

## Chapter 5

# The Emergence of Childhood – From the Enlightenment to Modern World of Childhood

There was a changing perception of children during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in Europe. During the sixteenth century the Protestant Reformation supplanted the Catholic Church and its rituals with a sterner form of faith that emphasised the sinfulness of children. Therewith children and parents no longer had the reassurance of understanding that baptism would spare children the torment of Hell if they died in infancy. Devout parents were urged to bring children to acknowledge their sins and the need for salvation by clerics. They were born out of sin into sin and needed to be taught the ways of righteousness. The increasing availability of the printed word made catechisms the preferred method of bringing children to the knowledge of God. Adults posed questions and children learned appropriate responses by rote. Parents could never start this too early with a catechism even for children “*that are not past the breast yet*” and behaviour books of around 400 pages for 5 year olds.

Some parents consequently lived in a situation of *angst* unequalled until the present. That was without considering the situation of children themselves (for instance, see deMause 1974:51; Ariès 1962:379). Parents’ unease about bringing up children was greater than in the past and undoubtedly began to mark out different ages at which childhood ended and conflicts this could cause. Many poor children would then have been earning a living full time at 6 or 7 years of age although ‘better off’ boys might still be in full-time education at age 14. The period saw the expansion of boys’ education and an astonishing *volte-face* in attitudes to girls’ education that defied the established (Roman Catholic) Christian doctrine.

### Economic Expansion

There was a great deal of change in Europe which in economic history is known as the Commercial Revolution. It was a period of European rapid economic expansion, colonialism and mercantilism that lasted from approximately 1520 until 1650. This

change was partially influenced by the commercial success of the Italian city states but also by a policy of expansion through acquisition of new territories that earlier voyages of discovery had opened. The voyages of discovery of the late fifteenth into sixteenth centuries allowed some European nations to begin to accumulate vast networks of international trade. In turn that generated a great deal of wealth that went into circulation throughout Europe. Initially the rapidly growing global economy was based on silver which allowed the purchase of goods (for instance: silk, spices and other goods from the Far East) that Europeans wanted. However, they possessed nothing of comparable value for which to exchange it until vast amounts of silver coinage and bullion were found for payment. This drove exploration of newly discovered territories in which silver and gold could be found. An important outcome of Europe's commercial revolution was accrual of the basis of the wealth that led to the Industrial Revolution.

The large amount of money caused widespread inflation, widening the already wide gap between rich and poor. Inflation was worsened by a growing population but stagnant production, low wages and a rapidly rising cost of living. This, when combined with overpopulation, affected agriculture profoundly. The landholding aristocracy also suffered under inflation because they were dependent on fixed rents paid by peasant tenants who were fast becoming poorer and unable to pay. Botched attempts were made by the aristocracy to offset diminishing income by setting up short term leases of land in order to allow periodic reassessment of rent. The manorial system dwindled and aristocratic landowners were forced to sell pieces of land in order to maintain their standard of living. This attracted a new rich bourgeois who wished to buy land to improve their social status.

Common land was gradually being enclosed by landed bourgeois who increased the efficiency of stock breeding. Enclosure made food production more efficient and less labour intensive, thus forcing the surplus population who could no longer find employment in agriculture into cottage industries such as weaving. In the longer term, this pushed them into growing towns and cities and newly developing factories. Initially, wool from growing numbers of well husbanded sheep fed quickly expanding textile production. That eventually became one of the most important components of the impending Industrial Revolution.

The European economic centre relocated from the Islamic eastern Mediterranean to Western Europe (Portugal, Spain, France, the Netherlands and England). Following circumnavigation of the Cape of Good Hope, the new eastern trade ended the monopoly of the Ottoman Turks and their competitors the Italian city states. Portugal came to control trade between east and west and later the (then) Dutch city of Antwerp which had one of the first currency exchanges in Europe.

One of the outcomes of this rapid expansion was the growth of something that was to shape parts of the modern world. That was the transatlantic slave trade. The traffic of slaves from Africa to the Americas originated around 1500 during the early modern period of European exploration of West Africa and setting up colonies in the Caribbean, South and North America. It is estimated that 11–12 million men, women and children were transported in ships across the Atlantic to various ports in the New World. Most went to South America and the Caribbean between 1500 and

1850. In the Americas, slavery played an important role in economic development, with slaves planting and harvesting cash crops and working on construction of buildings and roads as well as performing domestic duties.

