



Notes on childhood and theory: a Latin American approach

Notas sobre infancia y teoría: un enfoque latinoamericano

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ABSTRACT This work seeks to introduce and examine different historically relevant theories and propose certain frameworks that allow for the development of a Latin American theoretical approach based in a new discourse regarding childhood and adolescence. In order to undertake the creation of this Latin American approach, understanding the category of childhood as a social and historical construction, the work draws upon the contributions of structuralism (in particular, childhood as a permanent category, its relational dimension with regards to adulthood and its historical and intercultural dimension) and Foucault and Deleuze's concept of the society of control associated with the category of domination, an essential aspect of Latin American thought. The text was presented as a speech in the V World Congress for the Rights of Children and Adolescents held in San Juan, Argentina, from October 15-19, 2012.

KEY WORDS Child Advocacy; Adolescent; Policy.

RESUMEN Este trabajo tiene como objetivo introducir y revisar algunas alternativas teóricas históricamente relevantes y plantear ciertos delineamientos que permitan desarrollar un enfoque teórico latinoamericano basado en un nuevo discurso sobre la infancia y la adolescencia. Para comenzar a elaborar un enfoque latinoamericano, entendiendo la categoría infancia como una construcción histórica y social, se parte de las aportaciones del enfoque estructural (en particular, el carácter de categoría permanente, su dimensión relacional respecto de la adultez y su dimensión histórica e intercultural) y las contribuciones de Foucault y Deleuze con el concepto de sociedad de control asociado a la categoría de dominación, muy propia del pensamiento latinoamericano. El texto corresponde a la conferencia presentada en el V Congreso Mundial por los Derechos de la Infancia y la Adolescencia realizado en San Juan, Argentina, entre el 15 y el 19 de octubre de 2012.

PALABRAS CLAVES Derechos del Niño; Adolescencia; Políticas.

To an adult, it is scandalous to consider a human being in the state of childhood as an equal.

Francoise Dolto (1 p.13) [Own translation]

After Ellen Key wrote *The century of the child* (2), the progress made in the theory of childhood was slow up until the implementation of the International Convention on the Rights of the Child (ICRC), which became a turning point that put the subject and the subject's associated rights in center stage. This event marked the beginning of a long struggle for the ratification of the rights of children and adolescents, which has been going on for over 20 years.

As in any struggle, the ratification of rights and their legal-institutional framework have certainly meant progress and significant advances, but at the price of what can be called conceptual unidimensionality. Therefore, I want to stress that law and the legal "sciences" have had a central responsibility in the constitution of the individual subject – the child – who is granted a system of guarantees in the view of providing "comprehensive protection." Given such a conceptual framework, the final result would be a type of singularized child, protected against any threat or violation of his or her rights. Knowledge associated with children and adolescents relies mainly on the legal sciences and, supplementarily, on psychology and pedagogy.

Knowledge related to childhood is quite considerable, constituting an interdisciplinary space that must incorporate many converging efforts. In addition to Law, other disciplines involved include sociology, philosophy, history, political science, economics, geography, psychoanalysis, anthropology, knowledge associated with education, among others. I believe that we should broaden our knowledge on these subjects and explore new directions that do not necessarily exclude these areas, since the current task at hand implies resignifying struggles and renovating the languages associated with childhood.

These notes aim to introduce and review some historically relevant theoretical alternatives, and to outline some guidelines that could allow us to little by little develop a new Latin American theoretical approach based in a new discourse on childhood and adolescence.

EMERGENCE OF CHILDHOOD

Aside from the discussion and debate between the philogenetic approach of Lloyd de Mause (3) and the proposals of Philippe Ariès (4), which I consider valuable approaches that rather than competing are complementarily to one another, I believe the matter – without going in to a detailed historiographical reading – has to do with recognizing that childhood in the modern sense has not always existed.

