

Jacques DONZELOT *The Policing of Families: Welfare v the State* 1980 Hutchinson

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Introduction

The following, rather long, tapestry of social and family forces which constitutes the status of women, men and children within a family is used to identify the relationships existing between medicine (pathology and psychopathology), the state (society, culture and including the aesthetic), the law (the definition of the legal and hence, the deviant) and the construction of the family.

It is also gives and example of Foucauldian “archaeology” as a methodology which can be understood and used in different frames such as pornography, health, illness, criminality, etc. Also, to reflect on how contemporary art works either support or oppose the view of the family represented by this method. In this respect, although there are no direct references to art or art works, the use of examples can easily be included in such a discourse.

The Text

From the Introduction:

Objective: “to militate for a usage of history different from that of speaking in its behalf or of taking refuge in its meanders. It is time for us to ask history to tell us who we are instead of beating its sides once more in order to extract the final drop of prophetism, or using it as a surface on which to engrave, in philosophical letters, the maxims of an arrogant disdain.” (p8)

Chapter 2: The Preservation of Children

In the middle of the 18th Century, an abundance of literature began to flourish on the theme of the preservation of children, coming from mainly medical sources but also from the administration (the police) and military leaders which questioned the educative customs of the century.

Three Main Targets:

I. FOUNDLING HOSPITALS where 90% of children in care died representing a loss of “forces ... made useful to the state” as in; the militia, the navy and possible colonisation. A foundling is described as:

“being without parents, with no other support than that obtained for them by wise government, they hold nothing, and have nothing to lose. Could death itself appear as something to be feared by such men as these, whom nothing seems to attach to life, and who could be accustomed to danger at an early age? It should not be difficult to make people look upon death and danger with indifference when they are brought up without these sentiments and are not distracted by any mutual tenderness.”

What exactly was the origin of this high mortality rate?

2. THE REARING OF CHILDREN BY NURSES (Wet Nursing) and a more general problem of nursing infants disguising the abandonment of children due to distance and 'shady schemes' e.g. nurses taking more than one child one of which would 'die' in transit whilst the nurse still claimed a fee for services. Around two-thirds of infants died whilst in nurse care

who lived at a distance from the parental home, one-fourth for those who lived nearer.

Nurses displayed "self interest and hatred" towards their charges (and the wealth of those who made them so; based on an idea that slaves (the servants) tend to foster the growth of forces that might one day overwhelm their masters).

3. THE EDUCATION OF RICH CHILDREN being left to the house servants, who treated them to a mixture of constraints and liberties unsuited to development e.g. swaddling clothes. Education for pleasure and dress (corsets for adolescent girls) which was an enfeebling seclusion rendering them unfit for duties of motherhood and thus perpetuating the need for servants (a vicious circle).

These three factors, foundling children, wet nursing and the education of rich children, became the domain for an alliance between representatives of the medical and social worlds, in parallel and in mutual support of the production of wealth and the treatment of the body.

For those who supported these revisions (the physiocrats) wealth and the treatment of the body became a possibility when the state, being the means of production, introduced a government of social relations which would intensify production to a maximum by restricting consumption. For the medics a new relationship became the body and soul.

Beginnings

The earliest form of what we would now recognise as medical knowledge revolved around the early Greek theory of bodily fluids: such as bile, semen, blood, phlegm, milk, etc. giving us four definitions or humours of sanguine, choleric, phlegmatic and melancholic. Flows of fluids of the body were originally regarded as regulated by the soul and later through the soul, effectively placing control with God (the soul) and to man (who has will over the soul). A natural conclusion being that the excessive waste or use of the fluids caused illness, hence, blood letting, leeches, etc. Onanism (coitus interruptus, masturbation) being included as an excess. Therefore, the control of flow became an economy; the economy of body flows being linked with social flows.

This can be demonstrated by the power relationships of MASTER AND SERVANT.