As the early exploration of the New World moved forward the conquest of native people and often their enslavement followed. In the Spanish Americas the native population dropped when diseases they had never previously suffered arrived and rapidly depleted them. That is when the importation of African slaves began. The liberalisation of trade from a large merchant base may have allowed parts of Europe to produce and utilise emerging scientific and technological developments more effectively than countries with robust monarchies and aristocracies who were still essentially feudal. For children also, the changes in distribution of people around the world, the conversion of many of them to Christianity and introduction to European economic, social and political structures as well as social and economic changes in the Western world were bringing changes. Those were to give the world the beginnings of what universal notions of childhood are considered to be today.

## A Period of Unrest

People were beginning to show disquiet with their situation in Europe. In the spring of 1517 the *Bundschuh* movement arose and rebelled on account of a harsh period of by the aristocracy. Castles were ruined, aristocrats slain and expanses of the countryside devastated throughout 3 months of uprisings. The Emperor Maximilian stayed his hand throughout the episode and appeared favourable to the cause of the peasants as long as they only punished the most avaricious aristocrats. Thereafter as peasant 'armies' disbanded and the remainder degenerated into marauding bands he sent a few hundred knights to end the disorder. Little compassion was shown to fugitives and brutal executions followed. Additionally, heavy reparation was demanded from the entire peasantry in the form of a perpetual tax. The conflict was mostly in southern, western and central areas of what is now Germany and parts of modern Switzerland and Austria. At its height in the spring and summer of 1525 it involved about 300,000 peasant rebels. Contemporary estimates put fatalities at 100,000. The revolt in the Krain (Slovenia) lasted longest and was suppressed with most bloodshed. Those in Styria and Karinthia (Austria) came to an end sooner with far less disastrous results for people who had been involved.

The bad feeling was to continue in Europe. During 1524 and 1525 the Peasants' War began. It was Europe's most massive and widespread popular uprising before the 1789 French Revolution. The strife consisted of a series of economic as well as religious revolts by peasants, townsfolk and the aristocracy without common objectives. It was not only in Germany or elsewhere in Central Europe that discontent was perceptible among peasant populations at the beginning of the sixteenth century. In England expropriation of land to make room for sheep farms gave occasion for periodical local disturbances that culminated in 1549 in Wymondham in England where Robert Kett led a rebellion.

## The Period of Economic Hardship and Recovery

At that time much of Europe was facing severe economic hardship. In England, in the region of 80 % of income was used to purchase food. Wages were lower than before and falling. In 1559 they were 60 % less than in 1509. There were consecutive harvest failures following heavy rains in 1556 and 1557 and an outbreak of 'sweating sickness' during 1551 and 1552. Epidemics in 1556 and 1558 reduced the population by 200,000 (6 %), with the death rate at twice its normal level (see Livi-Bacci 2000). It has been argued by historians (for instance, Rosenwein 2001) that the long period of population expansion during the Middle Ages was brought to an end by either a Malthusian 'positive check'<sup>1</sup> at the end of the thirteenth century or by the 'exogenous' intercession of the Black Death in 1347–1350. However, population expansion is part of a continuum that lasted up to the end of the nineteenth century during which there were obstacles, some of them direct consequences of development. When labour was depleted after an epidemic, famine or war starvation, malnutrition and lower birth rates, there was often a relatively immediate outcome. However, as the situation improved, standards of living and wages rose. Labour shortages demanded increased use of all available people including children. In rural economies all labour inputs were required to maintain economies. Much has been made of the situation of working children in the early part of the Industrial Revolution. Large scale industrial manufacturing and mining appeared only in the late eighteenth century and children began to be removed from workplaces by the mid-nineteenth century. In fact, children in Western Europe were only engaged in heavy industrial labour for around a century, which is only a small part of the period this research looks at. Here we find what such authors as Ariès may have misread as periods when it was difficult to distinguish between adults and children.

During the fifteenth century, European recovery became general with rapid population growth and relative prosperity. Urbanisation increased exponentially and mercantilism replaced what had previously been a more sedentary rural economy. Religious war, plague and economic upheaval changed much of that. The Italian city states never recovered and the ascendancy passed to Northern Europe particularly the Hanseatic cities of the North Sea. Growth was steady until 1700 when improving technology, expanding sea routes and growing cities began to change rural agrarian production systems toward capitalism and imperialism. The Netherlands, Great Britain and France became powerful and increasingly ambitious about acquisition of new colonies. Between 1750 and 1845 there was extensive population growth, with

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<sup>1</sup>Malthusian 'positive checks' were famine, misery, plague and war that were necessary because 'preventative checks' had not limited the numbers of the poor. Malthus thought that positive checks were indispensable for that task. He believed that if positive checks were unsuccessful, famine would inevitably be the consequential means of keeping a population down. Moral discipline, vice and birth control were primary preventative checks. Moral restraint was the means by which higher ranking people limited family size so as not to dissipate wealth among too many heirs. For lower ranking people vice and birth control were means by which numbers could be contained although he believed they were insufficient to limit vast numbers of poor people.

about half of the world population in Europe (250 millions). Spain at first and then Portugal began to decline in influence beginning with liberation wars throughout Latin America in the nineteenth century.