Reducing the scope of our analysis to follow Ariès' formulations, there was no childhood in the Middle Ages. Girls were secluded and raised for domestic life, prepared in their reproductive role for marriage. Once boys had developed their psychomotor abilities they were directly integrated into society. There were no differences between children and adults: children lived among adults and chose their own teachers. Children were considered young adults, and therefore, the category of childhood as a stage differentiating by age did not exist. The family did not have an affective function but rather that of the conservation of property and the common practice of a trade. Ariès describes (4) that love between spouses as well as between parents and their children was not essential for the existence and balance of the family; however, of course, if there was love and affection, so much the better.

It was not until the late 17th century that two fundamental changes occurred. Firstly, the family became a space of affection between spouses and between parents and children. The family was no longer constituted to serve property and fortune but to cater to children and their education. Children emerged from anonymity and became a decisive affective dimension of the family.

Secondly, the school appeared as a space of confinement in which to discipline and teach children. Thus, children no longer commingled with adults. School attendance marked, along with changes in the family, the emergence of the category of childhood in industrial capitalism.

Starting in the 18th century, an increasingly endogenous characteristic began to emerge in the family, which closed itself off into the intimacy of private life, thus differentiating the family from society. This strengthened processes seeking greater identity in the inclusion of children.

The issue today does not lie in identifying the origin of the term but in the examining the different varieties of discourses that, in the name of childhood, regulate the cultural relationships between adults and childhood.

THE GREAT ASYMMETRY

If we undertake a profound analysis that goes beyond a rights-based approach, we are in the presence of a historical asymmetry of the most formidable kind, as is summarized in Table 1. It is an asymmetry that, in the cultural dimension, expresses the relationship between childhood and adulthood prevalent today. Here, childhood neither refers to a child in the singular nor to the categories of son/daughter or student, but to the collective noun *childhood* which expresses the cultural role the new generations play with respect to adults. The assignment of this cultural role is historical and discursive. Childhood is undoubtedly placed in a relationship of dependency and subordination.

This polarity is complemented by an idea of linearity that implies transformation towards the central destination, adulthood. It is here where the concepts of maturation and the accompanying education to become an adult play a key role. This *bildung* implies an idea of improvement and personal preparation to integrate oneself through education and reach maturity.

In this temporality, life is organized into cycles through clearly defined sequences: care and stimulation in early childhood, school/education, work in the productive age and retirement in old age. Each of these stages defines rights and obligations and cultural codes of belonging. The “self” is elaborated in the subjectivation of a being defined for the future: as a child or a grandchild, this means to be like one’s parents or grandparents, that is, repetition. The proto-adult emerges, having priority, preeminence, adult superiority over childhood.

According to Ravello de Castro (6), the *telos* of childhood is its determined directionality: to become an adult. This process is generally “normalized” in a growth curve with a universal trajectory. The socialization of subjectivity consists of its adaptation to a “normalized” development.

The child goes from a pre-social state to a social state, and diversions are conceptualized in terms of variance and margin of errors.

Within this context, the intervention of the modern State is conceived in order to achieve this type of rational and balanced society, in which the main adjustment to childhood is performed through the role as a student, through age segregation, and through submission to the scientific knowledge by which childhood is “regulated.”

Being is temporal, that is to say, defined by time. Therefore, growing up is the best thing that can happen to a child. The trajectory of human development ends in a rational, autonomous, self-controlled adult. The cycle of maturity is synonymous with progress, which, in turn, is equivalent to development.

This linear and unitary conception of human development conceals the conditions of its discursive production prevalent today, and thus becomes a political and cultural project which “scientists” usually legitimize.

Childhood and its asymmetry with adulthood put into focus the features attributed to childhood and that help build the legal and cultural mechanisms that attach childhood to “smallness.” We must therefore decode the hegemonic discourse of childhood and establish a directly critical position regarding the theories that celebrate child dependency. The unfolding of childhood is still

Table 1. The great adult-centric asymmetry.

Adult	Child
Mature	Immature
Rational	Emotional (irrational)
Autonomous	Dependent
Senior	Junior
Authority	Obedience
Competent	Incompetent
Complete	Incomplete
Public	Private
Culture	Nature
Independent	Dependent
Works	Plays
Actor	Object
Visible	Invisible
Strong	Vulnerable
Shaped	Malleable

Source: Own elaboration based on Alan Prout (5 p.31).

open, with a historicity that places the past not as that which used to be but in terms of the future as re-enchantment of the world.