THE HOUSE SERVANT

When wealth is made from the land:

- The **healthy were the poor**; they were fit, had regular exercise and food from the land, and were subject to religious discipline
- The wealthy were moving to the city; to display their wealth through excess and consequently, the **unhealthy were the rich**
- Male land servants became town servants (footmen, butlers, coachmen, etc.) to avoid conscription into the armies, navies, etc. and later, to emulate the wealthy, becoming the bourgeoisie.
- Women were left in the country and were poor, but still healthy
- Rich women needed wet nurses in order to maintain their status and wives and socialites
- But, the women were in the country and the men were in the towns.....
- Hence, the children were transported to the country, by the male servants with the 90% death rate mentioned earlier.

Both the children of the rich and the poor die. From this scenario the triple relationship unfolds:

Education then had a two fold function:

Through **medicine**; the knowledge and techniques of bringing children under the 'observation' of the parents

Through **social economy**; directed at the life of the poor, to produce workers, under the umbrella of philanthropy

The **Medical Solution** has two routes:

Hygiene: clean, healthy and moral living (Cleanliness is next to Godliness)

Diffusion: making medical knowledge common knowledge (vulgarisation)

In order to retain power, medical knowledge has somehow to be retained in the hands of the medics. This was achieved through the notion of family medicine. The challenge was met by the alliance of the Doctor and the Mother (within the family) thus separating "charlatans and uncertified doctors" (midwives, apothecaries, alternative medicines, natural remedies, etc.) using the two new forms of hygiene and common sense.

Thus, you have the emergence of **Men of Learning** (certified doctors who prescribe and diagnose) and **Women who do it** (domestic nursing) who are both rich and poor with the sick being helpful (to men) in achieving their goals of providing a means of production through a healthy and plentiful labour force.

Therefore, the re-organisation of the family required

- Closing up the family against the old form of education (through servants)
- The reduction in the number of domestic servants
- the reduction of social promiscuity ('sleeping around' of the rich with servants, both male and female; and all servants with each other)

Establishing a privilege alliance with 'mother' (and the advancement of her educative usefulness)

The family 'used' by the doctor against old structures of education, religion and boarding schools.

In summary then, up to the middle of the 18th century, medicine had no interest in women and children. They were regarded as reproductive machines in possession of their own medicine (mid-wives, witches, etc.) with the servants and nursemaids holding knowledge and practice (and the power).

The main identified methods of acquiring this knowledge/power were through various practices that needed 'correction':

Maternal breastfeeding (denying the need for the wet nurse)

Clothing and the practice of swaddling the babies of the rich and corseting women (freedom of movement and better pregnancies for young women)

Games (being sexual) between servants and children, servants and masters

Stories and the oral tradition of the servants, passed on to the children as horrific and uncensored

Collective observation (of everyone, but by everyone - introducing Surveillance or Panopticism)

These practices were discouraged by the notion that they were “against free development goals” with the strategic counter-development objectives of:

- freeing the child of all constraint
- freedom of movement
- exercise of the body
- growth of ‘forces’ (body of men for war, etc.)
- protection from harm (physical)
- protection from harm (corruption, moral)

All this resulting in making children available for treatment through the ‘mother’. What was suggested was “an alliance profitable to both parties: with the mother’s help, the doctor prevailed against the stubborn hegemony of ... popular medicine of the old wives.” But, “he conceded a new power to the bourgeois woman in the domestic sphere, capable of shaking paternal authority” p.20

This raises several questions that are still valid today about who holds the power in the domestic realm: mother or father?

In 1785, the Academy of Berlin ran an open discussion questions as a competition. The questions were:

1. What are the foundations and limits of paternal authority in a state of nature?
2. Is there a difference between the rights of a mother and the rights of a father?
3. To what degree can the laws extend or restrict this authority?

The winning answer:

“If the grounds for the power that parents hold with respect to children during the age of weakness and ignorance reside for the most part in the obligation they are under to attend to the welfare and preservation of these fragile beings, there is no question that the extent of this power grows in proportion to the duties one has to fulfil on their behalf. Owing to her position as mother, nurse, and protectress, the woman is prescribed duties that are unknown to men, and consequently she has a more positive right to obedience. The best reason for asserting that the mother has a more genuine right to the submission of her children is that she has greater need of it.”