## New Philosophies That Include Children

In the middle of the seventeenth century Hobbes, the philosopher and political theorist turned his attention to the evils of ‘the state of nature’ in his argument for absolute rule in his best known work *Leviathan*. The problems of social organisation included some consideration of the ‘ownership’ of the child. His work, including his consideration of children, exerted a continuing influence on later thinkers (see also Chap. 6).

Children finally became the focus of new thought as the seventeenth century ended and the eighteenth century began. The impact of two great philosophers, John Locke and Jean-Jacques Rousseau, on children and their vastly differing views of childhood began to change perceptions of whom and what children were. In 1693 John Locke published *Some Thoughts Concerning Education* which was for many years probably the most influential British book on childhood. Its origins hardly suggested this.

Locke had been tutor to a number of aristocratic children and on the basis of this experience wrote some letters to a relative on child rearing. These circulated and eventually Locke was persuaded to publish them. Locke, unlike the Puritans of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, was not apparently concerned with children’s salvation. His concern was with suggesting ways of inculcating good habits into children that would last for life. The way to do this was neither through corporal punishment nor through frightening them, but taking reason as the means: “the Principle of all Vertue and Excellency lies in a power of denying ourselves the satisfaction of our own Desires, where Reason does not authorize them” (§ 38.). The first thing infants should learn, according to Locke, is that they should not have something simply because they like it but because it is deemed good for them. He also thought that learning should be fun and children and they “...must be tenderly us’d<sup>2</sup>...” (Locke 1971:19). He also appreciated that each child should have his (or her?) own “natural genius and constitution” (Locke 1971:27).

John Locke’s book was comparable with the work of Benjamin Spock in the twentieth century in that he comforted parents and described a clear schema. In that he claimed that “nine parts of ten” (Locke 1971:4) of how a child develops into the adult, for “Good or Evil, useful or not” (*Ibid.*), will be the result of education and upbringing. This was the age of the development of a gentler and more affectionate type of family life. The life of the child in the bosom of the ‘protective’ family was established.

For something in the region of half a century Locke’s book held a place of enormous influence throughout Europe and North America as well as in Britain. It was

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<sup>2</sup>‘us’d’ is *used*.

eventually challenged by Jean-Jacques Rousseau's *Émile* (1762). Rousseau believed that the problem with Locke rested in his fixation on the adult-to-be rather than on the child. He was conceivably the first intellectual to be at least convincingly 'child-centred'. He wrote that we should not reason with children but let them learn from things, ideally from nature rather than teachers. Rousseau therewith laid a foundation for the Romantic poets in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries and for a number of philosophical and moral stances on children during the twentieth century. It was only a single small step from arguing that a child should learn from nature to postulating that a child might gain access to the natural world in a manner that was normally inaccessible for unhappy adults.

## New Economic Thought

Economic analysis of the period generally disregarded children however Adam Smith (1723–1790) noticed the conditions of some in his native Scotland. He was one of the major figures in the intellectual movement known as the Scottish Enlightenment and for his treatise: *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations* (1776, here '*The Wealth of Nations*', 1973) It was one of the earliest attempts to methodically study the historical development of industry and commerce in Europe and attempt a sustained attack on the doctrine of mercantilism. His work was a foundation of the modern academic discipline of free market economics. It offered one of the best-known components of the intellectual *raison d'être* for capitalism, free trade and libertarianism. His treatise was so successful that it led to the refutation of earlier economic schools. Much of his work reflected his knowledge of the Scottish economy and it is here he noticed the situation of children: "poverty (...) is unfavourable to the rearing of children" (Smith 1973:182).

He was critical of working conditions of the common people that did not allow them a state in which children would grow to maturity. In what is essentially an argument for better pay and a larger labour force that child survival would bring, he says that: "(The) liberal reward of labour (...) enabling them to provide better for their children, and consequently to bring up a greater number..." (*Ibid.*). Later economists such as Malthus refined his theory into what is now known as classical economics.

Thomas Malthus (1766–1834) was an avid disciple of Jean-Jacques Rousseau and David Hume, both of whom he knew. In his *Essay on Population* (1798) he hypothesised that *unchecked* population growth always exceeds the growth of the means of subsistence. Actual, or 'checked', population growth is kept in line with food supply growth by 'positive and preventive checks' both of which are exemplified by 'misery and vice'. His hypothesis inferred that actual population always has a tendency to exceed food supply. Thus any attempt to improve the condition of lower classes by increasing incomes or improving agricultural productivity would be futile. The additional means of subsistence would be entirely absorbed by the

boost in population it caused. He saw three elements at the root of this situation: the overproduction of children, incapability of resources to remain abreast of the rising human population and recklessness of the lower classes. He suggested the family size of the lower class ought to be regulated so that they did not produce more children than they could support.