THE STRUCTURAL APPROACH

Jens Qvortrup's structural analysis (7) is foundational, proposing a synthesis of nine theses constitutive of the sociology of childhood:

- 1) Childhood is a particular and distinct form of the general social structure of a society.
- 2) Childhood is not a transition, a phase, a period, but a permanent social category.
- 3) Childhood is a historical and intercultural category and, therefore, it is a complex category.
- 4) As an integral part of society, childhood is touched by the division of labor and the prevailing relationships of dominance.
- 5) Children are constructors of childhood and, therefore, of society.
- 6) The same macro-structural relationships that make up adulthood (such as economic relationships and institutions) affect childhood in a particular way.
- 7) Affirming that children depend on adults has direct consequences for their exclusion in historical and social analyses and their invisibility as beneficiaries of a "benefactor-philanthropist" State.
- 8) The "familist" ideology (not kinship relationships) constitutes an obstacle for the interests and welfare of children.
- 9) Childhood is a category that has been "minoritized", made smaller, made "tiny" and, is therefore, subject to analyses that marginalize it or have a paternalist nature. (7 p.223) [Own translation]

As can be noted, this formulation shows significant progress in the consideration of a differentiated childhood. Furthermore, it identifies childhood from the outset as a specific and independent analytical category within the context of society, with a clear separation between the category of childhood and the category of son/daughter, which is circumscribed to the private sphere of the family, or with the category of student, which is restricted to the school

environment. The assertion of the permanent rather than transient nature of childhood has become a crucial characterization that serves as a starting point for considering childhood in terms of *being* rather than in terms of *becoming*. It is *being* that definitely enables the language of the subject and ascribes an active role to childhood. Thus begins an epistemology of childhood. Children and adolescents are people in the state of childhood in the same way that adults are people in the state of adulthood.

According to Sarmento (8), sociological analysis emphasizes that the category of childhood is a historical and social construction and not a mere mark of nature. It is clearly differentiated by its antagonism with adulthood, as well as with other social categories such as class, gender, ethnicity, and so on, even when, as was already stated, it is touched by them. This analysis is epistemologically far removed from the biologicizing and development-based conceptions of an individualistic and abstract nature, such as those developed by other analytical traditions like psychology, particularly Piagetian psychology (8). Within this context, children and adolescents are analyzed and classified according to different types of knowledge but are not seen as actors. However, they are subjects with a historical representation specific and different from their position in adult culture. Childhood rebels against the enforcement of rules and values vertically imposed by the adult world. This perspective also differs from the socio-psycho-pedagogical view that places childhood within the context of the teacher-student social relationship, classroom "instruction," and the pedagogical sphere restricted to school.

This does not mean that childhood is a homogeneous category. Childhood is a homogeneous category with respect to adulthood, which serves as its external constitutive force; but is heterogeneous with respect to the different dimensions that affect it, such as social class, ethnicity, gender, urban or rural living environments, religion, language, and so on; and, above all, heterogeneous with respect to the historical temporality.

RESEARCH METHODS

This is why childhood requires different types of approaches. Prout and James (9 p.8-9) – cited

by Sarmiento (8) – define items they consider essential for the development of a paradigm for the study of childhood:

- 1) Childhood is understood as a social construction. As such it provides an interpretative frame for contextualizing the early years of human life. Childhood, as distinct from biological immaturity, is neither a natural nor universal feature of human groups but appears as a specific structural and cultural component of many societies.
- 2) Childhood is a variable of social analysis. It can never be entirely divorced from other variables such as class, gender or ethnicity. Comparative and cross-cultural analysis reveals a variety of childhoods rather than a single and universal phenomenon.
- 3) Children's [and adolescents'] social relationships and cultures are worthy of study in their own right, independent of the perspective and concerns of adults.
- 4) Children [and adolescents] must be seen as active in the construction and determination of their own social lives, the lives of those around them and of the societies in which they live. Children [and adolescents] are not just the passive subjects of social structures and processes.
- 5) Ethnography is a particularly useful methodology for the study of childhood. It allows children a more direct voice and participation in the production of sociological data than it is usually possible through experimental or survey styles of research.
- 6) Childhood is a phenomenon in relation to which the double hermeneutic of the social sciences is acutely present (see Giddens 1976). That is to say, to proclaim a new paradigm of childhood sociology is also to engage in and respond to the process of reconstructing childhood in society. (8 p. 24)