Jacques PEUCHET *Encyclopedia Methodique* Article: ‘Enfant, Police et Minicipalite’ 1792

Therefore, the **civil authority** of mother gained **social status**.

Women became mother, educator, and medical auxiliary. She dealt with birth, death, marriage and divorce by the link between children and health (the preservation of children).

Men, on the other hand, became concerned with **wealth/poverty** (bread winners) and **policing** (law enforcement - "Wait 'til your father comes home!").

Education

The educational practices of the wealthy were previously to send their children away to boarding schools (lycees and convents, both public and private). Notable for their overcrowding, poor ventilation, lack of exercise, promiscuous dormitories, contagious environments, corruption and depravity (just think of a scene from Dickens). Unscrupulous servants ran such schools with a prevalence of the seemingly innocent games and stories referred to earlier.

The new aim of education became to establish “parents and schoolchildren” in mixed education, accepting scholastic discipline and good conditions maintained by parental involvement. Corporal punishment was banned and in France, ‘gymnastics’ introduced. Such schools were also watched by their approaches, by newspaper kiosks, bars, exhibitions, prostitutes, etc. being in the near vicinity.

Such education was only available to the well off who could afford servants and thus, (house) wives with time to devote to their children’s’ educational needs. Education was paid for and required that parents themselves were educated and able to read books produced by the doctor/family relationships underpinning the changes.

The working classes, being illiterate, were not able to afford a family doctor, and had different problems. Although the concerns were similar (ensuring the preservation of children) and the spread of hygiene, they were essentially in opposition.

By now the aim has changed:

“no longer to free children from awkward constraints but to call a halt to the liberties that were being taken (abandonment in foundling hospitals, the disguised abandonment of putting children out to nurse), to control unauthorised associations (concubines), to block lines of escape (vagabondage of individuals, children in particular).”

Now, we see a change from ‘protective measures’ to ‘establishing direct surveillance’.

Three parallel events had a ‘rise and fall’ at about the same time (from the mid 1600’s to the end of the 1800’s)

1. Convents for young girls (to provide missionaries, relief workers and educators) coming originally from the counter reformation movement

2. Brothels (during the middle ages, found in reserved districts) being organised by the police.

3. Foundling Hospitals and the provision of state care to counteract ‘the corporation of beggars’ and the acts of mutilation in order to engender pity (and money).

By the end of the 19th Century, all three practices were discredited by the following measures.

Public assistance against “automatic” foundlings (illegitimate children)

Workrooms and 'convents of preservation' becoming objects of financial and moral scandal

Vice police attacked for making ‘arbitrary arrests’ and functioning as a ‘parallel police force’

The unification of these three strands marked a transition point between the old family regime and the new family regime.

THE PRACTICE OF COLLECTION AND SEGREGATION OF CHILDREN

These practices can only be understood in relation to the old alliances between male and female which require some brief explanation.

Patrimony represented the possibility of man or woman alone to marry whilst 'others' remain in their charge. This resulted in a form of the extended family with a married couple providing homes for unmarried relations, assorted children and servants etc. living as one large family, sharing work, care, etc., essentially functioning internally with old wisdoms, etc. and thus, out of range of the new regime.

Legitimate offspring being used as the method of discriminating between offspring status. Legitimate children being desired as opposed to the 'undesirable' foundling. It was important to generate the notion of the legitimate child with a clearer distinction of illegitimacy for survival purposes.

"The regime of alliances, therefore, did not seek to coincide with sexual practices, but was based rather on a calculated distance from them." p.24

Therefore, it became necessary to recognise the **PRESERVATION OF PERSONS** intended for profitable alliance from **any union** which was not consistent with this purpose and consequently diverting those not consistent with this purpose i.e. those without family aspirations (convents, prostitutes, vagabonds and rogue men).

Therefore, the rise of separation of the **sexual and the familial** which produced such illegalities being more or less tolerated with a conflict over loss of the useful resources (people) that this implies. (This is quite paradoxical).