That, of course, does not conform to Smith's proposition and certainly counter-veils Rousseau's ideas. In contradiction to his views it may be argued that a high rate of population that is rapidly increasing meant a high rate of innovation. The extreme exception in his time was Ireland. It had the fastest growth in Europe in eighteenth century following the introduction and widespread cultivation of the potato. In the nineteenth century that was to see its greatest ever population crisis during the Great Famine. Starvation, disease and mass emigration saw the population of Ireland reduced by 20–25 % between 1845 and 1852. About a million people died, many of them children, and a million more emigrated to England, Scotland, Australia, Canada, and the USA.

One of the harshest critics of Malthusian principles was Robert Owen (1771–1858) who believed in far more positive ways that people were the product of their environment. That nurtured his support for education and labour reform making him a pioneer in the promotion of investment in human capital. A general malaise and trade stagnation as a consequence of the end of the Napoleonic Wars was gripping the United Kingdom. Thus he considered the special causes connected with the wars that led to the execrable situation. He noticed that the permanent cause of distress could be found in the contest between human labour and machinery with an effective remedy in the united action of men and subordination of machinery.

He advocated social inclusion and early intervention at the beginning of the nineteenth century when he stated that the community he created would accommodate more than just the children of New Lanark. Anyone in nearby Lanark or thereabouts who could not afford to educate their children would be able to send them to his school whereby (Owen 1816) said:

They would receive the same care and attention as those who belong to the establishment. Nor will there be any distinction made between the children of those parents who are deemed the worst, and of those who may be esteemed the best members of society: indeed I would prefer to receive the offspring of the worst, if they shall be sent at an early age; because they really require more of our care and pity and by well-training these, society will be more essentially benefited than if the like attention were paid to those whose parents are educating them in comparatively good habits. (Address to the Inhabitants of New Lanark, 1 January 1816)

This was part of his proposition on the remedy of poverty. Communities of about 1,200 persons would need to be settled on parcels of land from 1,000 to 1,500 acres. Everybody lived in a large building in the form of a square that had a communal kitchen and dining rooms. Families would live in private apartments and have care of the children until the age of 3. Thereafter they should be brought up by the community, although parents could see them at mealtimes and on other occasions. The notion was that the communities could be established by individuals, parishes, counties or state. Supervision would be by suitably qualified persons. Work and its

rewards would be a common good. Education and inclusion were the keys to the success of this plan:

It is therefore, the interest of all, that every one, from birth, should be well educated, physically and mentally, that society may be improved in its character, – that everyone should be beneficially employed, physically and mentally, that the greatest amount of wealth may be created, and knowledge attained, - that everyone should be placed in the midst of those external circumstances that will produce the greatest number of pleasurable sensations, through the longest life, that man may be made truly intelligent, moral and happy, and be thus prepared to enter upon the coming Millennium.

(A Development of the Principles & Plans on which to establish self-supporting Home Colonies, 1841)

What he was describing was what should be referred to as an intentional community. It is a planned residential community planned and operated so that it has a higher degree of collaboration amongst members than other communities. They usually share responsibilities and resources. Members typically hold common social, political or religious beliefs and are often considered part of alternative society.

Those communities include co-housing communities and cooperatives, communes, eco-villages, residential land trusts, retreats, kibbutzim and ashrams. Members are selected by a community's active membership and whilst many attempt to live in a 'different' and 'improved' circumstance to the rest of society they do not tend to claim to be 'Utopias'. Children are often treated very much as in Owen's vision, indeed are often far more autonomous and allowed to share decision-making. However there is often a great deal of emphasis on a childhood unspoiled by adult influences (for instance see McLaughlin and Davidson 1990:187–216). Owen's ideas were to be of great influence on Karl Marx. Apart from a few idealised and usually short lived communal experiments from that time to the present, those egalitarian and inclusive ideas have never really come to fruition.

## Children in Literature

With the end of the eighteenth and beginning of nineteenth centuries the impact of British poets on childhood through works such as those of William Blake and William Wordsworth further 'softened' hearts and minds toward children. When we examine the transition into the Victorian age, we find a period in which some children were allowed to live out the dream of a romantic childhood. On the other hand, the conditions of life in a rapidly industrialising and urbanising Europe gave an appearance that many were 'children without childhood'. Those children were predestined to long hours of work and their lives were far from the nature that the Romantics so highly valued.

