognitive and moral developmental schema.

Conclusion

We have seen that philosophers such as Kant, Rawls, and Schapiro dismiss the moral agency of the child, rigidly separating the deficient (or animalistic and diseased) condition of the child from the ideal, rational, and autonomous condition of the adult. In turn, the adult's relation to the child is one of *reform*—the adult's task is that of leading children out of their deficient (nonideal) condition toward liberal, fully developed adulthood. With Kohlberg's naturalistic account of moral development, this normative account of the deficient child, the ideal adult, and the resulting conception of adult-child relations ostensibly gains substantial strength. As seen through the lens of this developmental model the normative distinctions between the adult and the child offered by Kant, Rawls, and Schapiro (and the Western liberal philosophical tradition more generally) become objective, natural divisions in the human species. Following Kohlberg one can claim that the “scientific facts” demonstrate that there is a “universal ontogenetic trend toward the development of morality as it has been conceived by Western moral philosophers”²⁰¹ On Kohlberg's account, liberal adulthood *just is* the universal end point of moral evolution, an ideal state of being separated from the child by an expanse of developmental stages. Given that the child has not realized adulthood—the biological and

²⁰¹ Kohlberg, *Essays, Vol. 1*, 178-180, 105.

evaluative end of this developmental model—he is classified, both naturally and normatively, as a deficient being.

The historical account of the child in Western philosophy as a deficient being—familiar to us from the philosophical canon ranging from Plato to Rawls—is now advanced via (ostensibly) scientific justification. As understood in the moral theory of Kant, Rawls, and Schapiro and, now, as empirically demonstrated by Kohlberg, the child is a deficient being in need of reform. Adult morality (and the condition of adulthood as such) represents a distinct, biological, and normative advance beyond its childish precursors. In order to become a moral agent—or, what is more, in order to develop naturally—the child must shed his deficient condition and become the liberal adult.

CHAPTER III

RECONSIDERING THE CHILD: VOICE, RECOGNITION, AND THE DECONSTRUCTION OF THE HEGEMONY OF ADULTHOOD

Introduction

In Chapters 1 and 2 I examined the place of the child in the work of major figures in the Western philosophical tradition ranging from Plato to Rawls. Throughout the history of Western philosophy—both in the ancient and modern eras—the child is approached as the *non-adult* and *being-to-be-transformed*. That is, the child is conceptualized in ethical and political discussions as a being lacking (or possessing in primitive form) the positive traits of the ideal adult and, in turn, as a being that must shed his deficiencies and take on the moral and socio-political norms of the adult. Insofar as the child is *new*—born into the world devoid of the norms and traditions of the adult—he is potentially *dangerous* and is in need of control and reform. The conceptualization of the child as non-adult and being-to-be-transformed continues in contemporary Western philosophy, most notably in liberal ethical and political thought. In the work of Rawls and Schapiro, the child is still understood through a negation of the positive traits of the ideal adult. And, for Rawls, discussion of the child continues to be motivated by the concern to create an ideal state and citizenry. In conjunction with the cognitive developmental work of Piaget and (especially) Kohlberg, the *hegemony of adulthood* crystallizes in contemporary accounts of the child. Adulthood is regarded as the value-end of a person, serving as both the *normative* standard for all other moral developmental states and the *natural* end point (*telos*) of moral evolution.

But as it stands, I have largely presented a descriptive account of the dominant modes of conceptualizing the child in Western philosophy. In this chapter I will go

further and present a critical response to the conceptualization of the child in Western philosophy. My critique of the Western philosophical concept of the child is not confined to its presence within canonical texts (as discussed in Chapters 1 and 2). Rather, having revealed the dominant conception of the child as deficient being, in this chapter I point to the material relevance of this concept for those classified as children. That is, I contend that the Western philosophical account of the child is problematic and ought to be rejected insofar as it informs the adult's relation to (and, ultimately, the production of) children as deficient beings. If the paradigmatic concept of the "child" (one deployed by philosophers and accepted throughout Western culture) designates a deficient being, lacking moral and political possibilities,¹ those classified as children are excluded from moral and political realms of human activity. In virtue of his classification, the child—as discussed within the canon and, ultimately, as existing in the world—is "subjected" to the corrective strategies of the adult and the restricted field of action proper to a deficient being (one that excludes possibilities for authentic moral and political experience).²

¹ By "moral and political possibilities" I mean the ability to act morally and politically and/or possess authentic moral and political concerns. The child is often regarded as possessing a *potential* for moral and political activity that is actualized once the child becomes the adult. But until the child becomes the adult, he is not (*qua* child) recognized as possessing positive ability or concern in moral and political realms.

² My use of the term "subjected" is influenced by Foucault's use of the terms "subject" and "subjection" in "The Subject and Power" in *Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics*, eds. Hubert L Dreyfus and Paul Rabinow (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983). Foucault states that there are two meanings of "subject": to be "subject to someone else by control and dependence...[or] tied to his own identity by a conscience or self-knowledge" (212). Foucault refers to "struggles against these forms of domination" as "struggles against subjection" (212). I regard the child's deficient classification as informing his subjection to the corrective strategies of the adult (such that he sheds his deficiencies by becoming the adult), as well as his subjection to a pathological identity (such that he accepts his identification as a being without moral and political possibility).

Following this analysis—one informed by Michel Foucault’s work on power, knowledge, and the production of human subjects³—we will better understand the child as a subjected being that originates at the intersection of the ethical and political interests of canonical figures and the continuing maintenance of the hegemony of adulthood. Only after accounting for the birth of the deficient child within this network of ends, tactics, and power-knowledge relations can we offer substantive resistance to this production. Only then can we begin to move beyond accounts of the child that, from the start, harbor assumptions as to his deficient status and begin to consider different possibilities for the child.

But let me be clear: in departing from the discourse on the child in Western philosophy, I will not repeat the mistake of insisting on (or assuming) an essentialist, monolithic vision of the child. The Western philosophical canon is littered with such attempts, ones that often serve the interests of the adult and/or subsume attributes of children (as distinct individuals) within the concept of a totalized (animalistic, appetitive, innocent, etc.) *Child*. Instead, I will focus on delimiting necessary conditions for

³ Foucault’s understanding of the human subject is best understood in reference to his discussion of power, knowledge, and discourse. Foucault’s focus on the human subject is meant, in part, to contest the privileged place of the autonomous, sovereign individual as represented in Western philosophy. As opposed to this conception of the individual, Foucault discusses the individual as a subject; he is never free of subjection to a specific network of discourse, knowledge, and power “which categorizes the individual, marks him by his own individuality, attaches him to his own identity, imposes a law of truth on him which he must recognize and which others have to recognize in him” (“The Subject and Power,” 212). For example, the delinquent, although a human person or individual, is a subject insofar as he is classified by others through a field of knowledge surrounding delinquency, is taken up in discourse as a delinquent, and, further, comes to understand himself and his possibilities in reference to this classification (delinquency). The subject, then, is a kind of human person (whether the delinquent, the sexually perverted child, the mad, or the sane) constituted within networks of knowledge, power, and discourse. For more on the formation of the human subject, see Section 1 below.

reconsidering the possibilities of the child.⁴ I contend that reconsidering the child’s moral and political possibilities requires an antecedent examination of the concept of the “adult” and the deconstruction of the hegemony of adulthood. There is little possibility for fundamentally different accounts and treatment of the child—beyond his status as the non-adult and being-to-be-transformed—if adulthood continues to be identified (or, structurally linked) with the ideal state of human existence.⁵ By deconstructing the hegemony of adulthood (which presents adulthood as an ideal, value end of human existence, a condition of completed development that is rigidly separate from childhood) I intend to create the conceptual and practical space within which the child can be considered apart from this tradition.⁶ In that space, I contend, we can counter the silence

⁴ By “necessary conditions for reconsidering the possibilities of the child,” I mean those conditions that set the ground for alternative accounts of the child’s state of being. As I contend below (Section 3) we cannot fully reconsider the possibilities of the child without contesting the hegemony of adulthood. That is, rather than attempting to contest the child’s deficient classification by insisting that the child is essentially “rational” or “moral,” we should deconstruct the image of the adult in reference to which the child is regarded as deficient in the first place. After doing this we can move forward to consider the child apart from his deficient relation to the adult. We will then be in position to begin work on a rival conception of the child. This dissertation does not complete the task of developing a new concept of the child. However, it sets the ground for this work and, in doing so, makes a significant contribution to reconsidering the child.

⁵ Many of the figures considered in this dissertation do not regard adulthood *per se* as the ideal state of existence. For example, for Plato and Aristotle, sagehood, or the virtuous life is the ideal state of existence. For Rousseau, a particular form of natural freedom is the ideal state. However, being an adult is a necessary condition of the achievement of these states and, in this sense, there is a structural link between being an adult and inhabiting the ideal state of existence. *Only* adults can inhabit the ideal state of existence, even if *some* adults do not inhabit the ideal state of existence. None of the figures considered in this dissertation would allow that a child could achieve this ideal state (that is, until the child becomes the adult).

⁶ As I contend below (Section 3.1), a significant aspect of deconstructing the hegemony of adulthood involves rejecting the structural link in Western philosophy between adulthood and moral and political existence. Insofar as the concept of a moral and political agent refers to adults (and excludes children), children are conceptually excluded from consideration as moral and political agents and are treated as morally and politically deficient beings. But after deconstructing the hegemony of adulthood, the structural link between adulthood and moral and

imposed on children throughout the Western philosophical canon. We can begin to listen for the voices of children and recognize them, perhaps for the first time, in their distinct identities and moral and political locations.⁷

Section 1: Producing Subjects: The Sexually Perverted Child and the Delinquent

The child occupies a paradoxical place in the Western philosophical canon. On the one hand, the child is consistently characterized in negative terms. As a deficient being, the child is often overlooked, remaining silent in moral and political realms wholly populated by adults. On the other hand, the child is a major preoccupation for philosophers, surfacing in a multitude of canonical texts from the *Republic* to *A Theory of Justice*. As we have seen, the child most often emerges as the subject of strategies of

political agency will no longer be maintained. We will have created the “conceptual space” to reconsider the concepts of moral and political agency and the possibility of their extension to beings that are not adults. In turn, if the adult is no longer the sole bearer of moral and political agency, then we will have opened a new “practical space” for different forms of engagement with the child. That is, if the child’s moral and political possibility is now an open question (given that moral and political agency are no longer assumed to be exclusive traits of the adult), we have reason to consider interacting with children in different ways—for example, we might begin to listen to children’s concerns or engage them in moral and political discussion in order to grasp the extent of their moral and political possibilities (whereas previously they were simply not-adults, and, thus, not moral and political beings).

⁷ Throughout this dissertation I have discussed the “silence” of children in the Western philosophical canon. First, children are silent in the canon insofar as they are absent in moral and political discussions. The figures considered in this dissertation do not regard children as active participants in these moral and political realms. Nor do they devote significant attention to what just treatment of the child would entail or how goods should be distributed with respect to children. Second, in this chapter I consider a second form of the child’s silence—the silence of actual children insofar as they are governed by the deficient classification of the child. That is, if children are regarded as deficient moral and political beings, then they will not be listened to or consulted in moral and political matters by adults. Instead, the adult will necessarily speak for the child as a deficient being. Children, then, are “silenced” both in the canon and, in turn, in the world. In response to this tradition and corresponding treatment of children, I argue that we should begin to listen to the “voices” of children, both in theory and practice. We listen to the voices of children in theory by devoting more attention to the child’s place within theories of morality and justice, both by reconsidering the child’s agency in these realms and adult obligations to children. We listen to the voices of children in practice insofar as we listen to actual children in the world as they engage in moral and political realms of action, or simply by ceasing to exclude children from philosophical, moral, or political discussions.

control, education, and moral and political development. In turn, these strategies serve as conditions of possibility of broader ethical and political aims, such as the formation of the ideal state and its population of ideal citizens. The child, then, is torn between two locations—a location of deficiency and obscurity and a location of prominence and instrumentality.⁸

At this point I want to focus on the deficient child as *produced* at the intersection of these locations. The deficient child is a production insofar as he does not pre-exist the discourse on the child in Western philosophy. That is, he is not a being found in the world (as a natural kind) and documented by various philosophers, but rather, is produced within and by specific educational, moral and political discourses and strategies.⁹ A

⁸ More specifically, the child's "obscurity" in the Western philosophical canon is largely determined by his agential irrelevance. That is, the child is not considered in moral and political discussions given that he is not a moral and political agent in his own right. As such, he is not regarded as a relevant point of consideration in these discussions (as are rational, moral and political adults). But this is not to say that the child is absent from the canon. As is evident in Chapters 1 and 2, the child occupies a "prominent" position in the canon insofar as he frequently surfaces in discussions of education and development. If the child is deficient, he is also the starting point for the broader moral and political projects of the figures in question. The child occupies a position of structural significance in canonical works, making possible the formation of the ideal adult or state.