The family then represents discrepancies between the regime of alliances and the sexual domain.

This discrepancy results in a permanent threat to the peace of households through "seduction, fraudulence and codifications of the law" (a position that still exists today).

THE STATE RESPONSE

The state now sees the rejects from the law of alliance as a source of danger: vagabonds (wanderers, itinerants) the modern equivalent of travellers and gypsies; indigents (the needy, the poor) the sick, disabled, the 'underclass'; and losses in production (the unemployed).

The Convents of Preservation, Brothels and Foundling Hospitals have now to be reconciled to the interests of families and the interests of the state. By bringing harmony through the moralisation of behaviour and consolidation of the force of the state. The growth of the police during the 18th Century relied on the power of the family to bring 'peace and happiness' by extending the authority over rebels and cast offs, hence the police are acting in the service of the family.

The honour, reputation and standing of the family depends on the management of rebellious adolescents, adulturine children and prostitution.

The state therefore, has the responsibility for management of the 'squandering of vital forces, useless and unused individuals'. So, the concentration is focused on 'undesirables'

of the family through:

- mobilisation of philanthropy
- provision of a point of support
- a laboratory to investigate the working classes
- a starting point of tactics 'to counter socially negative effects'
- re-organisation of the working class family

These represent not a single unified aim but rather a duplicity of aims, with a rough coalition around the notion of what constitutes an acceptable family group.

A SOLUTION - THE TURRET



The turret, in real terms, was a revolving cylinder, with a closed side facing the street. A bell nearby summoned the attendant of the foundling depository who turned the turret. The baby, to be abandoned, was placed inside and the turret turned to take the baby in. Its function was to provide a service that in turn aimed;

“to break, cleanly and without scandal, the original link identifying the individual as offspring of objectionable alliances; to cleanse social relations of progeny not conforming to the law of the family, with ambition and its reputation.”

In 1811, there were 269 turrets, between 1826 and 1853 165 were closed and by 1860 the last one disappeared. So, over some fifty years, the turrets existed and were used. At its peak, in 1833, 131,00 children were deposited in the shelter of one, St. Vincent de Paul.

THE PROBLEM WITH TURRETS

As mothers (wet nurses) were needed for the children, they were paid as foster carers. The babies placed in turrets were returned to the mothers, but with pay, and often by illicit arrangements. Therefore, it became necessary to pay mothers direct which meant replacing the original idea of the open depositing. Such payments were made to the poor but also to the immoral. Pay was made generally in the form of a family allowance but by the end of the 19th Century this led to the introduction of a collective state payment.

This resulted in the extension of medical control and in 1865 the Society for the Protection of Children was instituted. This required medical inspection, a system of education, hygiene, supervision of the children of the lower classes and the introduction of medical state

supervision.

Mothers now became nurses with status, known as state approved nurses, leaving a legacy of the child/mother link tarnished by “laxity, abandonment, self interestedness, and hopeless incompetence”.

The solution to this problem became the objective of **MARRIAGE OF THE WORKING CLASS**.

“Social necessity and highly moral endeavour; it is also an excellent piece of business, an obvious immense saving for the state.” But, public support, marriage made easy, papers of license, returned children to their parents. Societies sprang up to aid this, giving power to women as nurses.

However, this did not mean that MEN would become fathers, providers, etc. Contracts resulted between the working classes and the protective societies, not between family members i.e. men and women.

THE DOWRY - the marriage ‘starting capital’ was provided by families. But, this was not always available in the working classes, so, women provided their domestic labour, free of charge. Hence, social expenses were now paid for by unpaid labour; the hygiene of child rearing and nutrition and regularised behaviour (premature death, illness, insubordination).

MEN are controlled by woman which in its turn controls the ‘spirit of independence’ of the working man.

Thus, the promotion of feminism and philanthropic morality and the swing against brothels, prostitution, vice police, convents and backward education of women facilitated the eventual absorption of women **as part of the industrial process**.