Critical authors such as Mayhew, Dickens, Kingsley, Twain, Anderson and numerous others used fiction and/or journalism as a means of exposing the situation of children. Briefly mentioned in the Introduction is a related trend whereby Dominique Julia (Becchi and Julia 2004:85) identifies three illustrative representations of childhood that emerged toward the end of the eighteenth century and was to endure well on into the twentieth century.



In literature and current affairs three romantic figures of childhood were drawn into popular imagination. The first was the abandoned child who is reared by animals (i.e.: Victor,<sup>3</sup> Mowgli or Tarzan). Victor's discovery fortuitously came toward the end of the Enlightenment when many intellectuals were debating what exactly distinguished man from animal. A prevalent enquiry of the time was about the human ability to learn language. It was hoped that by studying Victor they might discover the answer. Mowgli<sup>4</sup> and Tarzan<sup>5</sup> are examples of the same genre who also possess extraordinary powers and skills much like those in the third group.

The second group was child prodigies. Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756–1791) is perhaps the most well known example in general. The German mathematician Carl Friedrich Gauss (1777–1855), Irish mathematician and physicist, William Rowan Hamilton (1805–1865) and English composer, organist and artist William Crotch (1775–1847) are probably his equal in their respective areas and creativity. In the oriental world child priests and deities such as Tibetan lamas and living gods have been attributed similar prodigious spiritual qualities. Siddhārtha Gautama (the Buddha) is said to have had the enlightenment that led to his later life as a youth and in Hinduism more than a few gods such as Rama appear to have become divine whilst they were still very young.

The third was child heroes who were mainly fictional figures, including such characters as Petit Gavroche,<sup>6</sup> Jack Dawkins<sup>7</sup> or Huckleberry Finn<sup>8</sup> who often possessed extraordinary skills and occasionally almost superhuman powers. They do things that adults would not normally do or dare that are both considered childish

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<sup>3</sup>Victor (of Aveyron) also known as the Wild Boy of Aveyron seemingly lived his childhood naked and alone before being found wandering in the woods outside Saint-Sernin-sur-Rance, near Toulouse in France in 1797. He escaped soon after being captured but was captured again and placed in the care of a local woman for a few days before escaping again. On 8 January 1800 he came out of the forest alone and stayed in human care until he died in 1828. His age was unknown but local people estimated that he was about 12 years old. The fact he could not speak and his food preferences suggested that he had been in the wild for most of his life. His story has become the subject of several books and films.

<sup>4</sup>Mowgli originally appeared in Rudyard Kipling's short story 'In the Ruk' in *Many Inventions* (1893), then became the main character in *The Jungle Book* (1894) and *The Second Jungle Book* (1895). He is the child of British parents in the Indian jungle lost during a tiger attack. The human baby is adopted by wolves who call him Mowgli (Frog) because he has no fur. Kipling tells us some of the stories about his childhood until he returns to human society where many other adventures begin.

<sup>5</sup>Tarzan (Tarzan of the Apes, Edgar Rice Burroughs, 1914) is John Clayton, born in western equatorial Africa to John and Alice Clayton, a marooned couple from England, who are also Lord and Lady Greystoke. The infant child is adopted by Kala the she-ape after his parents died and named 'Tarzan' ('White Skin' in ape language) and raised by the band of apes. In his youth he feels alienated by his peers because of physical differences and then discovers his human parents' cabin where he finds out about others like himself from books which he teaches himself to read.

<sup>6</sup>Petit Gavroche is the street boy who fights in the French Revolution and dies manning a barrier when students revolt and erect barricades in the narrow streets of Paris in Paris in Hugo's *Les Misérables* (1862).

<sup>7</sup>Dawkins, aka the Artful Dodger, appears to possess very mature qualities.

<sup>8</sup>Huckleberry Finn first appeared in Mark Twain's *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* (1876) but was so successful that *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* followed in 1884 with Huck as the hero.

because of the risks but heroic and mature because of their courage and fortitude. Surprisingly, there are few accounts of real ‘child heroism’ in the seventeenth to twentieth centuries. It appears that with exceptions of examples like Hugo’s fictional Petit Gavroche, children usually take the role of victim and frequently the nameless victim.

Despite the number of wars and the role of the hero as a model for society, it would seem that heroism was a matter for adults and reserved almost exclusively for men. Jack Cornwell, although 16 years old when he died (Unknown author 1918), volunteered to serve in the Royal Navy and became Boy Seaman First Class after basic training. He received further training as a Sight Setter or Gun Layer. After the Battle of Jutland in which his ship, the *Chester*, was engaged and seriously damaged, Cornwell was found to be sole survivor at his gun. There were shards of steel in his chest, but he was still looking through his gun sights and waiting for further orders. He died 3 days later in Grimsby General Hospital. Later that year his mother received his posthumous Victoria Cross. His example is quite unique and has also something of the boy hero that has been used to describe a particular British type of courage and devotion to duty. It has, however, little apparent appeal outside of the sphere of British influence.