⁹ To be clear, I am not claiming that the child—whether understood as a natural or social kind—cannot be found in the world. Nor do I contest the possibility of providing thin naturalistic accounts of the child. For example, it is possible to describe a child, in part, as a biologically immature instance of the human species. Rather, my concern centers on the application of the "natural" to the child as described in the Western philosophical canon. Recall that the child of Western philosophy is discussed as naturally innocent and pure, as well as naturally appetitive and animalistic. Although these traits are presented as "natural" (as essential attributes of the child, merely awaiting description by the adult), I contend that these qualities take shape or "show up" for the adult in virtue of a specific mode of approach to the child. For one, it is always the adult that determines the child's "natural" qualities. And given that the adult is assumed as the norm of human development, the standard of moral and political agency, and the ideal instance of humanity as such, the child appears to the adult as a deficient being. In this sense, the deficient child is not "natural" (representing what the child essentially *is*), but rather, is a production that cannot be understood apart from the adult's position of power and normative standing in relation to the child. In the Western philosophical canon, this production is perhaps most evident in the educational, moral, and political discussions of the adult philosopher. Although the child is

specific mode of understanding children *qua* deficient subjects—as beings that exist to be invested with the ethical and political projects of the adult—has formed within the institution of Western philosophy as evident in the work of major figures spanning the tradition.

My understanding of the deficient child as a produced being (and, in part, my understanding of the means of this production) has affinities with the later work of Michel Foucault, particularly in *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* and *The History of Sexuality, Vol. I*.¹⁰ A primary focus of Foucault’s work in these texts is to develop the “history of the different modes by which, in our culture, human beings are made subjects.”¹¹ Previously nonexistent subjects are created through shifting discursive conditions and networks of knowledge and power, with kinds of individuals (human subjects) emerging as effects of these relations.¹² Part of the value of Foucault’s work lies in his attempts to disentangle these complex relations, revealing the paths of production of subjected individuals, such as the *sexually perverted child* and the *delinquent*. Within and through their production, the perverted child and the delinquent become possible

presented as naturally deficient, his deficiencies are malleable and shift in relation to the needs and concerns of the adult. These are usable deficiencies, posited by the philosopher such that, when corrected or reformed, they lead to the realization of his moral and political ends. For more on this point, see Section 2 below.

¹⁰ Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Vintage, 1995); *The History of Sexuality. Volume I: An Introduction*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Vintage, 1990).

¹¹ Foucault, “The Subject and Power,” 208.

¹² See page 97 of Foucault’s “Two Lectures,” trans. Alessandro Fontana and Pasquale Pasquino, in *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews & Other Writings, 1972-1977*, ed. Colin Gordon (New York: Pantheon, 1980). Foucault writes, “we should try to discover how it is that subjects are gradually, progressively, really and materially constituted through a multiplicity of organisms, forces, energies, materials, desires, thoughts etc. We should try to grasp subjection in its material instance as a constitution of subjects.”

objects of knowledge and sites for the extension of power relations. As delimited kinds of persons (the sexually perverted individual or the delinquent individual), they can be recognized, documented, discussed, and subjected to the corrective interests of others. What is more, these subjects can come to understand and evaluate themselves (as perverted, as delinquent) in virtue of their subjection. Three, interrelated concepts are essential for understanding the processes and effects of subjectification: power, knowledge, and discourse. I will now turn to a brief discussion of these concepts, followed by examples of their application in the production of the sexually perverted child and the delinquent.¹³

In *The History of Sexuality, Vol. I*, Foucault presents an account (or “analytics”) of power in opposition to common, “juridical” representations of power in modern political thought.¹⁴ Foucault advances the historical claim that “since the classical age the West has undergone a very profound transformation of...forms of power.”¹⁵ Prior to the seventeenth century, juridical power (in the form of the law that prohibits or the rights of the sovereign over his subjects) was the major form of power in the West.¹⁶ But since the

¹³ Ultimately, I contend that Foucault’s methodology—his analysis of the production of human subjects and the relations of power, knowledge, and discourse immanent to these productions—is useful in understanding the production of the deficient child (see Section 2 below). This is not to say that the deficient child is coextensive with the sexually perverted child. These subjects are distinct, both in terms of their historical point of origin and the distinct relations of knowledge, power, and discourse providing for their production.

¹⁴ Foucault, *History of Sexuality*, 82, 87.

¹⁵ Foucault, *History of Sexuality*, 136.

¹⁶ Foucault writes, “perhaps this juridical form of power must be referred to a historical type of society in which power was exercised mainly as a means of deduction (*prélèvement*), a subtraction mechanism, a right to appropriate a portion of the wealth, a tax of products, goods and services, labor and blood, levied on the subjects. Power in this instance was essentially a right of

seventeenth century, this form of power has gradually receded, giving way to a radically different form of power. Juridical power has become the “counterpart” of a form of power—“bio-power”¹⁷—that does not primarily function as a power of death and restraint, but rather, as a power that “exerts a positive influence on life, that endeavors to administer, optimize, and multiply it, subjecting it to precise controls and comprehensive regulations.”¹⁸

In its paradigm representations, juridical power cannot account for the exercise of modern, bio-power. Juridical power takes the shape of the law that prohibits, the sovereign that punishes, or the state that represses a citizen body.¹⁹ It is a power that can be possessed by an individual (or group) and wielded unilaterally against those without power, forcing them to obey.²⁰ Perhaps the most striking feature of this account of power, Foucault contends, is that it has “only the force of the negative on its side, a power to say

seizure: of things, time, bodies, and ultimately life itself; it culminated in the privilege to seize hold of life in order to suppress it” (*History of Sexuality*, 136).

¹⁷ Foucault refers to the modern era as “an era of ‘bio-power’” (*History of Sexuality*, 140). “Bio-power” (or a “power over life”) takes two primary forms: First, it is a power that centers on the human body, primarily exercised through various disciplines (such as the school, the military, or the hospital) that make the body docile while increasing its utility. Second, it is a power that centers on regulating the greater population, supervising “biological processes” and conditions of birth, death, and health. Foucault refers to these “two poles” of bio-power as (1) an anatomo-politics of the human body and (2) a bio-politics of the population. See *History of Sexuality*, 139.

¹⁸ Foucault, *History of Sexuality*, 137.

¹⁹ Foucault, *History of Sexuality*, 85. Foucault writes, “whether one attributes to it the form of the prince who formulates rights, of the father who forbids, of the censor who enforces silence, or of the master who states the law, in any case one schematizes power in a juridical form, and one defines its effects as obedience.”

²⁰ Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 26-27.

no; in no condition to produce, capable of only posting limits.”²¹ Thus, juridical power cannot account for forms of subjugation apart from prohibition and repression; it cannot account for power in its *positive, productive* forms. In his attempt to develop a richer account of power, Foucault departs from a juridical power “poor in resources” and “monotonous in the tactics it uses.”²² Instead, he examines a modern form of power that is irreducible to the representation of law.²³ That is, power *qua* power relations, broad networks or fields of force relations that, brutally or subtly, are always at work in human interactions, producing subjects and investing persons as objects of knowledge. Foucault writes:

We must cease once and for all to describe the effects of power in negative terms: it ‘excludes’, it ‘represses’, it ‘censors’, it ‘abstracts’, it ‘masks’, it ‘conceals’. In fact, power produces; it produces reality; it produces domains of objects and rituals of truth. The individual and the knowledge that may be gained of him belong to this production.²⁴

To better understand Foucault’s rejection of juridical accounts of power (as wholly negative in their effects) we can consider the positive nature of power relations as deployed in the production of knowledge of human subjects and as transmitted in discourse. Foucault contends that power does not function apart from knowledge, nor

²¹ Foucault, *History of Sexuality*, 85. The full quotation reads: “It [power] is defined in a strangely restrictive way, in that, to begin with, this power is poor in resources, sparing of its methods, monotonous in the tactics it utilizes, incapable of invention, and seemingly doomed always to repeat itself. Further, it is a power that only has the force of the negative on its side, a power to say no; in no condition to produce, capable only of posting limits, it is basically anti-energy.”

²² Foucault, *History of Sexuality*, 85.

²³ Foucault, *History of Sexuality*, 85.

²⁴ Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 194.

does knowledge function independently of power. Rather, power functions in the production of truth and the accumulation of knowledge relies on relations of power:

We should abandon a whole tradition that allows us to imagine that knowledge can exist only where the power relations are suspended and that knowledge can develop only outside its injunctions, its demands and its interests. Perhaps we should abandon the belief that power makes mad and that, by the same token, the renunciation of power is one of the conditions of that knowledge. We should admit rather that power produces knowledge (and not simply by encouraging it because it serves power or by applying it because it is useful); that power and knowledge directly imply one another; that there is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the same time power relations.²⁵

Together, power and knowledge form a strategic unity (“power-knowledge relations”) best understood in their situated forms of operation.²⁶ In any society, a vast network of power relations—broadly understood as a “chain” or “net-like organization” of force relations²⁷—conditions (among other things) one’s identity, social status, and possibilities of action. We can see this most clearly within specific grids of power-knowledge relations, for example, those that have “crystallized” in the form of disciplines such as the human sciences and their supporting institutions.²⁸ On the basis of these systems, certain individuals can be classified as scientific “experts” or “specialists”; they are coded with a

²⁵ Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 27-28.

²⁶ For Foucault’s methodological focus on situated, localized forms of power-knowledge, see “Two Lectures,” 96-97; *History of Sexuality*, 98; and “The Subject and Power,” 219.

²⁷ Foucault, “Two Lectures,” 98.

²⁸ Much of Foucault’s work on power/knowledge—in texts such as *Discipline and Punish* and *The History of Sexuality*—occurs in conjunction with an analysis of the formation and operation of the human sciences. For example, see *Discipline and Punish*, 305-306. For Foucault’s use of the term – “crystallized” – see “The Subject and Power,” 222.

legitimized form of knowledge capable of deployment through the specialized tactics of a scientific methodology (observation, statistical analysis, treatment, etc.). Both this status (scientific expert or specialist) and the power-knowledge system that serves as its condition of possibility create a “field of knowledge” within which specific kinds of objects can *be known* (via specific tactics of observation, analysis, or treatment). The primary object of the human sciences (the human subject) emerges from a field of knowledge that is not separate from relations of power, but, on the contrary, that follows upon “the advances of power, discovering new objects of knowledge over all the surfaces on which power is exercised.”²⁹ In short, it is because certain individuals and institutions are distributed within a network of power-knowledge relations as capable of speaking the truth of an *Other* that others can emerge as *spoken for*. With a unified network of power and knowledge in place, a correlative field of subjects become possible, a field in which power-knowledge relations “invest human bodies and subjugate them by turning them into objects of knowledge.”³⁰

Far from being exclusively repressive or prohibitive, then, power and knowledge (which, again, are coextensive in their operation) function positively in the creation of kinds of individuals as “submissive subjects.”³¹ Discourse is a necessary condition of the emergence of subjected individuals insofar as “it is in discourse that power and

²⁹ Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 204.

³⁰ Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 28. Also see 155, 194.

³¹ Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 295.

knowledge are joined together.”³² We can think of discourse (or a “discursive formation”) as a specified body of knowledge that “transmits and produces power,” providing power relations with increased points of application within a society.³³

Foucault writes:

In any society, there are manifold relations of power which permeate, characterize and constitute the social body, and these relations of power cannot themselves be established, consolidated nor implemented without the production, accumulation, circulation and functioning of a discourse. There can be no possible exercise of power without a certain economy of discourses of truth which operates through and on the basis of this association. We are subjected to the production of truth through power and we cannot exercise power except through the production of truth...In the end, we are judged, condemned, classified, determined in our undertakings, destined to a certain mode of living or dying, as a function of the true discourses which are the bearers of the specific effects of power.³⁴

In their relationship to networks of power, discourses are productive (as opposed to merely descriptive) practices, capable of acting as both the “instrument and effect” of power-knowledge relations:³⁵ as instrument, spreading the surface of power-knowledge relations (via a legitimized field of knowledge) and thereby making “possible the formation of a whole group of various objects”;³⁶ and, as effect, formulating the truth of these newly formed objects. For example, by classifying certain persons as “deviants”

³² Foucault, *History of Sexuality*, 100. For Foucault’s most comprehensive account of “discourse” see *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, trans. A. M. Sheridan Smith (New York: Pantheon, 1972).

³³ Foucault, *History of Sexuality*, 100-101. For Foucault’s use of the term – “discursive formation” – see *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, 38.

³⁴ Foucault, “Two Lectures,” 93-94.

³⁵ Foucault, *History of Sexuality*, 101.

³⁶ Foucault, *Archaeology of Knowledge*, 44.

who must be examined, treated, and *spoken for*, a discourse immanent to the human sciences (such as psychology) also defines their subjection.³⁷ It structures a “possible field of action” for the deviant human subject (what he is capable of; what ought to be expected of him); it “governs” him insofar as he is recognized by others as deviant; and, further, it subjects him to a pathological self-identification insofar as he comes to recognize himself (and his possibilities) in virtue of this identity.³⁸ The deviant originates in what it is possible to say of him and, ultimately, is governed by what he can say of himself.