The implications of these six points are fundamental to understanding the processes of how to research childhood. The key point here is how to manage the adult-centrism that pervades the method of analysis, the way of understanding and explaining the research process, and the conclusions reached. Adult-centrism impedes the

understanding of historical circumstances, does not allow for the deconstruction of the language of children and adolescents, does not understand the power relationship between adults and childhood and does not consider children as actors who have an intense life of their own in which they are produced as social beings in dialogue with adults.

Ferreira (10) has carried out an exemplary study on how to discover children using the stories they tell and on the importance of carrying out research *with* them. She correctly affirms that childhood has epistemological citizenship, which implies a very particular methodological and analytical sensitivity in order to understand childhood in its own right, according to its codes, knowledge and feelings.

Corsaro (11) has been the forerunner of studies on the culture of childhood through his "interpretative reproduction" approach. He upholds that the interpretative studies on childhood oppose the classical approach of socialization that considers childhood as receptive and merely passive. This means that children do not simply reproduce the adult order, but produce it through processes in which they re-elaborate, interpret and create a new order of meaning in a culture of peers; they have their own codes and a language developed amongst them, appropriating the language of adults but resignifying it in their own terms (a).

This highlights the need to invert adult-centric knowledge and its associated research methodologies in order to understand childhood as and from childhood itself. Research on children as social actors must accept their autonomy and ethical symmetry with adults. This represents a great challenge in terms of profound methodological reflexivity.

SOCIETY OF CONTROL

From the perspective of Foucault, one can analyze childhood by the violence exerted by adults on the child's body – "the tortured, domesticated, marked, mutilated, rotten, forced, and enslaved body; bodies that are distributed, organized, separated, gathered" (13) [own translation] – in terms of an antagonism in which one party makes use of violence and the other suffers the violence. Childhood is then a relational

category in which power is at stake; a relationship that is historically evidenced in the practices (discursive or otherwise) and in the struggles that affect it. Childhood is not an *a priori* subject or a formal abstract legal subject but rather a historical and relational construction.

Foucaultian thought on the subject does not make reference to a subject established once and for all, that is, a sovereign subject to whom rights have been attributed, an apparently autonomous, free and singular subject. On the contrary, Foucault considers a subject who is affected by social, political and cultural influences which are historically determined, a subject produced by and tied to the dominant order. The operations of subjectivation then appear in order to turn human beings into subjects. At first, these operations include what Foucault would call *the disciplinary society*: the society of instruments of punishment, of police and of institutions of confinement such as asylums and prisons. Also included here are two pillars that make up child subjectivity: the family and the school. The disciplinary society shapes docile, regularized and ordered bodies, and correlative sets of knowledge. Its central method is *panopticism*. The panopticon involves a central, continual, individualized surveillance, which above all must make and keep visible the disciplined body while at the same time maintaining invisible and hidden the discipliner.

Now, according to Deleuze, we are undergoing a transitional time in which the disciplinary logic is subordinated to the logic of control. This leads to *the society of control* where the mass media are in center stage. Thus, the biopower held by the State in order to discipline populations is transformed into the concept of control of audiences managed by corporations. The most significant feature lies in the production of a type of open and continuous subjectivation based on the permanent flow of data, images, social practices, propaganda and communicational operations that keep us under control. Deleuze calls this type of subjectivation *invagination*, which is like the internal fold of an outer layer (b). It is a manipulative and controlling machine in constant operation, whose essential feature is the commercialization of information. Deleuze argues that:

Marketing is now the instrument of social control and produces the arrogant breed who are our masters. Control is short-term and rapidly shifting, but at the same time continuous and unbounded, whereas discipline was long-term, infinite, and discontinuous. A man is no longer a man confined but in debt. One thing, it's true, hasn't changed – capitalism still keeps three quarters of humanity in extreme poverty, too poor to have debts and too numerous to be confined: control will have to deal not only with vanishing frontiers, but with mushrooming shantytowns and ghettos. (15 p.8)