Crossovers like Mowgli or Tarzan bridge the gap between the ‘wild’ children and ‘heroes’ and have some of the promise of the prodigies. Various forms of this vision of childhood persisted well into the twentieth century when film stars such as Jackie Coogan, Shirley Temple, Judy Garland and Mickey Rooney often seemed to bring many of those characteristics together through both their acting skills and the characters they portrayed. This is part of the history of childhood that has implanted a notion of a ‘golden child’ that supports an earlier view of the indistinguishable nature of children and adults espoused by those who believe in a ‘golden age’.

At the other end of the spectrum were children whose lives were less exciting and certainly neither privileged nor exceptional. Literature also contributes here. Henry Mayhew<sup>9</sup> described many urban children’s miserable lives as a critical journalist and Dickens contributed very revealing caricatures of lives and attitudes in several of his books.<sup>10</sup> In the harsh industrial world in particular, Victorian reformers such as Lord Ashley, Mary Carpenter or Dr Barnardo in the UK set themselves the undertaking of rebuilding childhood for those who were effectively missing out on it (for instance, see Selleck 1985).

In the USA ‘child savers’ were more concerned with delinquency but also contributed to changes in attitudes and practice toward young people (Platt 1977).

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<sup>9</sup>His four volumes of *London Labour and the London Poor* appeared between 1851 and 1861 chronicled the lives of the poor in London and gave a graphic account of children’s lives as they probably were throughout Europe and probably elsewhere in the world at that time.

<sup>10</sup>In *Bleak House* (1853) his descriptions of the life and fate of Jo the crossing sweeper are a stark portrayal of a miserable life and many attitudes toward such children and the fictional headmaster of Dotheboys Hall school, Wackford Squeers, in *The Life and Adventures of Nicholas Nickleby* (1839) illustrates, whilst also exaggerating to an extent the cruel attitudes toward them.

It was felt that children should be protected from the adult world of work and responsibility. They should become and thus remain dependent on adults with their time apportioned between home and school.

The ideal was that they should be *happy*, which was something that has since been particularly associated with childhood. Childhood was idealised as a kind of garden that was protected by walls and hedges and where nature thrived flawlessly. In reality few parents attained or even wished for this kind of childhood for their children. The better off put their children into the care of governesses and later sent them to boarding schools. For the majority of working classes poverty meant that a child had to contribute to the family economy as soon as possible, which the law allowed.

Although there was a removal of children from the labour force from about the 1850s onward, compulsory and universal education from the 1870s onwards generally had to be imposed by force of law (for example, see Davin 1996). The economic value of children was changing from one of the child as a contributor, to one of the 'property' of the parents and, to a point, the state who invested in the child as a future asset (Zelizer 1985).

## Education

Education was another key element in the changing status of children. It is not an exclusively European notion, but in its present form largely owes much to western formats. When the Church of Scotland was established in 1560, a year later it followed up by setting out to provide schools in every parish controlled by the local kirk session. Education was to be provided free for the poor and it has hoped that pressure by the church would assure that all children took part. In 1633 the Scottish Parliament introduced a local tax to fund it. Schooling was not free for everybody, however the tax kept fees low and the church and charities financed poor students.

This was substantially successful, although late in the eighteenth century some parishes had grown so much that there was a growing role for 'adventure schools' that were funded through fees and religious charities. In 1872 education for all children aged 5–13 was made compulsory through 'public schools' (in Scotland that meant for the general public) run by local school boards. Leaving age was raised to 14 years in 1883 and a Leaving Certificate Examination introduced in 1888 to set a national standard for secondary education. General school fees were brought to an end in 1890 (see Smout 1972; Devine 2006:389–412).

In 1833 the United Kingdom government budgeted for the construction of schools for poor children which was when the state became involved with education in England and Wales unlike Scotland that began in 1561. The Elementary Education Act 1880 made education compulsory from age 5 to 10 years. The Elementary Education (School Attendance) Act 1893 raised leaving age to 11 and a little later to 13. The Elementary Education (Blind and Deaf Children) Act the same year gave compulsory education to blind and deaf children with provision for special schools (Green 1990).