To concretize our understanding of power, knowledge, and discourse as related to the production of human subjects, we can look at two examples from Foucault’s work: the production of the sexually perverted child and the delinquent. In *The History of Sexuality, Vol. I*, Foucault counters a dominant narrative concerning the relationship between power and sex throughout the modern era. The “repressive hypothesis” holds that, beginning in the seventeenth century and increasing throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, sex was increasingly “repressed” and “prohibited”;³⁹ it was “driven out, denied, and reduced to silence,” only recognized in certain legitimized or tolerated forms (such as the procreative couple and the brothel).⁴⁰ Foucault disputes the repressive hypothesis and its maintenance of repression as “the fundamental link between power,

³⁷ For a discussion of my use of the term “subjection,” see footnotes 2-3 above.

³⁸ Foucault, “The Subject and Power,” 221.

³⁹ Foucault, *History of Sexuality*, 10.

⁴⁰ Foucault, *History of Sexuality*, 3-5.

knowledge and sexuality since the classical age.”⁴¹ Without doubt, restrictions and prohibitions have been placed around sex—rules of propriety and restrictions on rhetoric have attempted to silence sex, while “deviant” forms of sexuality (the homosexual, the zoophile, the pederast) have been subjected to strategies of prohibition and reform. But the repressive hypothesis provides for an understanding of sex and sexuality as natural kinds, as realities that power must “hold in check,” and that knowledge must gradually “uncover.”⁴² On Foucault’s account, sex and sexuality are “historical construct[s]” that do not predate the strategies of repression and the relations of power, knowledge, and discourse giving rise to them.⁴³ Developing an account of the “deployment” or “production” of sexuality (as opposed to its mere identification and repression), Foucault writes:

We are compelled...to accept three or four hypotheses which run counter to the one on which the theme of a sexuality repressed by the modern forms of society is based: sexuality is tied to recent devices of power; it has been expanding at an increasing rate since the seventeenth century; the arrangement that has sustained it is not governed by reproduction; it has been linked from the outset with an intensification of the body—with its exploitation as an object of knowledge and an element in relations of power.⁴⁴

⁴¹ Foucault, *History of Sexuality*, 5. Foucault’s “classical age” spans roughly the 17th and 18th centuries.

⁴² Foucault, *History of Sexuality*, 105.

⁴³ Foucault, *History of Sexuality*, 105.

⁴⁴ Foucault, *History of Sexuality*, 107. For Foucault’s use of the terms “production” and “deployment,” see *History of Sexuality*, 105-106.

Far from being consigned to a “shadow existence,” then, Foucault contends that sex (since the seventeenth century) has been tirelessly “transformed” into discourse.⁴⁵ In areas such as medicine and pedagogy, sex has been a constant preoccupation (not a silenced reality)—a primal soil for the production and dispersion of “peripheral sexualities” that, in turn, must be sought out, studied, and controlled.⁴⁶ Through the multiplication, identification, and consolidation of these sexualities, power-knowledge relations have gained additional points of application, penetrating further into the social body to regulate forms of perversion and modes of conduct.

The sexually perverted child (or the “masturbating child”) originates as a “local-center” of power and knowledge within this multiplication of discourses on sex and peripheral sexualities.⁴⁷ At first glance it might seem that (Freud aside) a “general and studied silence” was imposed upon children’s sexuality throughout the modern era.⁴⁸ If adult sexuality was masked, children’s sexuality was veiled all the more. But this silence is pierced by a multitude of institutional discourses on the child’s sexuality—discourses that ultimately provide for the emergence (as a distinct personage) and subjection of the sexually perverted child. The perverted child is known (and constituted as a possible

⁴⁵ Foucault, *History of Sexuality*, 35, 23, 105-107. This is not to say that sexuality literally “becomes” or is “converted” into discourse. Rather, the point is that sexuality is put into discourse (perhaps, “discursified”) such that it can become a possible object of constraint and repression and provide for the proliferation of points of application for power-knowledge (such as the “aberrant sexualities” identified in the form of the sexually perverted child or the hysterical woman).

⁴⁶ Foucault, *History of Sexuality*, 30, 48, 105.

⁴⁷ Foucault, *History of Sexuality*, 104-105. Also see Foucault’s *Abnormal. Lectures at the Collège de France, 1974-1975*, trans. Graham Burchell, ed. Arnold I. Davidson (New York: Picador, 2003), 59.

⁴⁸ Foucault, *History of Sexuality*, 4.

object of knowledge) through a discursive “implantation” of perversions. For example, we can consider the emergence of concerns regarding child masturbation in the nineteenth century. Medical, psychiatric, and pedagogical discourses of this era presented child masturbation as “an epidemic that needed to be eradicated,” as a “dangerous” perversion present to all children.⁴⁹ On the basis of these discourses (and the institutionalized grids of power-knowledge relations supporting them), the masturbating child—a subject gripped by his dangerous sexual activity—became knowable, constituted as both an “object of analysis” and a “target of intervention.”⁵⁰

From the moment he became known in discourse, the perverted child became subject to greater manifestations of power: the doctor must now study the child in order to track down the origins (and eventual repercussions) of his perversity; the teacher must educate the child as to the dangers of his “sin” and submit the child to projects of reform;⁵¹ the parent must constantly watch the child and, what is more, bring him to confess those secret acts that escape surveillance. The multitude of concerns and strategies centering on the child’s sexuality were not mere steps in a process of repression, but rather, surface elements of the formation of a human subject—the

⁴⁹ Foucault, *History of Sexuality*, 42, 104.

⁵⁰ Foucault, *History of Sexuality*, 26.

⁵¹ Foucault, *History of Sexuality*, 27-29, 41-42. In this instance, Foucault uses the term “sin” to describe the fault at issue. This sense of the child’s fault carries a religious connotation, a failure of the soul to choose virtue over vice. Foucault mentions this sense of the child’s fault as located in the contexts of religious confession and, to a lesser extent, the school (*History of Sexuality*, 19-20, 29). But an essential aspect of Foucault’s account of the child’s sexuality (and sexuality in general) is its eventual “implantation” in the body such that the source of a sexual perversion or fault can be medicalized and treated as a matter of pathology and illness (as opposed to a matter of sin and salvation). The child’s sexuality is no longer (primarily) a matter to be confessed to the priest, but a defect in the body to be sought out, treated, and controlled by the medical professional or pedagogue.

sexually perverted child—as a localized site for the extension of power-knowledge relations. The child’s body became something to be managed and administered by others (the doctor, the teacher, the parent); it became a site for “the operation of a subtle network of discourses, special knowledges, pleasures, and powers.”⁵² The child is made subject to, on the one hand, strategies of knowledge and power immanent to medicine, pedagogy, and the family and, on the other hand, his self-identification as a perverse being in need of reform. Constituted as sexually perverse, the child ultimately comes to embody his classification. The child is bound up in a form of power which “categorizes the individual, marks him by his own individuality, attaches him to his own identity, imposes a law of truth on him which he must recognize and which others have to recognize in him.”⁵³

Foucault’s discussion of the delinquent serves as another example of the production of a submissive subject within an institutionalized network of power, knowledge, and discourse. In *Discipline and Punish* Foucault provides a genealogy of punishment, beginning with the torture and public execution common to the classical age and culminating in the modern carceral system. The transformation of punishment is constituted by interrelated shifts in penalty and power. Foucault identifies a historical transition away from classical punishment as a “ceremonial of sovereignty.”⁵⁴ This form of punishment marked the presence of the sovereign (and the “truth” of a crime) on the tortured body through “excessive pains, spectacular brandings” and “the ritual of public

⁵² Foucault, *History of Sexuality*, 72.

⁵³ Foucault, “The Subject and Power,” 212.

⁵⁴ Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 130.

execution.”⁵⁵ In contrast to classical punishment, modern punishment functions as a “technique of improvement,” a means to “correct, reclaim” and “cure” the offender.⁵⁶ These disparate forms of punishment reveal (and operate on the basis of) a parallel shift in techniques of power. In contrast to the spectacle of “sovereign power” and its visible, violent manifestations, the modern era is marked by a subtle, more pervasive, “disciplinary power”—a technique that constitutes the individual as an object of knowledge and instrument for the greater exercise of power.⁵⁷ Unlike the criminal of the classical age, the “disciplinary individual” is not confined to the rack, nor placed upon the scaffold. Instead, he is enclosed (and becomes knowable) within a web of scientific discourses that describe, judge, and measure him so as to provide for his classification, correction, and normalization.⁵⁸

The delinquent is a particular kind of disciplinary individual that originates within the modern penitentiary apparatus and its project of “unceasing discipline.”⁵⁹ The manifestations of sovereign power were as haphazard as they were spectacular, punishing certain offenders (while leaving others untouched) and yielding uncertain results (ranging from greater allegiance to the king to public outcry and revolt). In contrast to the deployment of sovereign power, the birth of the prison marks the institutionalization of

⁵⁵ Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 101.

⁵⁶ Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 10.

⁵⁷ Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 170. Disciplinary power, or the anatomo-politics of the human body, constitutes one of two forms of modern bio-power (see footnote 17 above) and is primarily discussed in *Discipline and Punish*. The second form of bio-power is referred to as the bio-politics of the population and is primarily discussed in *History of Sexuality*.

⁵⁸ Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 23, 26, 191-192.

⁵⁹ Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 236.

an efficient, continuous power to punish. The architectural design of the prison locates the convict in a “field of visibility” such that he never escapes the reach of observation, nor the interventions of power.⁶⁰ This architectural design and its corresponding effects of power are best understood in terms of the “Panopticon,” a model of the prison that provides for the unceasing observation, and, in turn, subjection of prisoners.⁶¹ Within the panoptic prison, prisoners and their cells are distributed around a central observation tower such that they can always be seen, but can never see their observer. In virtue of its design, the Panopticon induces “in the inmate a state of conscious and permanent visibility that assures the automatic functioning of power.”⁶² Subjected to a constant visibility, the prisoner is no longer primarily controlled through force or constraint. Instead, the prisoner “assumes responsibility for the constraints of power” and becomes “the principle of his own subjection.”⁶³ Further, within the panoptic prison the prisoner can be subjected to precise regulations (of behavior and movement, of expression, of labor, etc.) culminating in a “total education” that seeks to impose a “new form on the

⁶⁰ Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 202.

⁶¹ Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 200-201. Foucault makes clear, however, that the function of the Panopticon and its effects of power and knowledge are not confined to the architecture of the prison. Rather, the Panopticon serves as a general model for the functioning and effects of disciplinary power in the modern era. Foucault writes, “The Panopticon... must be understood as a generalizable model of functioning; a way of defining power relations in terms of the everyday life of men... The Panopticon must not be understood as a dream building: it is the diagram of a mechanism of power reduced to its ideal form; its functioning, abstracted from any obstacle, resistance or friction, must be represented as a pure architectural and optical system: it is in fact a figure of political technology that may and must be detached from any specific use” (*Discipline and Punish*, 205).

⁶² Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 201.

⁶³ Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 202-203.

perverted individual.”⁶⁴ In short, the panoptic prison functions as a “discipline-mechanism” that does not (primarily) torture and exclude the offender, but rather, that constantly *includes* him in a controlled and “useful training.”⁶⁵

These modern techniques of observation, training, and correction constitute a new form of punitive relation to the offender. Within the penitentiary apparatus the criminal is no longer merely a body to be tortured or a threat to be overcome. Rather, as the focus of a detailed plan of conduct and constant surveillance a “body of knowledge” accumulates around the inmate and transforms him into “an individual to know.”⁶⁶ It is at this moment—when the inmate is “constituted himself as the object of possible knowledge”—that the figure of the delinquent begins to “substitute” for the convicted offender.⁶⁷ The latter committed a crime and is delivered to the prison, but the penitentiary operation—as understood in its attempts to know, control, and reform the offender—applies itself not to the juridical offence, but rather, to the psychological causality (the “soul of the criminal”⁶⁸) that gave rise to it. Behind every criminal act lies a “biography” to be read, a path of “sordid detail” to be analyzed, or a “syndrome” to be discovered.⁶⁹ On the basis of this approach (and the power-knowledge relations sustaining it) the delinquent—a distinct personage “existing before the crime and even outside it”—emerges as a pathological subject “linked to his offence by a whole bundle

⁶⁴ Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 236.

⁶⁵ Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 209.

⁶⁶ Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 294, 251.

⁶⁷ Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 251; *Abnormal*, 14-22.

⁶⁸ Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 255.

⁶⁹ Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 252-253.

of complex threads (instincts, drives, tendencies, character).”⁷⁰ Once defined, the pathological state of delinquency provides a “whole horizon of possible knowledge” for criminology and the human sciences.⁷¹

In turn, the formation of delinquency provides for greater applications of power, both in the prison and within the social body. The doctor, psychiatrist, and warden (as distributed within the prison and broader penitentiary apparatus) must collectively trace delinquency back to its origins, define its variations, compare it with other pathological states, and, as far as is possible, submit it to regulation. Insofar as he is known as a dangerous being, the delinquent must be controlled and subjected to precise interventions of power (isolating him from others, prescribing his schedule of activity each day, subjecting him to constant surveillance). And insofar as he is known to suffer from a pathological condition (delinquency), these punishments must simultaneously function as a “treatment,” with their effects “inscribed among the discourses of knowledge.”⁷²

But knowledge of delinquency is not confined to the prison; it is spread over the surface of the social body, allowing for the specification of a “delinquent milieu” that must be sought out, studied, and controlled.⁷³ Delinquency is not merely a target of penal repression, then, but rather, a strategic classification, capable of being invested and extended by power-knowledge relations. Foucault writes:

One should not see in delinquency the most intense, most harmful form of illegality, the form that the penal apparatus must try to eliminate through imprisonment because of the

⁷⁰ Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 252-253.

