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The Government of Childhood: Discourse, Power and Subjectivity

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The Government of Childhood: Discourse, Power and Subjectivity

Chapter Abstracts

Introduction

This book is concerned with the government of childhood from the early modern period to the present, drawing on Foucault's work on governmentality. This brief introductory chapter discusses the relationship between children and parents from the perspective of Foucault's understanding of power and provides an overview of the remainder of the book.

Chapter One – Conceptualizing Governmentality

The aim of this chapter is to set out in detail the origins and meaning of the concept of governmentality as it was developed in the work of Michel Foucault and his successors. Following exploration of the concept of governmentality, there is an examination of Foucault's genealogical analysis of the 'governmentalization of the state' - the genesis of the concept of governmentality - in which he approaches the state as a set of practices associated with the exercise of 'pastoral power' and traces the emergence of liberal practices of governing. The final sections explore the work of Foucault and others such as Nikolas Rose and Mitchell Dean in relation to neoliberal and 'post-social' rationalities of rule.

Chapter Two – Subjects of Government

At the heart of the concept of governmentality are the interconnections between power, knowledge, subjectivity and freedom, which are the focus of this chapter. The first part of the chapter looks at the relationship between power, knowledge and subjectivity, drawing mainly on Foucault's work on this theme, with a particular emphasis on practices of self-government and the Hellenistic philosophical schools - particularly Stoicism and Epicureanism - from which they derive. This leads into a discussion on the manner in which citizens of liberal democracies are called upon to relate to themselves as subjects of government and how this - has changed since the nineteenth century as conceptions of self-hood grounded in morality gradually gave way to those rooted in psychological concepts. This chapter is also concerned with the way in which liberal forms of government deal with individuals and groups deemed unsuitable to be governed through freedom. Children represent the largest social category regarded as incapable of self-government - the final section of the chapter introduces the topic of the government of childhood with a particular focus on the work of Chris Jenks and his Dionysian and Apollonian models of childhood as well as on the work of Hobbes and Rousseau with whom Jenks links these opposing images. Drawing on the work of Hellenistic scholars and the recent arguments of Pierre Force particular attention is paid to the influence of Stoicism and Epicureanism on the work of Hobbes and Rousseau.

Chapter Three – Disciplining Childhood

The aim of this chapter is to explore the construction of childhood in early modern discourse and the implications for the manner in which children and families were governed. It is not possible to mark a neat dividing line between different historical periods in terms of the discursive elements which shaped how childhood was understood and given the particular

importance of Christianity generally, and the doctrine of original sin, in particular, to constructions of childhood in the West an examination of the doctrine and its broader theological context is provided as a preliminary to the main discussion. This introductory section draws on the work of Michael Gillespie on the influence of nominalism on the reconceptualization of divine-human relations in the late middle ages in a manner which he argues had a profound impact on early modern thought. This is followed by discussions on Renaissance humanism, religious schism and the natural and moral philosophy of Thomas Hobbes with reference to children and education. The remainder of the chapter is concerned with the government of children and families with a particular emphasis on schools and schooling.

Chapter Four - The Gentle Way in Child Government

This chapter is concerned with the construction and regulation of childhood from the eighteenth century to the late twentieth century. The chapter takes Rousseau's *Émile* – credited by Jenks with 'formalization' of the Apollonian child as a starting point and examines Rousseau's ideas on education and the nature of childhood in conjunction with those of Locke, before exploring Romantic and utilitarian ideas in relation to childhood and education. The remainder of the chapter focuses on developments in relation to child welfare and education in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. A brief discussion on liberal government of the family is followed by examination of legislative and policy developments in relation to child labour and compulsory schooling. There follows a discussion on youth justice and child welfare and protection. Drawing in particular on the work of Nikolas Rose and Kurt Danziger the final sections of the chapter are broadly concerned with the rise of developmental psychology in the context of child welfare and education policy and provision.

Chapter Five – Governing the Responsible Child

In recent decades ideas about childhood in terms of competence and agency have become increasingly influential. Drawing on recent governmentality literature in relation to childhood, this chapter explores the idea that the image of the child as competent and agentive has been taken up in strategies of exercising power over children, which operate through participation rather than protection as in the past and which are linked to the idea of the 'entrepreneurial self', a concept deployed by Foucault in relation to the behavioural economics of Gary Becker. As a symbol of this mode of exercising power, the model of the Athenian child is put forward as analogous and complementary to Jenks's models of the Dionysian and Apollonian images of childhood.

Conclusion

This final chapter briefly revisits the three models of childhood presented in this book – the Dionysian and Apollonian images of childhood developed in the work of Chris Jenks and the newer model of the Athenian child – and examines their particular characteristics and their deployment in the context of the exercise of pastoral power.