The question of the audience is central to the topic of childhood since it is there where a memory of styles, desires and beliefs is shaped and configured to create consumers. Podestá declares:

...if disciplines shaped bodies by developing habits mainly in the body memory, societies of control shape brains and create habits mainly in the affective, volitional and sensory memory. (16 p.287) [Own translation]

In another publication (17) we explained how the machinery of control operates in the conformation of the nascent subjectivity of childhood and adolescence. Capitalism knows quite well that it is there where it can sow its seeds. Here appears the correlation between the shaping of subjectivity as control and the creation of a spectacularized reality. This corresponds to the society of the spectacle in the terms of Guy Debord, who in his thesis 34 states that "the spectacle is capital accumulated to the point where it becomes image." He continues explaining in his thesis 42:

The spectacle corresponds to the historical moment at which the commodity completes its colonization of social life. It is not just that the relationship to commodities is now plain to see – commodities are now all that there is to see; the world we see is the world of the commodity. (18 p.55)

The entertainment industry is central to the logic of the spectacle and its impact on children and adolescents has been widely demonstrated (c). The relevance of the Foucault-Deleuze

perspective in the analysis of childhood is unquestionable. The transition from discipline to control is not linear and shows overlaps. Thus, the creation of a malleable body and a controlled subjectivity is essential in childhood to guarantee the transmission and reproduction of the adult order that oppresses it. New forms of subjectivity centered on individuality are arising: nomad subjects with neither territorial nor political determinations (20p.182); bodies fragmented and objectified as a consequence of biotechnological manipulation. In summary: this is the new style of governance. According to Ciriza:

...the capitalist world [...] turns bodies into commodities that can be bought and sold in the organ market, the sex market, in the new market of biotechnological maternities, perfectly dividing by class those who can enjoy this machinery of dead human knowledge that, transformed into fetish, turns on to human life so as to dominate it. (21 p.182)
[Own translation]

THE LATIN AMERICAN PERSPECTIVE

The Latin American perspective is still in formation. Within Latin American thought there is thus far no concrete viewpoint directly related to childhood. We can recognize some historical studies at the national level concerning the development of social politics, within which childhood is identified, but there is no systematic theoretical effort in terms of childhood. However, especially during the last decade, very worthwhile studies regarding the problems of children and adolescents have been conducted from different perspectives such as philosophy, education, history, social work, social psychology and anthropology. An abundant and growing academic production exists (22-28). Despite the value of these works, the effort of theorization for the development of a perspective on childhood within a wide field of viewpoints and differences is not yet evidenced.

In the present work, I attempt to outline provisionally some concepts that were already mentioned in *El recreo de la infancia* [The recess of childhood] (17) (d).

The first outlines of a Latin American approach must start with the contributions of structuralism, especially childhood as permanent category, its relational dimension with respect to adulthood and its historical and intercultural dimension. Although not uniformly recognized, not only the relational but the antagonistic nature of childhood and adulthood is also relevant.

It is additionally important and necessary to take into account Foucault and Deleuze's key contributions. In this sense, the concept of society of control is crucial and is highly associated with the category of domination that is central to Latin American thought. However, the society of control is a historical becoming. In practice, the exploration of disciplinary order and order of control as critical-regulatory categories that exceed traditional thought on socialization and child development is just emerging in Latin America.