⁷¹ Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 277. 253.

⁷² Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 256.

⁷³ Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 280.

danger it represents; it is rather an effect of penalty (and of the penalty of detention) that makes it possible to supervise illegalities. No doubt delinquency is a form of illegality; certainly it has its roots in illegality; but it is an illegality that the ‘carceral system’, with all its ramifications, has invested, segmented, isolated, penetrated, organized, enclosed in a definite milieu, and to which it has given an instrumental role in relation to other illegalities...For the observation that prison fails to eliminate crime, one should perhaps substitute the hypothesis that prison has succeeded extremely well in producing delinquency, a specific type, a politically or economically less dangerous – and, on occasion, usable – form of illegality.⁷⁴

The production and specification of delinquency provides for the creation of a correlative “field of illegal practices.”⁷⁵ Once recognized (or implanted) within the social body, these illegalities can be used to extend relations of knowledge and power. They can be analyzed and supervised by legitimized experts (such as criminologists and psychologists); and, as knowledge of delinquency expands, so does its potential threat (which calls for further response). Far from the penitentiary, delinquency surfaces as the “faceless enemy” of society that must be searched out in “the slightest illegality, the smallest irregularity, deviation or anomaly.”⁷⁶ The penitentiary technique—which emerged coextensively with the formation of knowledge and control of delinquents within the prison—now extends into society to pursue its own production via a “generalized policing” and “perpetual surveillance of the population.”⁷⁷

⁷⁴ Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 277.

⁷⁵ Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 280.

⁷⁶ Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 286, 297.

⁷⁷ Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 281. Foucault refers to the spread of disciplinary techniques from the prison to the greater social body and its institutions (such as the school, the court and the asylum) as the “carceral continuum” or “carceral archipelago.” See *Discipline and Punish*, 297-303.

And while it is left to the criminologist or psychiatrist to determine the figure of the delinquent in the social field, it is left to each individual to question his own position in relation to this pathological state. As with the formation of the sexually perverted child, the production of delinquency makes it possible for each individual to inhabit this classification and become “the principle of his own subjection.”⁷⁸ By interrogating his own potential for delinquent acts or seeking treatment for criminal desires, the individual serves as an element of the material constitution of delinquency and is distributed within the continuing play of power-knowledge relations surrounding this production. Whether in the prison, as subjected to psychological analysis, or, more commonly, by evaluating himself and his possibilities in relation to a norm of legality, the individual can now be “governed” by the classification of delinquency.

Section 2: The Production and Problem of the Deficient Child

Following Foucault, we have seen how previously nonexistent subjects can be formed within institutionalized networks of discourse, knowledge, and power. A complex of discourses (medical, psychological, pedagogical, and penal) condition the historical emergence of the sexually perverted child and the delinquent—kinds of subjects that crystallize in the world as objects of analysis and targets for interventions of power. By and within their formation, the sexually perverted child and the delinquent are *subjected* beings: subjected to material relations of power (from corrective strategies of the doctor and pedagogue to tactics of discipline found in the prison) and, what is more, to their self-identification and interaction with these pathological conditions (as perverse, as delinquent). To the extent individuals inhabit (or are confined to) these classifications

⁷⁸ Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 203.

they are effectively constituted as subjects, governed by the plans and intentions of others, the power-knowledge relations sustaining them and, ultimately, by their assumption of a pathological identity.

Foucault's account of the production of human subjects can help us gain further insight into the fundamental problem of this project—the deficient child. Like the sexually perverted child and the delinquent, the deficient child is a historical formation, originating within relations of discourse, knowledge, and power immanent to the Western philosophical canon. That is to say, the deficient child is not a natural kind; he is not found in the world and described by philosophers (or, for that matter, by developmental psychologists). Rather, I contend that both the child and his deficiencies take shape within and in relation to the moral, political, and educational discourses of figures ranging from Plato to Rawls.⁷⁹ In virtue of his classification, the child—as discussed within the canon and, ultimately, as existing in the world—can be subjected to both the corrective strategies of the adult and the restricted field of action proper to a deficient being (a field of action that, among other things, excludes possibilities for authentic moral and political experience).

⁷⁹ There are numerous ways of conceptualizing the child. To name a few, one can classify the “child” in a legal sense of the term (as a human person under a designated age, lacking certain rights and obligations) or in a biological sense of the term (as a human person who lacks some specified standard of physical or cognitive maturity). But, to be clear, in this dissertation I am not focusing solely on a given concept of the child. I am not concerned with the “deficient child” as simply another concept of the child among many, confined to the Western philosophical canon. Rather, I am concerned with the deficient child as a subject in the world and the relations of discourse, knowledge, and power that provide for this production. This child (the child-as-deficient) is not wholly distinct from the child (the child as such) we face on a daily basis. Insofar as the child's deficiencies are determined in relation to the adult, and, further, insofar as the child is treated as necessarily devoid of moral and political possibility, he is subjected to an image of deficiency. We are then facing the deficient child, a being subjected both to the plans and projects of the adult and his own pathological self-identification. For a related discussion on the constitution of the deficient child and the harm of “misrecognition,” see pages 185-190 below.

To understand the subjection of the deficient child we must return to the origins of his formation as a distinct personage in Western philosophy. Like the delinquent, the child of Western philosophy is an “institutional product,”⁸⁰ capable of recognition (as a knowable individual) through a discursive implantation of deficiencies. From Plato to Schapiro, children are constituted as a deficient class of humanity, identified through their possession (or, in some cases, their lack) of the following qualities: the child is animalistic and appetitive, guided in his conduct by desire, pleasure and pain; the child is irrational and incomplete, lacking the developed reason and autonomy (or will) to comprehend and authentically participate in moral and political affairs; the child is dangerous, a novel being that threatens the norms of the adult and traditions of the state; the child is naïve and innocent, a being that must be made docile in order to preserve his purity; and, finally, the child is nonideal, classified in virtue of his deviation from the ideal, evaluative end of adulthood.

These classifications of the child have shifted throughout the canon, just as conceptions of childhood have changed throughout the West generally.⁸¹ Regardless of their similarities as, say, irrational and appetitive beings, the child of Plato and Aristotle’s *polis* is not identical to the child of Kant’s commonwealth and Rawls’s well-ordered society. Rather, these children are distinct historical formations, bound up in the specific moral, political, and pedagogical projects of the philosopher in question. For example,

⁸⁰ Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 301.

⁸¹ For detailed accounts of the formation and evolution of the concept of childhood in Western society, see Philippe Ariès’s *Centuries of Childhood. A Social History of Family Life*, trans. Robert Baldick (New York: Vintage, 1962) and Lloyd DeMause’s “The Evolution of Childhood,” in *The Sociology of Childhood. Essential Readings*, ed. Chris Jenks (London: Batsford Academic and Educational, Ltd., 1982).

consider Plato and Kant's accounts of the child: Plato's child lacks the just constitution of the adult (the soul governed by reason), instead possessing an animalistic nature (the soul governed by its appetitive element). In order to become the virtuous adult citizen—and, in turn, make possible the ideal *polis*—the child must be subjected to precise regulations of social and educational control (via games, song, stories, and surveillance). Through the deployment of these corrective measures the child will shed his deficient, dangerous nature and become the virtuous adult. Kant, too, broadly characterizes the child as an animalistic and appetitive being. Nonetheless, Kant's child is a distinct historical formation birthed from a specific set of philosophical concerns. In contrast to Plato, Kant's child does not possess a disordered soul, nor is he understood through his subjection to *mousike* and *gumnastike* (musical and physical education). Rather, Kant's child is primarily characterized by the absence of the autonomy, freedom, and independence of the adult. The child now inhabits a *passive* state of existence and becomes *active* insofar as he acquires the ideal, rational nature of the adult. In order to transform the child into a *full* person—an active member of the commonwealth and potential member of the kingdom of ends—he must develop in reason and undergo a moral education in virtue of which he becomes capable of self-legislation (acting out of duty to the Moral Law) and rational engagement with others.

Reviewing Plato and Kant's children alongside each other illustrates the instrumental and malleable character of the deficient child in the Western philosophical canon. We could arrive at the same illustration by returning to the children of Aristotle, Rousseau, Rawls or Schapiro (as detailed in Chapters 1 and 2). For each of these figures the child takes shape within and through the various ends of the adult, serving as fertile

ground for the formation of educational, moral and political projects. That is, if the child is (in some form) always deficient, he also always possesses the *potential* to change, to become a different *kind* of person. And on the basis of this posited potential—whether specified as a potential for the achievement of reason and autonomy or virtue and natural freedom—whole classes of beings (from virtuous citizens to noble savages) and ideal states (from the *Kallipolis* to the well-ordered society) become possible. At the heart of the child's production lies an instrumental, productive form of deficiency, perhaps most visible in those defects (or potentialities) that, when corrected or reformed, provide for the realization of the moral and political ends of the philosopher. Given that these moral and political ends shift throughout the canon the child, too, must be malleable; he must be capable of bearing a multitude of attributes—appetitive and animalistic, naïve and innocent, passive and nonideal—that call for correlative moral and political projects (such as the formation of the child into the virtuous citizen or autonomous agent that provides for the possibility of the ideal *polis* and the well-ordered society). In short, whatever else he is, the child of Western philosophy always possesses the capacity to be what the adult needs him to be.

We can see, then, that the deficient child (as well as that which makes him deficient) is not uniform. Rather, his classification shifts throughout the canon (and without doubt, continues to do so), in relation to a diversity of figures and their educational, moral, and political objectives. But none of this is to say that the canon lacks a paradigmatic conceptual approach to the child. On the contrary (and as illustrated in Chapters 1 and 2), in the midst of this diversity of projects and productions, the child is consistently characterized, on the one hand, in terms of the qualities he *lacks* (as the *non-*

adult, lacking the autonomy, agency, and freedom of the adult) and, on the other hand, in terms of the qualities he *possesses* (as the *being-to-be-transformed*, possessing dangerous appetites and desires, as well as usable potentialities). To the extent the child has been *known* in this two-fold manner, correlative fields of action have been created for the adult philosopher, legislator, and educator. If the child possesses animalistic and appetitive desires, he must be reformed. If the child is innocent and naïve, he must be protected. If the child lacks autonomy and independence, he must be educated and developed. In contradistinction to the adult, the child of Western philosophy is generally constituted as the subject of treatment which, in turn, calls for experts—Plato’s “Director of Children” and “Minister of Education,” Aristotle’s “child-supervisors,” Rousseau’s “governor”—to guide the child to adulthood; for developmental psychologists to analyze the child; for pedagogues to form the child into the adult citizen. Throughout the canon, knowledge of the child as deficient (whether in virtue of his *lack* or *possession* of certain qualities) is always intertwined with relations of power,⁸² conditioning the child’s visibility to the adult as an object of analysis and subject of reformatory projects.

In his production as an instrumental being, object of analysis and subject of reform, the deficient child remains silent; he is always *spoken for* in a unidirectional discourse *of* the adult *about* the child, approached as an “object of information, never a

⁸² In part, I am referring to “relations of power” that provide for the child’s visibility as a deficient being in the Western philosophical canon (the power of the philosopher to determine the nature of the child’s being). But these relations of power are not wholly confined to the canon and the philosopher’s discourse on the child. Rather, they extend to relations between children and adults (those to whom the philosopher grants power in his theoretical work) in the world. This is evident in the position and possibility of the adult to approach the child as an object of analysis (determining whether the child is or is not “problematic,” “well-developed,” “well-behaved,” etc.) and subject of reform.

subject in communication.”⁸³ And if the child is distributed within the canon as *spoken for*, it is always the adult that is in position to speak the child’s truth. That is, it is always the adult that determines the child’s deficiencies (defining what children are), as well as his progress toward a predetermined moral, political, or educational end (dictating what children can be). In one sense, the adult’s ability to speak the truth of the child stems from the practical fact that adults (not children) write philosophical treatises. Canonical works from Plato’s *Republic* to Rawls’s *Theory* are authored by adults, and, thus, quite literally, the adult is in position to define the child, to dictate his deficiencies and possibilities. But the adult’s ability to speak the truth of the child runs deeper than his act of authorship; this ability is conditioned by broader, hegemonic conceptualizations of the adult as the standard for moral and political existence (and the ideal of humanity as such). In the Western philosophical tradition, the adult is not just *a* moral or political being among many. The adult is the *only* moral and political being, possessing the exclusive traits of agency (reason and autonomy, independence and freedom). On the basis of this idealized conception of the adult it becomes possible to constitute the child as the *Other*, as a being best defined through his deviation from the ideal condition of the adult.⁸⁴

So understood, the nature (and, ultimately, the problem) of the child’s location in adult-centered conceptions of moral and political existence resembles that of the woman in male-centered conceptions of moral development and the human life-cycle. In *In a*

⁸³ Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 200.