An example of this ‘contract’ between women and philanthropy is in practice is the **CONVENT FACTORY**:

The convent factory, part industrial and part religious, was an all woman institution. It supported families by providing dowries for daughters raised through working and ‘held in trust’ being paid in a lump sum when the woman left to marry. Hence, with the restriction of women’s choices (without a dowry) between being a nun or a prostitute, (or a teacher or welfare worker) the Convent Factory offered an alternative. But the industrial labour of women was an occasional necessity, not regarded as the norm.

Another example of the contract is the process of **women “watching” men**.

If the aim of improving the MAN, necessitates the woman remaining in the home, then the woman must be given the impression of a patriarchal power with the primary responsibility of the man as providers. To facilitate this goal, woman must be “watchful” over men.

How was this achieved? Through primary education, instruction in domestic hygiene, worker’s garden plots, Sunday holidays and **SOCIAL HOUSING**. These methods achieved getting women out of the convents, and men out of the streets. Women were “told how to use it; keep strangers out so as to bring in the husband and especially the children”.

Again, a comparison with **the old housing** may be helpful.

1. The hovel: a rural and artisan dwelling, a hiding place, hidden from view, where valuables were kept, like an animal keeps its kill, a little fortress, no doors or windows (due to a tax on windows)

2. The barracks: bringing together large numbers of individuals, immoral in mixing, unable to enforce regulation

The New Social Housing; Introduced the individual house, run by women, which was 'clean and proper'. Therefore, no riots, men working to keep them, women working domestically to keep them (and their husbands and children). But it was also necessary to reinforce the prohibition on subleasing (taking in lodgers) and ensuring the construction made space for parents and children only. This was facilitated by making the bedroom central, not seen by the children or anyone else becoming "the little capital of the peaceable kingdom".

"If the husband preferred the outside, the lights of the cabaret, and the children the streets with its spectacles and promiscuity, this would be the fault of the wife and mother." p45

THE ADVENT OF THE MODERN FAMILY - Re-centred education with two channels, with reverse symmetry.

I. BOURGEOISE "Tactical Constriction" suppressing/controlling an internal enemy of the domestic servant through the alliance of woman with doctor

2. WORKING CLASS "Turning Back" to a circular relation of vigilance against the external enemy; cabaret and the street

Both of these educational aims were achieved by isolation and the surveillance of the norm.

This tactical difference between bourgeoisie woman and working class woman was made through the valorisation of education in which the bourgeoisie woman had a new mission of welfare and educational norms becoming "the instrument of cultural diffusion on the outside" and the working woman, being antagonistic to mother, status and having no cultural diffusion. She had a new mission of the "social retraction of her husband and children".

WHAT THEN OF CHILDHOOD? Childhood became two things:

1. "Protected liberation" - freeing children from fear and constraint by "a sanitary cordon" inside which the growth of the body and mind took place with the aid of psychopedagogy and controlled by discreet observation

2. "Supervised freedom" - not the freedom of being left in the street. Back and forth to school and home, controlled by discreet observation.

A final note: WHAT THEN OF ABUSE? It seems to me then that sexual abuse, as it occurs within the family, can be seen here to revolve around the centre of the intention of familial relationships to induce 'profit'. I refer you here to the relevant sections from the above notes:

"the regime of alliances, therefore, did not seek to coincide with sexual practices, but was based rather on a **calculated distance from them**"

Therefore, it became necessary to recognise the preservation of persons intended for profitable alliance from any union not consistent with this purpose and **diverting** those not consistent with this purpose (those without familial aspirations). Therefore, there arises a **separation of sexual and familial** which produces illegalities being more or less tolerated with a conflict over loss of useful resources (people). This results in a **permanent threat** to the peace of the household through "seduction, fraudulence and codifications of the law."

Conclusion: The criminalisation of sexual abuse and the acknowledgement that this is an essential part of the family as it is constituted for social, economic and political reasons, is in conflict with the philanthropic or the welfare of children and is in denial of the rights of children to be children.

[Lecture List](#)