From the start, Latin American thought has had a markedly critical aspect (e). Similarly, the category of dominance in the analysis of social relationships is also thoroughly present in Latin American thought, and is a category that strongly influences the category of childhood, forming the crux of its emancipatory character. We could summarize the main aspects of Latin American thought as follows:

1. A conception of emergent morality and the idea of human dignity as regulatory. The morality of emergence is a reconstruction of many manifestations of different social sectors that are oppressed that can be found in both popular and cultivated literature, and that has manifested itself in innumerable historical circumstances. The morality of emergence comes from those who have nothing to lose and implies a critical hermeneutics. Human dignity is an anthropological *a priori*. Men and women are not men or women if they do have dignity.
2. The humanization of societies always comes from below. A wide solidarity with the oppressed, who are identified as having a strong potential for producing positive changes, is postulated. Humanization starts with a Latin American "we" which requires thinking with the people. This self-affirmation is the basis to feel and be dignified.
3. Humanization starts with the material requirements for human dignity and ends with an

- emancipated citizenship (32). There is a transition from necessity to freedom.
4. Humanization is always practical, since it is about generating the requirements for a free, equal and fair society. It is here where political practice enters, which leads to the strengthening and reinforcement of democracy.
 5. Latin American thought has a utopian inspiration that is not a rigidly constructed world but rather the search for a more just society as an open possibility. It is about a utopian attitude defined as a persistent ability to transform the world's negativity. This means *ektopia* (from the Greek words *ek topos* = out of place, out of center), or staying away from the place that is considered spontaneously as right. *Ektopia* implies a critical perspective so that the utopian attitude not rest in a definite belief. This complements what Roig calls the *neotopical* view, which is made up of the group of symbols that bind themselves to the collective consciousness, guiding them to the achievement of social relationships that are increasingly more just (33).

Now, how does the tradition of the Latin American thought relate to a specific perspective of childhood that implies a first step towards a Latin American approach to childhood? Here I attempt to introduce some central ideas into the discussion.

Childhood is a social and historical field. By field, we mean the space where social and discursive struggles take place in order to regulate the reproduction or recovery of the *status quo*. That it is historical implies that a specific temporality exists in which these struggles are configured or reconfigured, and in which new discursivities emerge. Within this context:

1. Childhood is a category antagonistic to adulthood, by which it is externally constituted. However, the adulthood-childhood relationship is a relationship of dominance (f). It mainly operates by means of the concept of societies of control. Maturity and socialization are central conceptual mechanisms that are deeply questioned in this process.
2. Childhood is a structural and non-transitory category; but structural in the context of a relationship of dominance. A perspective critical of the classical theory of child development that

considers that the definitive *telos* of childhood is to result in adulthood.

3. Childhood is an intercultural category (g) with content that strongly opposes adult paternalism. Childhood is not primarily a protective theory, given that with more protection comes less autonomy and less participation as actors (h).
4. Childhood is autonomy (36 p.58) in the context of a social heteronomy considered as a political project and construction. It is autonomy understood as social belonging and not as an individual project.
5. Childhood is a diachrony; it is a discontinuity in the order of the *status quo*. Childhood is not a photocopy of the adult generation. It consists of a diachronic process which is not in synchrony with the adult order.
6. Childhood is an emancipatory category and as such it implies a theory of social change. The becoming of childhood, in the sense of transporting what is new, agrees with the construction of a just society. It is here that childhood coincides with the utopian attitude as a critical-regulatory principle of political practice.

I would now like to touch upon the question of utopia, which is a complex matter difficult to approach on the basis both of its overall features and the extensive bibliography on Latin America (i). I simply want to emphasize here that utopia relates to childhood primarily through the concept of incompleteness. Indeed, utopia has to do with Ernst Bloch's concept of *not yet* (40), in the sense of something that has not yet arrived but is soon to come, something that does not yet exist but is embodied in the reality from which it arises. The future is therefore something expected, not in terms of pre-oriented teleological knowledge but in terms of anticipation, and whose constructive principles can be found in the present.

It could seem that my reflections on incompleteness agree with the concept of childhood as *something that is not yet in existence but is about to be*. However, this is not so. It is therefore necessary to clarify that when I speak of utopia I do not postulate a finished order but an open one; otherwise, utopia would be a historically predetermined order. In this sense, childhood also does not appear as predetermined to end up in

adulthood as the most developed state of being, in the same way that adulthood is not a definite state. Similarly, utopia implies a tendency, an attitude that, from a future-to-come, questions what is real in a critically constructive way: it is an open questioning that moves forward to the future as an anticipation framed in the rebellion of an emerging subjectivity.