⁸⁴ My use of the term – “Other” – is influenced by Simone de Beauvoir’s discussion of the woman as *Other* in relation to man. See de Beauvoir’s *The Second Sex*, trans. H. M. Parshley (New York: Vintage, 1974), introduction, xix. Speaking of woman’s derivative status and conceptualization in relation to man, de Beauvoir writes: “She is defined and differentiated with reference to man and not he with reference to her; she is incidental, the inessential as opposed to the essential. He is the Subject, he is the Absolute—she is the Other.”

Different Voice, Carol Gilligan argues that psychological theories of human development have consistently relied on developmental models in which “men’s experience stands for all human experience.”⁸⁵ From Piaget to Kohlberg, Freud to Erikson, major figures in psychology and psychoanalysis have assumed (and, in turn, produced) the equivalence of the “developed” individual and the adult male committed to traditionally masculine values (such as separation, independence, and autonomy).⁸⁶ As taken up in these developmental models, the woman is constituted as the *Other*. Traditionally feminine values (such as maintaining relationships and connection, care and responsibility for others) are constituted as deviant in relation to the norm of masculine adulthood.⁸⁷ Given the position of the adult male as the “vertex of maturity” in developmental theory, woman’s divergence from this standard is no mere “descriptive difference,” but rather, a “developmental liability.”⁸⁸ In effect, the woman of the psychological canon is left to overcome her deficiencies and discover her (marginal) place in “man’s life cycle.”⁸⁹

Gilligan identifies a number of problems with the dominance of male-centered conceptions of development in psychological theory. For one, although presented as scientifically objective, these models of development have issued from a “consistent

⁸⁵ Gilligan, *In a Different Voice*, “Letter to Readers,” xiii.

⁸⁶ Gilligan, *In a Different Voice*, 10-13, 18-19, 30.

⁸⁷ Although Gilligan details contrasting features of the moral development of men and women she contends that her primary focus is to “highlight a distinction between two modes of thought and to focus a problem of interpretation rather than to represent a generalization about either sex” (*In a Different Voice*, 2). This is an important point of clarification given a number of criticisms of Gilligan’s empirical research and supposed essentialism, associating distinct values and “voices” with men and women. For example, see Naomi Weisstein’s “Power, Resistance and Science,” *New Politics* 6 (1997).

⁸⁸ Gilligan, *In a Different Voice*, 9.

⁸⁹ Gilligan, *In a Different Voice*, 17.

observational and evaluative bias.”⁹⁰ In many cases (as in the work of Piaget and Kohlberg), canonical standards of moral maturity and universal claims about moral development are grounded in empirical studies composed exclusively of males.⁹¹ As a result, conceptions of development as seen “through men’s eyes” are uncritically presented as universal standards for human development as such, prompting the evaluation of those diverging from these standards—most commonly, women and children—as developmentally and morally immature.⁹² As Gilligan writes, “as long as the categories by which development is assessed are derived from research on men, divergence from the masculine standard can be seen only as a failure of development.”⁹³

Further, disproportionate research on men has “blinded psychologists to the truth of women’s experience,” obscuring alternative lines of moral development centered not on the achievement of separation and the formal recognition of rights, but also, the maintenance of connection and the capacity to care.⁹⁴ Consideration of these alternative models not only benefits women—responding to the systematic dismissal of women and feminine values within the psychological canon—but also broadens the horizons of moral experience for all human persons. The greater inclusion of women in developmental research provides for a more comprehensive understanding of moral (as opposed to *male*) experience, including an ethic of care alongside a morality of rights, the recognition of

⁹⁰ Gilligan, *In a Different Voice*, 6.

⁹¹ Gilligan, *In a Different Voice*, 18. Piaget’s work on moral development does include a few references to girls and their deviant developmental status in relation to boys. See Piaget’s *Moral Judgment*, 77.

⁹² Gilligan, *In a Different Voice*, 6.

⁹³ Gilligan, *In a Different Voice*, 69-70.

⁹⁴ Gilligan, *In a Different Voice*, 62, 155-156.

responsibility for others along with the logic of justice.⁹⁵ Arguing for a broader conception of moral existence for both men and women, Gilligan writes:

Only when life-cycle theorists divide their attention and begin to live with women as they have lived with men will their vision encompass the experience of both sexes and their theories become correspondingly more fertile.⁹⁶

But the primary problem of hegemonic,⁹⁷ male-centered conceptions of development is the consequent lack of *recognition* of women apart from the norm of maleness. That is, if a traditionally masculine conception of man is taken as the apex of human development, then woman can be visible in developmental theory only as, at best, a deficient being, defined by her degree of deviation from the image of the rational, autonomous male. In virtue of this mode of classification—one that, from the start, conceptualizes woman as less-than, as deviant, and morally immature—it becomes possible for women to inhabit a submissive subject position, to self-identify with the image of the undeveloped, irrational woman as constituted in developmental discourse. Women are left to reconcile their moral experiences and concerns—for example, the valuation of connection with others as opposed to the exclusive prioritization of separation and independence—with entrenched psychological discourses that present these very experiences and concerns as indices of deficient stages of moral development.

⁹⁵ Gilligan, *In a Different Voice*, 73-74, 100.

⁹⁶ Gilligan, *In a Different Voice*, 23.

⁹⁷ I use the term “hegemonic” (or “hegemony”) to refer to the structural dominance of a particular concept of the person (or moral and political agent) such that others are devalued, or simply overlooked as relevant for consideration. For example, insofar as the adult, male-centered conception of moral agency is taken as *the* norm of moral agency, all other developing persons (i.e., women and children) are devalued as deficient. Further, the hegemonic status of the adult male moral agent has material effects on those who are devalued, providing for the possibility of all “others” to accept their deficient status as “natural” or “obvious” insofar as it departs from the norm.

In the face of an institutionalized devaluation of their lived experience women must struggle to find a *voice*—an identity or “core of the self”—that is not derived in opposition to maleness nor formed in accord with their deviant classification.⁹⁸

Seen in this light, the harm done to women by developmental theory (and its broader social, educational, and political manifestations) is akin to that suffered by minority groups and colonized populations as discussed in Charles Taylor’s “Politics of Recognition.”⁹⁹ Taylor contends that human life has a “fundamentally *dialogical* character” such that, in large part, we “become full agents, capable of understanding ourselves, and hence defining our identity” in our interactions with others.¹⁰⁰ There are:

links between recognition and identity, where this latter term designates something like a person’s understanding of who they are, of their fundamental defining characteristics as a human being...Our identity is partly shaped by recognition or its absence, often by the *mis*recognition of others, and so a person or group of people can suffer real damage, real distortion, if the people or society around them mirror back to them a confining or demeaning or contemptible picture of themselves. Nonrecognition or misrecognition can inflict harm, can be a form of oppression, imprisoning someone in a false, distorted, and reduced mode of being.¹⁰¹

⁹⁸ Gilligan, *In a Different Voice*, “Letter to Readers,” xvi.

⁹⁹ Charles Taylor, “The Politics of Recognition,” in *Multiculturalism: Examining the Politics of Recognition*, ed. Amy Gutman (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994).

¹⁰⁰ Taylor, “Politics of Recognition,” 32. For a related discussion see Joel Anderson and Axel Honneth’s “Autonomy, Vulnerability, Recognition, and Justice,” in *Autonomy and the Challenges to Liberalism. New Essays*, eds. John Christman and Joel Anderson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

¹⁰¹ Taylor, “Politics of Recognition,” 25.

Women in patriarchal societies, blacks in societies of white privilege, and colonized populations alike are susceptible to the harm of “misrecognition.”¹⁰² In each of these cases, “an inferior or demeaning image” (the irrational woman, the lazy black, the uncivilized aboriginal) is projected upon a class of individuals and to the extent these individuals accept this image they are inflicted with a “grievous wound”—they internalize forms of pathological identity that can lead to self-depreciation and “a crippling self-hatred.”¹⁰³ Subjugated by the imposition of demeaning images, these individuals gain their freedom, in part, through a struggle to revise these images, to realize identities—as rational, as industrious, as moral and political beings¹⁰⁴—that subvert demoralizing self-conceptions born from their location within a dominant culture.

Along with the disenfranchised minority or colonized population, the woman of developmental psychology, too, is susceptible to the harm of misrecognition. As taken up in theories that “eclipse the lives of women and shut out women’s voices,” she is, on the one hand, systematically ignored as a moral agent and, on the other hand, conceptualized as a deficient being in relation to man.¹⁰⁵ In either case, the woman is denied recognition as a moral being that, following Taylor, is essential for the formation of her own identity as a person possessed of valid moral concerns, worthy of the acknowledgment and

¹⁰² Taylor, “Politics of Recognition,” 25-26.

¹⁰³ Taylor, “Politics of Recognition,” 26.

¹⁰⁴ Or, in some cases, these individuals might contest the very categories used to saddle them with a demeaning image and attempt to supplant these categories with alternate conceptions of valuable activities, behaviors, and features of the individual (or of a group or culture). Thus, rather than simply attempt to prove that they are “rational” or “industrious,” an oppressed group might reject or re-signify the standards of rationality and industry to which they have been subjected. For an illustration of this point, see Frantz Fanon’s *The Wretched of the Earth*, trans., Constance Farrington (New York: Grove Press, 1963).

¹⁰⁵ Gilligan, *In a Different Voice*, “Letter to Readers,” xiii.

response of others. By and through her misrecognition, then, the woman's voice is not only dismissed by others—whether the psychologist, teacher, colleague or peer—but ultimately, is liable to be dismissed by the woman herself. In continually failing to gain recognition from others (including psychologists legitimated as “experts” on moral development) as a moral being, the woman is deprived of inclusion in a community of moral actors, a community that allows for its members to be seen (and, in turn, to see themselves) as moral beings. Instead, she is limited to the field of action of a deficient moral being and *spoken for* as a morally immature woman. As constituted in relation to the possibilities of the adult male, the woman's ability to recognize herself as a moral being is contingent upon her acceptance (and prioritization) of the values of autonomy, separation, and the logic of justice.

Above, I attempted to reveal the child's formation as a subjected being in the Western philosophical canon. For one, as created in conjunction with the plans of the adult philosopher, legislator, and educator, the deficient child is an instrumental being. If the child is deficient, he must be treated, controlled or corrected, thereby making possible the formation of the ideal citizen, savage or state. In this sense, the child of Western philosophy is conceptually born as a subjected being, shifting in characteristic and quality (whether as the *non-adult* or *being-to-be-transformed*) to suit the moral, educational, and political projects of the adult.

But with an account of the harm of misrecognition in hand we can identify a related, yet, deeper, form of the child's subjection. As emerging from the Western philosophical canon, a specific (if long sustained) grid of knowledge and power provides for a paradigmatic form of relation between the adult and child—that of one who *speaks*

in relation to one who is *spoken for*. Insofar as the canon overwhelmingly articulates moral and political existence through the voice of the adult, children are silenced, always emerging as less-than, as poor in (if not completely devoid of) moral and political possibility. The child is not only subjected to the material plans and projects of the adult, then, but also is made subject to a degrading self-image that confines him to a limited “space of possibilities.”¹⁰⁶ As with Foucault’s “submissive subjects”—the sexually perverted child and the delinquent—the deficient child originates within his subjection to a pathological identity. And akin to (though not exactly the same as) Gilligan’s morally immature woman, children subjected to this image—the “deficient child”—are restricted from authentic participation in a moral and political community composed exclusively of adult (male) actors. The child’s exclusion from moral and political realms is no insignificant matter; rather, I contend that it is a harm that cuts him to his core. For in failing to gain recognition from others as capable of moral and political expression the child is deprived of (or, at the very least, seriously hindered in) the ability to regard himself as a moral and political being.¹⁰⁷ In the face of an adult-centered account of

¹⁰⁶ I adopt Ian Hacking’s use of this phrase in his essay “Making Up People,” in *Reconstructing Individualism. Autonomy, Individuality and the Self in Western Thought*, eds. Thomas C. Heller, Morton Sosna and David E. Wellbery (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1986), 229. As a “dynamic nominalist,” Hacking contends that kinds of individuals—such as the homosexual or the pervert—came into being “at the same time as the kind itself was being invented” (228). In turn, the solidification of these classifications—such that one can *be* the homosexual or pervert—yields “new possibilities for action” under those descriptions (231). Also see Hacking’s *The Social Construction of What?* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999).