During the eighteenth century Prussia was probably the first country in the world to introduce free and universally compulsory primary education. Historically, Lutheranism had a strong influence on German culture including education and Luther himself had advocated compulsory schooling. It consisted of 8 years of primary schooling (Volksschule). It provided the skills needed in the early industrialised world through reading, writing, and arithmetic but also a strict education in ethics, duty, discipline, and obedience. At that stage the general population had almost no access to secondary education. In 1810, after the Napoleonic Wars, the Prussians introduced state certification of teachers which considerably raised standards. The leaving examination (*Abitur*) was introduced in 1788, compulsory in all Prussian secondary schools in 1812 and extended to all of Germany in 1871. With unification in 1871 the school system was centralised. More secondary schools were opened and the state assumed the sole right to set standards and supervise recently established schools. At the beginning of the twentieth century, four types of schools were given equal rank and privilege, thus ending what had previously been a class based system. Even then, the different types did not mean that they were of equal prestige. The divisions were retained in order to allow a small corridor of difference in which the distinction between those educated to be the ruling elite varied, down to those destined to be the rump of all echelons of the national labour force.

With the enthronement of the Meiji in 1868, the new leadership of Japan set out on rapid course of modernisation. It included establishment of a public education system designed to enable Japan to catch up with the rapidly industrialising West and develop a modern nation. The influence of education in England, Germany and the USA and initially the 'liberal' education of the latter shaped what was to become a conservative but dynamic system by the end of the nineteenth century.

Italy had a state-wide school system from 1859 when the *Legge Casati* (Casati Act) authorised educational responsibility for the imminent Italian state (unification was completed in 1861). The *Legge Casati* made primary education compulsory with the prime intent of reducing illiteracy. Control of primary education was devolved to single towns and cities, secondary education to *Regioni* (counties) and the universities to the State. Part of the task was to standardise Italian identity through education using a common language which had hitherto consisted of dialects and distinct languages. It was also very progressive and whilst very slow in achieving education for all Italian children, it was equally delivered to boys and girls and attempted to offer schooling to others previously excluded.

In 1898 Maria Montessori gave a lecture at an Educational Congress in Turin on the topic of education and training of the disabled. The serving Minister of Education was at the lecture and was so impressed by her compelling arguments that the same year he appointed her director of the *Scuola Ortofrenica*. It was an institution dedicated to the care and education of the mentally backward. She accepted the post so that she could put her theories to proof. Her first outstanding success was that several of her 8 year old pupils applied to take the state examinations in reading and writing.

The 'defective' children not only passed but did so with marks above average. After her success with these children she was invited to start a school for children in a poor housing project in Rome in 1907. She called it the *Casa dei Bambini*

(Children's House). The *Casa dei Bambini* was essentially a child care centre in an apartment building where she focused on teaching her pupils ways of developing their own skills at their own pace. It was a principle she called 'spontaneous self-development' (see Montessori 1964). The success of the *Casa dei Bambini* prompted the opening of many others and worldwide interest in her methods of education and philosophy of the meaning of childhood. She was very well informed about educational developments and the ideological propositions behind many other nations' views of children and uniquely for her time saw children as bearers of rights.

## The Century of the Child

This was followed by the twentieth century that was loudly proclaimed at its outset to be 'the century of the child' (see Ariès 1962). What this meant, was acknowledgment of the future of any nation being dependent on the wellbeing and preparation of its children. There were numerous positive facets to this new creed of 'welfarism'. The so-called child sciences that included paediatrics and parts of psychology and psychiatry came to be publicly acknowledged and formally established practical and theoretical disciplines. Child health received serious attention. So did education. There were some ambitious campaigns to relieve children from poverty with measurable success in the Family Allowances Act of 1946 in the UK. Elsewhere children began to receive equally successful attention as the principles of welfarism disseminated universally (Shinwell 1963:167). One of the initial responses was the reaction to the suffering of children during and in the wake of the First World War and a growth in charitable work with children (see also Chap. 7 on Englantyne Jebb and Save the Children).

Early in the twentieth century, science was held forth that the key to the future could be seen through such examples as the work of child psychologist Cyril Burt. In the 1920s he claimed that: "superintending the growth of human beings is as scientific a business as cultivating plants or training a race horse" (see Chap. 7). It was a notion that bore the hallmark of Freud's acceptance of the *tabula rasa* idea. Many parents then seemed badly prepared for the task. Burt, at roughly the same time, notably ascertained that girls were equal to boys in general intelligence which was a change from beliefs prevalent since the Edwardian era.