This is how the utopian attitude starts: a human dimension in radical contradiction with the negativity of the present world and in search of transformation. In this way it is identified with childhood, whose dimension is the creation and renovation of the present in an incomplete world. If utopia is the non-place, childhood is also the non-place in the adult world. From that non-place, childhood embodies knowledge in rebellion with the constituted order framed by adulthood. Thus, childhood contains forces that transform the *status quo*; it brings novelty, creation, and therefore becomes an important actor for social change. From this point of view, the child-adult duality involves a theory of social change. Childhood is no longer conceived as it was under the perspective of socialization, as something that needs to be adapted and molded to the adult order, but as something that represents the possibility of overcoming that order.

Moreover, childhood implies a theory of human expansion that does not end up in the oppressive adult order. It is a progressiveness that seeks the new and interprets, as we said earlier, in its own terms. Despite the antagonism with the adult order, the relationship with childhood is one of both tension and dialogue. This is why we speak of autonomy and not of independence. Childhood is autonomy with social belonging: it is not childhood against society. Thus, childhood should be understood as a historical and structural category.

Furthermore, there is a temporal category, in which childhood represents a beginning, but another kind of beginning that goes against the adult *status quo*. The temporality of today appears in our culture as linear and always with a sense of finalism. All is conceived to lie on a path towards the end, where death awaits. That is why we define ourselves as mortal men and women. However, childhood orients its temporality towards the beginning, towards the creation of life and its potentiality to renew: the place of beginnings, births, and that which is born, of the new that seeks to emerge. We should therefore define ourselves as natal men and women and go back to childhood, which is a return to the generative beginning of life and its immanent ability to change and re-enchant the world.

FINAL NOTES

a. Some authors make reference to the disturbing concept of “a childhood people,” as children and adolescents have their own relationships, produce their own meanings and define spaces for the development of symmetric relationships (12).

b. Urresti’s arguments on adolescent subjectivities are recommended (14).

c. Among the many that could be cited, the outstanding and innovative analysis by Joel Bakan is worth mentioning (19).

d. All 12 theses considered in the book I consider to be valid and pertinent.

e. I endorse the idea that Arturo Roig (29,30) was one of the principal inspirers of Latin American thought. A very good compilation of contemporary philosophical Latin Americanism can be found in Jalif de Bertranou’s text (31). Many authors can be identified in the evolution of Latin American thought using European matrices but with autochthonous reflections based in local identities: Alberti’s liberalism; Simón Rodríguez’s utopian socialism; Francisco de Bilbao’s liberal radicalism; José Carlos Mariátegui’s marxism; José Martí’s anti-imperialism and José Enrique Rodo’s arielism. Such humanistic thought began with Fray Alonso de la Veracruz, Fray Bartolomé de las Casas, Eugenio María de Hostos and continues up to the promoters of the Philosophy of Liberation.

f. Childhood is not a homogenous social category. We have already stated that it is influenced by relationships of class, gender, ethnicity, and diverse spatial and local situations. It is also a historical category. But there are dimensions that demonstrate it to be particularly oppressed by the adult order and, from this point of view, it is homogeneous.

g. It is clear that childhood is submitted "to the comings and goings of social change and therefore each childhood is a new childhood, just as each time is a new time, and the set of structures that make up the childhood category is modified due to social, cultural and economic changes, which leads to the necessary historical consideration as an element to explain childhood. However, there is more to it: the different positions that individuals occupy in society produce different experiences, and so it seems that rather than speaking of childhood it is appropriate to speak of 'childhoods' shaped in the intersection of diverse cultural and social systems with different physical, natural and artificial environments" (34 p.21) [Own translation].

h. Although he is not a Latin American author, it is advisable to take into account David Archard's excellent reflections on the theses of the conception of childhood from the point of view of protection (35).

i. Utopia is a complex matter with an incomparably wide bibliography. The compilation prepared by Roland Shaer, Gregory Claeys and Lyman Tower Sargent (37) may be consulted as an example. I especially recommend Alain Touraine's article "Society as Utopia" within that compilation. In Latin America, I suggest the classical texts by Fernando Ainsa (38) and Fernández Nadal (39).

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