¹⁰⁷ This is not to say that the situation of the infant or young child in the face of misrecognition is the same as that of the disenfranchised adult (for example, the woman subjected to sexism or the African-American subjected to racism). For one, due to various developmental differences, the infant and the adult differ in their ability to regard themselves as moral and political beings and speak in their own voice. And regardless of whether or not he is offered recognition, the infant (unlike the adult) will be incapable of acting in moral and political realms. Further, I do not intend to conflate the histories and harms of racism, sexism, and the discourse on

moral and political existence the child is bound up in a reciprocal process of misrecognition: conceptualized as a deficient being the child is deprived of recognition from adults inhabiting a moral and political community; and in failing to gain recognition from others the child *really is* deficient—he is deprived of elements of moral and political agency (ranging from a basic interest in the political realm to the capacity for moral expression and action) that are constituted, in large part, through one’s recognition and participation in a moral and political community. Given the canonical and social dominance of the image of the deficient child (as well as that of the ideal adult) the child is provided with little opportunity to be recognized as (and, I contend, to *be*) anything other than the subject of correction and reform. Instead, children are “colonized” by their conceptualization as deficient and in need of reform, confined to forms of action that fulfill the plans of others and their consequent acceptance of an impoverished field of moral and political action.¹⁰⁸

To better understand Taylor’s account of recognition and its applicability to children (in addition to Taylor’s examples of disenfranchised adults), it will be helpful to return to his account of the formation of identity. Taylor contends that the individual’s

the child. Nor do I claim that the infant or young child is in need of “liberation.” Rather, I draw a parallel between the disenfranchised adult and the child (whether younger or older) to the extent that (1) they are both subjected to a deficient identity and (2) this subjection provides for their own self-identification—whether in the present or the future—as lacking all moral and political possibility. For example, both the morally immature woman and the deficient child are evaluated in reference to the image of the adult male as the ideal of humanity. The image of the ideal adult male conditions the evaluation of the woman and child as deficient and, further, determines their status (insofar as they are closer to or further from the condition of the adult male). Although the experiences and abilities of the adult woman differ substantially from those of the child, both are subjected to deficient identities and, in turn, hindered in their ability to solidify identities as moral and political beings apart from the image of the adult male. For more on this point, see 192-197 below.

¹⁰⁸ For an excellent discussion of the relationship between the ideology of colonialism and the Western concept of the child, see Nandy’s “Reconstructing Childhood,” 57-59.

identity is not primarily forged in isolation, but rather, through an intersubjective process.¹⁰⁹ The individual's search for an "authentic" identity—an identity that is unique to an individual—is not primarily a monological task, but rather, a dialogical pursuit.¹¹⁰ Taylor understands recognition as an essential element of this dialogical process. As Taylor writes:

Discovering my own identity doesn't mean that I work it out in isolation, but that I negotiate it through dialogue, partly overt, partly internal, with others. That is why the development of an ideal of inwardly generated identity [an authentic identity] gives a new importance to recognition. My own identity crucially depends on my dialogical relations with others."¹¹¹

On my reading, then, Taylor's account of recognition is primarily *generative* as opposed to *responsive*.¹¹² That is, Taylor's account of recognition does not primarily focus on identifying privileged characteristics of the individual that already exist and, thus, merit recognition in response. Rather, Taylor also considers the constitutive (or generative) importance of recognition in the formation of the individual's identity, as, say, a political being, worthy of respect. It is in the latter, generative sense of recognition that Taylor speaks of individuals as "formed by recognition."¹¹³ For my purposes, it is important to note that Taylor discusses the constitutive importance of recognition for *all* human

¹⁰⁹ Taylor, "Politics of Recognition," 32-34.

¹¹⁰ Taylor, "Politics of Recognition," 28-32.

¹¹¹ Taylor, "Politics of Recognition," 34.

¹¹² My reading of Taylor's account of recognition has benefitted from Markell Patchen's analysis of recognition in "The Recognition of Politics: A Comment on Emcke and Tully," in *Constellations* 7 (2000) and Arto Laitinen's analysis of recognition in "Interpersonal Recognition: A Response to Value or a Precondition of Personhood?" in *Inquiry* 45 (2002).

¹¹³ Taylor, "Politics of Recognition," 64.

persons (not just adults). Although Taylor does not discuss children explicitly, he repeatedly states that recognition is essential “throughout our lives,” including at the “beginning of our lives.”¹¹⁴ Whether one is an adult, an adolescent, or a young child, the formation of one’s identity is hampered by misrecognition. It is this aspect of his account that I have adopted in my own discussion—not only disenfranchised adults, but also children cannot come to regard themselves as moral and political beings without being recognized in this fashion by other moral and political actors.

To be clear, I am not arguing that the conceptualization of the child as deficient is problematic because it has led Western philosophers (and adults generally) to overlook the *essential* or *natural* moral qualities possessed by all children. I do not claim that all children—understood as, say, morally pure, innocent beings—are violated by philosophical discourses that fail to recognize their true moral and political qualities. Nor do I maintain that children (as a class of persons) are essentially devoid of moral and political experience and concern. In contrast to philosophers ranging from Plato to Rawls, I assume no totalizing grasp of the *Child*. Instead, I contend that a conceptualization of the child as deficient has been deployed by major figures in the Western philosophical tradition, permeating the canon and gaining broad acceptance in Western culture.¹¹⁵

¹¹⁴ Taylor, “Politics of Recognition,” 33-34.

¹¹⁵ This dissertation is not a work of social science and, thus, I do not focus on empirical research to demonstrate the acceptance of the child’s deficient status in Western culture. In future work, I plan to move further beyond the Western philosophical realm to devote greater attention to the material relevance of the Western philosophical concept of the deficient child for the lives of children in the world. However, even now we can recognize the acceptance of the child as a deficient being in Western culture: First, this acceptance is evident in the use of “child” as a common slur, as a negative valuation of an adult as lacking or deficient. Second, this acceptance is evident in Western political realms of human activity, where one’s participation or exclusion is determined, in large part, on the basis of whether one is classified as an “adult” or a “child.” Third, major figures in the Western philosophical tradition have had a great impact on Western

Given the dominance of this account of the child, children are denied both the conceptual space and practical experience to be moral and political beings and, in turn, are hindered in their self-identification with moral and political actors. This self-identification is a necessary condition for actually *being* a moral and political actor, and, thus, the child's deficient classification acts as a form of oppression, confining him to a demeaning identity and an impoverished field of action.

Section 3: Beyond the Hegemony of Adulthood: Listening for the Voices of Children and Reconsidering the Possibilities of the Child

If my analysis of the formation of the deficient child is sound, we should be cautious in our attempts to specify exactly what the child *is*. We need not accept the terms of a ceaseless debate on the child's essential nature and whether it more or less resembles the idealized rationality and autonomy of the adult moral actor. Nor do we need to confine ourselves to a discussion of whether the child is naturally virtuous or vicious, fundamentally moral or deficient. These discussions have their place, but each misses a crucial point: we cannot define what the child *is* apart from an understanding of what he *has been*.¹¹⁶ I have shown that the child has been overwhelmingly classified as

moral, political, religious, scientific, and educational realms of thought and human activity. For example, consider the import of Kant's account of the "dignity" and "autonomy" of human beings for Western moral codes; the import of Plato and Aristotle's thought for Catholic philosophy and theology; the import of Descartes' skepticism and theory of knowledge for the formation of the Western scientific tradition; and the import of Rousseau's conception of natural education for Western approaches to pedagogy, particularly in primary education. Likewise, I contend, Western philosophical conceptions of the "adult" and "child" are not without influence in the Western world. Although few will have the work of, say, Aristotle or Kant directly in mind when thinking of an adult or child, Aristotle and Kant's understanding of moral and political agency has undoubtedly been influential in the West. Given that their accounts present moral and political agency as exclusively adult traits, they have also served as a conceptual resource in the Western world to differentiate adults and children and regard the latter as deficient in moral and political realms of human activity.

¹¹⁶ That is, attempts to reconsider or redefine the child do not begin from a blank slate. We must be sensitive to the historical and contemporary discourse on the child as a deficient

(and, in turn, confined to the possibilities of) a deficient being. The general evaluation of the child as deficient has conditioned a multitude of declarations as to his natural state of being—from his appetitive and animalistic nature to his innocence and lack of agency.

Instead of embarking on a search for the natural *Child*, we might instead consider what children *can be* apart from their historical and contemporary subjection to the image of the deficient child. But this is no simple task. It is tempting to counteract the child's subjection to a demeaning image by asserting his possession of those traits denied to him throughout the canon. That is, rather than accept the image of the appetitive, pre-moral and pre-political child, we might assert the child's rationality, autonomy, and moral and political agency. This tactic has been used to great effect by reformers and child advocates in the political realm, leading to significant advances in children's legal and political rights throughout the world.¹¹⁷ However, in the conceptual realm of Western philosophy, asserting the child's rationality or autonomy runs the risk of reinforcing the hegemony of adulthood and, with it, the child's deficient status in relation to the adult. We must not forget that, throughout the canon, rationality, autonomy, and moral and political agency have been theorized as *adult* traits. So-conceptualized, moral and political existence are essential qualities of adult existence and, thus, antithetical to the existence of all *non-adults*. In the work of philosophers ranging from Plato to Schapiro,

being and the continuing impact of this discourse on adults, their evaluations of children, and children themselves. This discourse has impacted what adults take the child to be (deficient or less-than the adult) and, further, has contributed to the subjection of the child to a deficient identity (in moral, political, and educational realms). Any reconsideration of the child must begin here, recognizing and challenging the conditions of the child's contemporary and historical production as a deficient being.

¹¹⁷ For example, see Howard Cohen's *Equal Rights for Children* (Totowa: Littlefield, Adams & Co., 1980); Richard Farson's *Birthrights* (New York: Macmillan, 1974); and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1989.

moral and political agency is achieved in one's separation from childhood, presented as a mark of one's transcendence of "childish" modes of being. For this reason, asserting the child's possession of rationality, autonomy, and moral and political agency does not, by itself, act as substantive critique of his deficient classification. These assertions leave untouched (and potentially reinforce) the structural equivalence of adult existence and moral and political existence, producing, at best, a conception of the child as *closer to the ideal adult* than previously thought, as *less deficient* in relation to the ideality of adulthood. Paradoxically, then, in order to reconsider the possibilities of the child we must attend to the adult and his ideal status. We must contest the hegemony of adulthood and the canonical uniformity between adult existence and authentic moral and political existence. For if we do not take this course of action, the child—conceptualized as the deficient *non-adult* in relation to the positive, ideal qualities of the adult—will remain subjected to an image of deficiency and the correlative harm of misrecognition.

Let us return to the image of adulthood common to the Western philosophical tradition: adulthood is an *evaluative* end, the *telos* of human existence that conditions the value of all other states of being (insofar as they are steps *toward* adulthood); adulthood is a *static* end, a state of being in which the pinnacles of humanity—rationality, autonomy, moral and political agency—have been achieved and, thus, growth and development have ceased; and, given these characterizations, adulthood is *rigidly separate* from all other deficient conditions of humanity (such as childhood and conditions of mental illness). Taken together, these conceptions of adulthood yield the figure of the *ideal adult*—the moral and political agent that serves as the standard and measure for all other persons. Given its correlative impact on images of the child, it is

essential to recognize this image of the adult (and its hegemonic status in the canon). Conceptions of the “child” and “adult” are logically necessary to each other—consideration of one of these concepts always occurs in relation to some consideration of the other¹¹⁸—and, thus, the continuing maintenance of the ideal image of the adult (whether in its ancient, modern, or contemporary, liberal manifestations) conditions a correlative image of the child as deficient and nonideal.¹¹⁹ That is to say, if the adult—as the citizen of Plato’s *polis*, the moral actor in Kant’s kingdom of ends or Rousseau’s natural savage—is accepted as the ideal end and perfection of the human species, and the child is *not* the adult, then the child is, by contrast, a nonideal, deficient instance of humanity. Given the necessary relationship between these concepts, reconsidering the possibilities of the child calls for more than a positive assertion of the child’s unrecognized qualities and characteristics—merely swapping the “rational child” or the “moral child” for the “deficient child” is not sufficient. Rather, reconsidering the possibilities of the child calls for an antecedent examination of the *ideality* of adult existence.

¹¹⁸ I am indebted to David Kennedy on this point. See his “Empathic Childrearing,” 9.

¹¹⁹ I make this conceptual point in regard to the “child” and “adult” as conceptualized within the Western philosophical canon. In canonical discourse on the child and adult, the concept of the adult (as an ideal moral and political being) conditions conceptualizations of the child (as the non-adult, one who is deficient and not a moral and political being). This is not to say that *all* related pairs (for example, the “caterpillar” and the “butterfly”) necessarily maintain a similar conceptual relationship. It seems possible to compare the existence of the caterpillar and the butterfly without adopting a normative stance on the superiority of the latter over the former. One need not assume the caterpillar is “deficient” until reaching “completion” as the butterfly. But this is precisely why the historical and contemporary relationship between the child and adult needs to be understood. The paradigmatic account of these concepts *does* present a normative description of the child and adult, while presenting these descriptions and the transition from the deficient child to the ideal adult as “natural.”