Thus, throughout the 1920s and 1930s behaviourism dominated child rearing with the stress on producing obedient children. A backlash against behaviourism during the 1940s that has lasted to the present probably did little to alleviate the fear of consequences of 'maternal deprivation' and relieve the trepidation of parents (see *The Curtis Report* 1946). However, rising standards of living mid-century permitted parents to commence investment of hopes and resources in children on a previously unprecedented scale. A question arises about this period's influence on where children stand today. For instance, does it contribute to an assumed understanding of '*the evolving capacities of the child*' expressed in Article 5 of the CRC or in a broader view of what children can and cannot do?

The relationship between authoritarian parents and children changed so that from the 1960s onwards children began to acquire new rights in relation to the state and families. What had happened was that childhood itself appears to have in numerous ways become longer and somehow ‘safer’ and children attained better status within both family and society generally. However, in its distinctness childhood has become so very different from adulthood. The notion of the child as a *citizen* with rights, responsibilities and any form of contribution comparable with those of adults was clearly an aspiration rather than a possibility. The early part of that period saw some efforts toward changing the *status quo*. The ‘children’s liberation’ movement was overtly occupied with establishing equal status between adults and children. What was at first covert, became increasingly evident very quickly, which was that it was occasionally very manipulative. Advocacy of sexual liberation, for example, of children sometimes blurred into attempts to justify paedophilia. That probably had far more to do with the power relationship between knowing and occasionally ‘predatory’ adults and learning and ‘vulnerable’ children in many cases.

## Child Protection

The backlash against the negative aspects of children’s liberation and also the growth of greater attention to abuse and neglect phenomena that owed much to Henry Kempe’s work began to more sharply define the need for protection. In 1958 Kempe and his colleagues Elizabeth Boardman and Betty Elmer created the Child Protection Team at the Colorado General Hospital in Denver. In 1961 Kempe, Brandt Steele and other colleagues made their first presentation entitled *The Battered Child Syndrome* (see Kempe and Helfer 1974; Kempe et al. 1962) in Chicago at a meeting of the American Academy of Pediatrics. It was also a very open acknowledgement of the universal nature of the phenomenon, something borne out by the extent of membership and regional sub-grouping of the *International Society for Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect* (ISPCAN) in 1977. However, despite the widespread concern with the topic, the ‘discovery’ of child abuse has had some negative consequences for children.

The true nature and extent of the ‘new’ discovery during the 1960s and 1970s is exemplified by the English experience. In 1884 the Reverend Benjamin Waugh had founded the *National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children* (NSPCC) in England. George Staite had begun this work in Liverpool in 1883, which in turn had been inspired when Thomas Agnew had visited the *New York Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children* in 1881 (see also Chap. 7). Harry Ferguson (1993) completed his doctoral thesis, *Protecting children in time: a historical sociological study of the abused child and child protection in Cleveland from 1880 to the ‘Cleveland Affair’ of 1987*, that charted over a century of usually unpublicised data about children held by the NSPCC. 1993 was also the year that the murder of 3 year old James Bulger by two 10 year old boys on 12 February had attracted world media to focus on the UK.

In fact, these English examples can very easily be matched by contemporary cases of violence against children, the 'home alone' phenomenon, working children, child soldiers, trafficking, international adoption and other events that have had the effect of reinforcement of child protection legislation internationally. In 1982 Neil Postman described a gloomy picture in which he noted the disappearance of games, food and clothes that were specifically for children. His vision of childhood was one in which children should be deferential to adults and committed to preparing themselves for adulthood rather than being a time in which relative free will and happiness are paramount. He saw this phenomenon as an aspect of an age of consumerism in which children are targeted as economic actors rather than having the kind of 'traditional', unbridled childhood that is embedded in folk memory.

This is very much part of the state of childhood we have at present and where the dividing line between how far they appear to need protection and how far they can actively play a role in civil society with all or most rights, duties and privileges of full citizenship is reliant on the success of children's rights.

## **Children and Human Rights**

Throughout the twentieth century the development of human rights has been rapid, the 1924 *Declaration of the Rights of the Child* was to be reworked several times. It eventually inspired the 1979 International Year of the Child and subsequent 10 year long drafting process that produced the CRC in 1989. That, in turn, has come to be the most universally adopted United Nations convention ever.

In theory, if not yet in practice, it should be a counterbalance to redirect some power back toward children. Thus, whilst much of the CRC is concerned with protection and provision, the inclusion of a judicious but comprehensive set of participation rights notionally redresses the tension between parental anxiety and the route toward increased inclusion in civil society.

There is tension between the perceived need for greater protection, a nostalgic perception of an unbridled but safe childhood in the past. There is also an ideal of increased shared responsibility and decision making for our world and mounting fear of the apparent lack of restraint of children and youth that marks the present state of play in the history of children's role in society. That does not generally describe a move toward inclusive citizenship as either the restoration of an earlier state of being or as a seriously considered proposition for the future supported by adults in general.