The conceptualization of the adult as the ideal moral and political agent is problematic insofar as it is both *illusory* (grossly misrepresenting adult existence) and *harmful* (conditioning the devaluation of other states of being). Western philosophers (for example, Kant, Rawls, and Schapiro) have relied upon ideal conceptions of adulthood as a fully developed state of being, as a condition of complete autonomy and rational control over impulses and desires. In the work of these figures, the adult gains separation from the existential condition of the child insofar as he possesses (and, conversely, the child lacks) an established sense of self, a self-legislating will, and a basic rational structure on the basis of which he unfailingly adjudicates between rival desires and motivational claims. But the *actual* conditions of adulthood rarely replicate these idealizations.¹²⁰ For one, it requires minimal reflection to recognize that the continuing development of a “voice” or “sense of self” is not absent from adult existence—adults undergo identity

¹²⁰ A Kantian might grant this objection, but maintain that, ultimately, it is of little consequence. The Kantian will contend that I am merely offering a *descriptive* critique of the assumed uniformity between the ideal traits of the Western philosophical adult and the traits of actual adults. But even if this critique is sound, it does not provide motivation to reject the Kantian’s *normative* concept of the adult (as a complete moral and political agent that one ought to strive to be). My response is as follows: The Kantian rejoinder to my objection does not pay sufficient attention to the interrelation of normative and descriptive accounts of the adult, such that an effective critique of the latter has consequences for one’s maintenance of the former. I have argued that there is a structural equivalence between adult existence and moral and political existence in the Western philosophical canon. The normative account of moral and political agency is linked to the condition of adulthood such that *only* adults are eligible to be classified (or described) as moral and political agents (even if not *all* adults are moral and political agents). This equivalence is evident in Kant’s own work, for example, in *The Doctrine of Right* (see Chapter 1, Section 4.2, above). Kant describes the actual adult male citizen in ideal terms (for example, as fully independent and autonomous), and on the basis of this ideal account of actual (male) adults, he excludes all individuals who are not fully independent from active participation in the commonwealth (women, children, and common laborers). But if it is established—via a descriptive critique—that few (if any) adults actually reach this ideal condition (the normative standard of moral and political agency), then the normative and the descriptive accounts come apart and we must reconsider the structural equivalence of adulthood and moral and political agency. Along with this reconsideration we open a conceptual space for reconsidering the moral and political possibilities of other, previously excluded persons, such as children.

crises and existential upheavals (from questions of sexual identity to questions about one's self in the face of ruptured relationships or "midlife crises"), just as they, at times, struggle to find a voice in the face of moral and political dilemmas. Indeed, the capacities for *growth* and *development* as a moral agent or political actor are important elements of adult experience, valuable to adults insofar as these capacities entail the *positive* ability to become better people, to learn from mistakes, and to expand the range of one's moral and political response. None of this is to say that adults are fundamentally undeveloped or irrational; rather, it is to say that adulthood can no longer maintain strict separation from childhood (nor exclusive possession of moral and political agency) through a characterization of the latter as the sole condition in which a person's primary task is to find a "self" or "voice." To be sure, children are occupied with these tasks, but adults, too, must continually struggle to find a voice, to grow in relation to the world and experiences around them, and to develop as moral and political actors.

Nor can the condition of adulthood be rigidly separated from childhood on the basis of the ideal adult's *independence* and *autonomy*. Along with the illusion of completed development and growth, Western philosophers have deployed an image of the *active* adult operating independently in moral and political realms. Free of animalistic impulse, unresolved motivational conflicts, and the dependencies of childhood, the ideal adult selects a rational course of action and promptly follows it for the betterment of himself and his community. By contrast, the child is conceptualized as devoid of autonomy, as a *passive*, dependent being that, at best, must rely on the support of (adult) others in moral and political realms. But if the child is a dependent being, we must also recognize the chimera that is the fully independent, autonomous adult. This ideal

conception of adulthood—particularly common to liberal political and moral philosophy—greatly underestimates the *dependence* of adults on a multitude of supporting conditions while abstracting away from the lived experience of actual adults. As has already been demonstrated at length by numerous feminist philosophers, care ethicists, and critical theorists, the individualistic autonomy of the ideal, liberal adult presupposes a web of support: from supportive relationships in the private realm to the legal framework that preserves one’s rights and freedoms to the social conditions and labor of others that provides the material conditions of possibility of one’s “independent” actions.¹²¹ We are all—adult and child alike—dependent on others in a multitude of ways, capable of acting autonomously (to a lesser or greater degree) only from a ground of interdependency.¹²² Again, this is not to say that the adult is wholly devoid of autonomy or moral and political agency. Nor do I maintain that children and adults are always in equal need of the care, protection, and support of others. The point is simply this: if adults are not ideally autonomous beings, then the adult’s exclusive status as moral and political agent cannot be secured on the basis of his illusory achievement (and, conversely, the child’s lack) of a fully independent state of being.¹²³ Although

¹²¹ See Anderson and Honneth, “Autonomy, Vulnerability, Recognition, and Justice,” 131, 133, 137; Arneil, “Disability, Self-Image and Modern Political Theory,” 236-237; and Mills, “‘Ideal Theory’ as Ideology,” 177.

¹²² Arneil, “Disability, Self-Image and Modern Political Theory,” 236-237.

¹²³ But a possible objection arises at this point: Let it be granted that the adult’s exclusive status as moral and political agent can no longer be secured on the basis of his assumed achievement of an ideal state of reason, independence, or autonomy. It is still possible that the adult can be differentiated from the child on the basis of his consistent aim for this ideal. Conversely, the child just is a being incapable of this consistent aim. My response is as follows: This distinction between the adult and child is an improvement over the paradigm distinction in the Western philosophical canon as presented and critiqued above. At the very least, it no longer idealizes adulthood as a condition of completed growth and fully developed moral and political

consistently assumed in the canon, the condition of ideal autonomy is absent from adulthood and, thus, does not serve as a valid ground to differentiate and automatically exclude the dependent child from moral and political realms.

In light of these reflections (which are certainly not exhaustive), we can see that there is a vast gulf between the *idealization* of adulthood and the *actual* lived experience of many (if not all) adults. If adulthood is a condition of developed agency, it is, like childhood, also a condition pregnant with the potential for growth and development. If the adult is rational and autonomous, he is, like the child, also always dependent on others. It is important to identify the influence of the hegemony of adulthood on canonical conceptions of agency and human existence. But in deconstructing ideal conceptions of adulthood, we do more than this—we also begin the process of challenging the misrecognition of all *Others* in relation to the ideal image of the adult. As we have seen, the deficient child is subjected to the harm of misrecognition insofar as he is encountered as the non-adult, as deficient in relation to the ideal adult *qua* sole bearer of moral and political existence. Akin to the morally immature woman, the sexually perverted child and the delinquent, the deficient child is ultimately restricted to a pathological self-identification; he is regarded as devoid of moral and political possibility and, ultimately, *really is* deficient insofar as he accepts the limited field of action delineated for him by the plans of the adult and the norm of ideal adulthood.

agency. However, a problem still remains insofar as the ideal in question remains unchallenged. That is, the moral and political existence to be sought (as the ideal) is defined in terms that, from the start, exclude consideration of the child's moral and political possibilities. To classify moral and political existence in terms of rationality, independence, and autonomy is to understand moral and political existence in terms that, historically and philosophically, have been structurally linked to adult existence. Thus, although the objection provides a better descriptive account of the adult, moral and political existence is still conceived in decidedly adult-centered terms that exclude the child and his moral and political possibilities from consideration.

But if we no longer assume that moral and political qualities *just are* adult qualities, then it becomes possible to reconsider the moral and political possibilities of other persons, including children. Prior to challenging the hegemony of adulthood there was no reason for any such reconsideration—children are not-adults and, thus, are clearly not capable of moral and political expression and experience (adult traits). Of course, from time to time children do act in ways that *seem* to carry moral intent or political purpose, but within the purview of the hegemony of adulthood these actions were, at best, shadowy images of the true form of moral and political action inherent to adult existence. Now, free of the assumed equivalence between moral and political existence and adult existence, the moral and political possibilities of children become an open question. We can begin to ask what children *can be* apart from their deficient classification in relation to the ideal adult. And where philosophers have long *spoken for* children—namely, moral and political realms—we can instead begin to *listen* for the *voices* of children. This is not to say that all children will be ready to speak and express moral and political concerns; we should underestimate neither the long-standing dismissal of these capacities in children, nor the corresponding difficulty for children to recognize themselves as (and *be*) moral and political beings under these conditions. But the upshot of the child’s historical and contemporary classification as a deficient being is that, regardless of how dominant it has been, it can always be contested. The canonical and social dominance of the image of the deficient child is daunting, but other narratives are possible, including those that provide new moral and political possibilities for children.¹²⁴

¹²⁴ On the “moral and political possibilities” of children, see footnote 1 above. I am referring to the possibilities of children to possess moral and political concerns and act in moral and political realms. I contend that, in large part, we do not know the child’s moral and political

We begin reconsidering the possibilities of the child by making a commitment to *listen* to children—both in theory and practice. As illustrated throughout this work, the child has been *silenced* in moral and political theory. Although the child is present in the work of philosophers ranging from Plato to Schapiro, he is always *spoken for* as an object of analysis and subject of reform, emerging in the canon insofar as he is capable of becoming someone else—the ideal adult. Given the dominance of this approach to the child, listening to children becomes a radical act. For one, in listening for the voices of children in moral and political theory we counter a tradition of exclusion immanent to Western philosophy. We no longer accept the voice of the adult as sufficient to speak for the moral and political experiences of *all* persons. Instead, we recognize that the idealization of adult moral and political experience has prevented substantive consideration of the moral and political possibilities of children, both for adults and children. In turn, by listening for the voices of children we stand for the *recognition* of their value apart from developmental progress toward adulthood. Listening to children and granting them a place in moral and political theory is, at this point, an act of good faith. It constitutes both an acknowledgment of the child’s historical and contemporary subjection to a deficient identity and the start of a process to subvert this subjection by providing an open space for children to speak, be heard, and, eventually, regard themselves as possessed of the possibility for moral and political action. As Gilligan writes, “to have a voice is to be human. To have something to say is to be a person. But

possibilities. Rather, we know the possibilities (or lack thereof) of the deficient child. Insofar as children continue to be subjected to this image of deficiency, they are hindered in their ability to identify with and, in turn, *be*, moral and political actors.

speaking depends on listening and being heard; it is an intensely relational act.”¹²⁵ We provide for the possibility of the child’s voice and realization of a positive identity (apart from his derivative moral and political status in relation to the adult) through a willingness to listen to the child before us, not the non-adult or being-to-be-transformed imposed upon us.

But in the face of so many philosophical approaches that, from the start, dismiss the child as a deficient being, it is unclear how we, as philosophers, might begin to “listen” to the child. There is a need to describe more concretely those approaches that offer the child recognition (and possibilities for different modes of being) apart from his status as the non-adult and being-to-be-transformed. Fortunately, we are not without examples of approaches that *do* allow for the voices of children to be heard while rejecting their conceptualization as deficient beings. First, in works such as *Philosophy and the Young Child* and *Dialogues with Children*, Gareth Matthews subverts traditional conceptions of the child as a deficient being, devoid of the reason, insight and interest necessary to participate in the practice of philosophy.¹²⁶ Rather than accept the canonical image of the deficient child, Matthews engages children in philosophical dialogue, listening and responding to their claims and concerns on a variety of philosophical topics—from the nature of happiness and desire to the realities of existence and death. Matthews’s work with children is interesting in its own right, but it is of particular import for our purposes for his reconsideration of the possibilities of the child. Implicit in Matthews’s work is the prioritization of a different form of relationship between children

¹²⁵ Gilligan, *In a Different Voice*, “Letter to Readers,” xvi.

¹²⁶ Gareth B. Matthews, *Philosophy and the Young Child* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1980); *Dialogues with Children* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1984).

and adults, “one without condescension—without the condescension of experimenter to subject, or of instructor to neophyte, or of loving provider to recipient of care.”¹²⁷

Departing from these modes of adult-child relations, Matthews offers children *recognition*. He offers them respect and, what is more, the opportunity to reconsider their own possibilities as philosophers, capable of reflecting on philosophical questions and contributing positively to philosophical discussion.

Matthews’ conception of the child radically departs from those of Plato, Aristotle, Rousseau, Kant, Rawls, and Schapiro. Recall that these philosophers primarily (though not uniformly) regard the child as the non-adult and being-to-be-transformed. The child is often understood in virtue of his deficiencies (his deficient reason, autonomy, and moral and political agency in relation to the adult) and, in turn, the primary mode of approach to the child is informed by strategies of control and reform. As taken up within these strategies, the child is often treated as an instrumental being, one whose transformation makes possible the moral and political ends of the philosophers in question. Conversely, Matthews approaches the child outside the bounds of the canonical understanding of the child. He instead focuses on the child’s *possibilities* when not saddled by adult assumptions as to his deficiency. Matthews writes:

What has not been taken seriously, or even widely conceived, is the possibility of tackling with children, in a relationship of mutual respect, the naively profound questions of philosophy...Children can help us adults investigate and reflect on interesting and important questions and...children’s contributions may be quite as valuable as any we adults have to offer.¹²⁸

¹²⁷ Matthews, *Dialogues*, 3.

¹²⁸ Matthews, *Dialogues*, 3.

Rather than accepting the child's assumed deficiencies from the start and a corresponding relationship of reform, Matthews chooses to "take seriously" a different conception of the child—one that does not exclude the child from the practice of philosophy (a realm of activity commonly reserved for adults). And as a result of his approach, many of the children he worked with—as evidenced by a multitude of discussion transcripts recorded and published by Matthews—actively participated in the practice of philosophy and, in turn, came to regard themselves as philosophical beings.

Matthews' work with children demonstrates that the mode of approach one takes toward the child materially affects one's ability to recognize (or overlook) the child's philosophical possibilities. Matthews writes:

Perhaps it is because so much emphasis has been placed on the development of children's abilities, especially their cognitive abilities, that we automatically assume their thinking is primitive and in need of being developed toward an adult norm. What we take to be primitive, however, may actually be more openly reflective than the adult norm we set as the goal of education. By filtering the child's remarks through our developmental assumptions we avoid having to take seriously the philosophy in those remarks; in that way we also avoid taking the child and the child's point of view with either the seriousness or the playfulness they deserve.¹²⁹

In his work, Matthews is able to consult the voice of the child by refusing to characterize the philosophical voice in exclusively adult-centered terms. As opposed to an adult-centered focus on textual analysis, argumentation, or abstract logical reasoning, Matthews adopted the use of stories to facilitate philosophical discussion with children. Making philosophical questions accessible through the medium of a story, Matthews discovered that children "quickly claimed the [philosophical] problems as their own and

¹²⁹ Matthews, *Dialogues*, 52-53.

took responsibility for dealing with them as best they could.”¹³⁰ Thus, by adjusting the method of approach to the child—one that allowed him to offer recognition to children as fellow philosophers—Matthews found that children were quite capable of participating in philosophical discussion and recognizing themselves as philosophers. By contrast, evaluating the child in relation to the norm of the adult—as has been the tradition in the Western philosophical canon—inevitably leads “one to ignore, or misunderstand, the really imaginative and inventive thinking of young children.”¹³¹

We can also consider the work of Robert Coles, the psychoanalyst and child psychiatrist who has spent much of his life documenting the moral, political, and spiritual reflections of children. In *The Moral Life of Children*, Coles speaks of psychological conceptions of children as morally deficient, as incapable of authentic (adult) moral concern and action.¹³² Given his training, Coles initially disregarded the ostensibly moral actions and concerns of children. To be sure, children of the American civil rights movement (many of whom Coles interviewed and came to know well) *seemed* to express moral and political concerns, but Coles was continually unable to reconcile the *actions* of these children (desegregating schools, taking part in protests, remaining nonviolent in the face of racial hatred and animosity, etc.) with their deficient classification in the stage theories of Piaget and Kohlberg.¹³³ In the face of this tension, Coles chose a

¹³⁰ Matthews, *Dialogues*, 27.

¹³¹ Matthews, *Dialogues*, 32.

¹³² Robert Coles, *The Moral Life of Children* (New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 1986). Also see Coles’s *The Political Life of Children* (New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 1986), *The Spiritual Life of Children* (New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 1990) and *Children of Crisis* (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 2003).

¹³³ Coles, *The Moral Life of Children*, 26-29.

methodological departure from his tradition, engaging children apart from pre-judgments based on adult-centered norms of moral and political agency. Coles *listened* to children, treating them with respect as beings possessed of moral and political concerns. In response, children chose to *speak* to Coles. They discussed their fears and doubts, their concerns for their lives and families, and, in many cases, came to see themselves as beings deserving of recognition, worthy of being listened to as opposed to *spoken for*.

As with Matthews, Coles was able to establish this possibility (both for himself and the children he worked with) by adopting a radically different approach to the child. Discussing the moral character of Ruby Bridges, a young African-American girl who participated in the desegregation of public schools in New Orleans, Coles writes:

She had somehow managed to obtain: strength to integrate a southern school; strength to be a young activist in the face of extreme hostility and plenty of danger; strength to believe not only in a social and political effort but also in herself as someone able and worthy to take part in it; and strength to maintain her high hopes, to keep her spirits up, no matter the serious obstacles in her way. Whence such strength—in a child whose parents were illiterate, unemployed, with few prospects?¹³⁴

According to standard theories of moral development and philosophical conceptions of moral agency, Bridges was pre-moral, and, thus, she was incapable of the choices she made and the actions she performed.¹³⁵ Rather than accept the contradiction before him—between canonical, adult-centered conceptions of agency and the ostensibly moral and political concerns and actions of Bridges—Coles attempted to better understand moral

¹³⁴ Coles, *The Moral Life of Children*, 33-34.

¹³⁵ Ultimately, Coles contends that the evidence at hand supported the view that Bridges possessed a “will” and made “ethical choices.” Coles writes, “Ruby had a will and used it to make an ethical choice; she demonstrated moral stamina; she possessed honor, courage.” See page 29 of Coles’ *The Moral Life of Children*.

and political existence from the perspective of the child. In large part, Coles accomplished this by adopting a novel form of listening to children. Rather than relying on the spoken word or argument as representative of the child's moral and political concerns (an approach that disadvantages young children uninterested in or incapable of moral and political discussion), Coles asked children (including Ruby) to draw pictures of their school, friends, and family, as well as anything they wanted to draw.¹³⁶ By engaging with children in this way, Coles was able to ask children about their concerns and recognize their conceptions of their own lives. In virtue of this method, Coles moves beyond the *totalized* child of Western philosophy—a being that is simply not the adult and, thus, incapable of moral and political concern. Instead, Coles provides a rich account of the complex and diverse psychologies of children and their varying moral and political concerns in the midst of crisis in their own lives and communities.

These examples of *listening* to the voices of children are not exhaustive; rather, they should be viewed as models for reconsidering the possibilities of the child. Matthews and Coles distinguish moral and political (as well as philosophical) existence from adult existence such that the moral and political concerns of children can be recognized in their own right, apart from their derivative value in relation to the concerns of the adult. If these figures accepted the canonical understanding of the child—in both philosophy and psychology, as deficient and devoid of philosophical, moral and political possibility—they would not have produced the work they did. But in listening to children they discovered children's moral, political and philosophical possibilities, while many of the children they encountered, no doubt, came to regard themselves differently as well.

¹³⁶ For a description of the drawing method, including its adoption in Coles's discussions with Ruby Bridges, see *Children of Crisis*, 14-38.

Insofar as we develop similar modes of approach to children in our own work we, too, can begin to offer children recognition beyond their likeness to or divergence from the condition of the adult. In our philosophical work and practical engagements with children we can move *from* the hegemony of adulthood *to* a systematic exploration of the moral and political possibilities of the child.

Conclusion

In her “Letter to Readers,” Gilligan describes her work as part of “the ongoing historical process of changing the voice of the world by bringing women’s voices into the open, thus starting a new conversation.”¹³⁷ Likewise, I have attempted to start a “new conversation” regarding the adult, the child, and moral and political existence by preparing the way for children’s voices to be included in Western philosophy. We are quite familiar with canonical discourses that identify the child’s *natural* limitations and *essential* deficiencies while assuming the *ideal* nature of the adult. Throughout the Western philosophical tradition (as well as that of developmental psychology) we are presented with contrasting images of the rational, moral and political adult and the pre-rational, pre-moral, and pre-political child. In response to this tradition and its representative figures—from Plato and Kant to Piaget and Kohlberg—I have revealed the historical and contemporary *production* of the child as a deficient being. As conceptualized within the hegemony of adulthood, the child is given no place beyond deficiency and subjection as the non-adult and the being-to-be-transformed.

Where philosophers have generally presented the child’s deficiencies as markers of the essential condition of childhood, I understand them as, in large part, contingent

¹³⁷ Gilligan, *In a Different Voice*, “Letter to Readers,” xxvii.

upon the continuing maintenance of the hegemony of adulthood. Denied substantive *recognition* as a human person possessed of moral and political possibilities, the child is deprived of the opportunity to identify with moral and political actors and, thus, *really is* a deficient moral and political being. The proper response to this state of affairs is not to offer yet another claim as to the child's nature—as, say, an innocent, morally pure, and naturally virtuous being. Nor should we simply assert the presence of political interest in the child. Instead, we can recognize that, in truth, we do not know the possibilities of the child; we only know the limited possibilities of the deficient child. Our task going forward, then, is to contest the child's subjection to this deficient identity, to *listen* to the child and, in doing so, to provide an open space for the reconsideration of the moral and political possibilities of the child.

CONCLUSION

In the preceding chapters I revealed the formation of the *deficient child* in Western philosophy. Throughout the canon the child has been conceptualized in two related ways: first, the child is regarded as the *non-adult*, a being lacking (or possessing in primitive form) the positive qualities of the adult. Whereas the adult is generally conceptualized as a rational, moral and political being, the child is not-rational, not-moral, not-political. In relation to the adult, the child is regarded as a deficient being. Second, given his deficiencies the child is regarded as a *being-to-be-transformed*, one that must be reformed by the adult. If the child is an animalistic, appetitive being, he must be corrected such that he can shed his deficient nature and take on the norms and traditions of the adult.

In Chapters I and II, I illustrated this dual approach to the child in the work of major figures throughout the Western philosophical canon: Plato and Aristotle regard the child as a deficient being, a *problem* that must be corrected through legislation and authorities empowered to supervise and direct the child's development. For Kant, the child is an irrational, animalistic being. Only through discipline and a precise developmental strategy can the child shed his deficient nature and become a *full* member of humanity (as an adult). By contrast, Rousseau extols the distinctive virtues of the child (for example, his innocence and purity) and departs from classifying the child as deficient in relation to the moral and political adult. However, Rousseau's child remains a being-to-be-transformed, one that must remain *docile* in order to realize Rousseau's vision of the natural adult.

The approach to the child as non-adult and being-to-be-transformed continues in contemporary Western philosophy (especially in liberal ethical and political thought). Both Rawls and Schapiro dismiss the moral and political possibilities of the child, rigidly separating the deficient (or animalistic and diseased) condition of childhood from the ideal, rational and autonomous condition of adulthood. The adult's primary relation to the child is one of *reform*—the adult's task is that of leading children out of their deficient condition toward liberal, fully developed adulthood. In conjunction with Kohlberg's naturalistic account of moral development, this normative account of the deficient child, the ideal adult, and the resulting conception of adult-child relations (ostensibly) gains substantial strength. As presented by Kohlberg, liberal adulthood *just is* the universal end point of moral evolution, an ideal state of being achieved by the child once he sheds his deficient condition.

A main focus in this dissertation, then, has been to trace the path of the child's emergence as a deficient being in Western philosophy. I have argued that the *deficient child* has served as the dominant image of the child in the Western philosophical canon. This conception of the child has developed, in large part, in relation to ideal conceptions of the adult—a being in possession of virtue and reason, autonomy and moral and political agency. However, I am not solely concerned with the “child” as a concept in Western philosophy (an image of the child confined to philosophical texts and of no practical import in the world). Rather, in Chapter III, I am also concerned with the *subjection* of children as deficient beings, persons that, given their deficient conceptualization, are exclusively regarded as subjects of reform and excluded from moral and political realms of human experience. Ultimately, the Western philosophical

canon and its depiction of the child as deficient is of interest to me insofar as it has been instrumental in producing the figure of the deficient child, supporting (whether tacitly or explicitly) the silencing of children not only within the canon, but also in adult interactions with children in Western society (that is, if children are regarded as irrational and appetitive, then adults are ostensibly justified in excluding these “non-political” children from political discourse and activity; if children are regarded as driven by natural impulse, then adults are ostensibly justified in excluding these “animalistic” beings from choice in relation to their own education). Following Foucault, I am interested in revealing the *production* of the deficient child as a subjected being, one that can be identified through his subjection to the plans of the adult and his own self-identification as a deficient being (as devoid of moral and political possibility).

In response to this tradition and subjection, I have not offered a contrasting, comprehensive vision of the child and childhood. I assume no totalizing grasp of the child’s nature and, thus, do not attempt to replace the assumed deficiencies of the child with an image of the essentially “rational” or “moral” child. Rather, I have argued that *we do not know the child*, nor his potential for engagement in moral and political realms of human activity. Instead, we know the limited possibilities of the deficient child. We are familiar with approaches to the child that identify his natural limitations and deficiencies, but we have only a vague idea (at best) of what the child *can be* apart from his deficient classification. Thus, I have revealed the historical and contemporary production of the child as deficient, in large part, to show that the child has been given no place beyond his status as non-adult and being-to-be-transformed. Denied substantive *recognition* as a person possessed of moral and political possibilities (beyond mere deficiency in relation

to the adult), the child has been deprived of all opportunity to identify with moral and political actors. This lack of recognition in moral and political realms is, I contend, a significant reason for the deficient moral and political condition of many children.

In revealing the child's subjection and canonical idealizations of the adult, I have set the ground for a reconsideration of the child apart from his deficiency and negative relation to the adult. But this dissertation is a beginning, not an end. Much work remains to be done. First, in practice, philosophers (and adults more generally) ought to contest assumptions as to the child's deficiency by *listening* to the child. In doing so, philosophers support a radically different approach to the child, one that provides an open space for children to engage with moral and political concerns and move beyond a pathological identity in relation to the adult. Numerous philosophers have already begun to take this process seriously, such as those working in philosophy for children and pre-college philosophy. Second, in the conceptual realm of Western philosophy, philosophers need to develop an understanding of the child that is not fundamentally derived from a negation of the positive qualities of the adult. I have not offered a wholly new conception of the child here, but rather, have focused on setting a critical foundation and motivation for this project.

At the conclusion of this dissertation, then, we are left with important questions for future work. If we have a better understanding of the place of the child in Western philosophy and the origins of the deficient child, we can now focus on what the child (and childhood) can be when regarded differently by philosophers and adults. If the child is not understood, from the start, as an instrumental being possessed of deficiencies, a new relation—both philosophical and practical—between the adult and child becomes

possible. At the intersection of this new relation lies the potential for a new conception of the child and the moral and political existence of children.

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