

## THE SOCIAL BACKGROUND OF FRENCH CHILD-REARING PRACTICES

### フランスにおける子育ての社会的背景

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本稿は、同棲、離婚、シングル・ペアレント、複合家族の増加という社会変動の中で、フランスの育児がどのように変化してきたかを考察する。

1967年 Neuwirth 法でピルが解禁され、1975年 Weil 法により条件付きで墮胎が認められた。一時、「子供は欲しい時だけに」(*“un enfant quand je veux, si je veux”*)、というフェミニズムのスローガンの影響で出産や育児はあまり流行しなかったが、しだいに出生率は1,99まで上昇した。避妊法が発達するにつれ、43%の婚外出産を含めて、子供の大部分は計画出産による<sup>1</sup>。大きくなった腹部を隠すよりも、スカーフを結びながら、むしろ強調するかのような妊婦服をみても、出産に肯定的な傾向がよく分かる。同時に出産法にしても、ラマーズ法よりもずっと進歩的なフレデリック・ルポワイエやミシェル・オダンの水中出産など、さまざまな形式が現れてきた。

以前のしつけ方針は「生きる」ためが目的であり、まともな人間になるように厳しく育てた。この方面で1960年代から最も影響力があったのはローランス・ペルヌやフランソワ・ズ・ドルトであった。育児書の売れ行きが一番であったペルヌは子育てに心理学を導入したことで目立っていた。大きな影響力をもったドルトは、1908年生まれとはいえ、きわめて進歩的であった。しかしドルト没後約15年になり、最近では、ドルト流のしつけ方は甘すぎたという批判が現われ始めている。

現在、「厳しく育てよう」というメッセージがあらゆる専門家(すなわちクリスチアンヌ・オリヴィエ、ダニエル・マルテリ、チチエ・プル、ベアトリス・コベル、ルワイエ、アルド・ナウリ、等)から聞かれる。親は、自分の利己的な生き方を貫くために、その代償として、子供を甘やかしてきたのではないか。小児精神学者、カロリヌ・エリアシェッフは、母

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1 それでも墮胎法以来、毎年22万 3人に一人 の子供が墮ろされている。

子密着を「要注意」と警告し、「プラトニックな近親相姦」とまで指摘している。ブルは「子供に嫌われても、平気な態度を取れ！」と助言している。フランスの親は、子供からしか安定した愛情を期待できないのだろうか。人口動態研究所のルイ・ルッセルは「あらゆる社会はそれ相応の子供しか作れない」と意味深いコメントを残している。

French women's attitudes towards child-rearing and maternity have dramatically changed from the sixties on. Never have so many women become mothers. In 2003, the average number of children per woman is 1.99 and maternity has become fashionable since the mid-eighties<sup>2</sup>. Why has motherhood become so fashionable again? Thanks to more reliable contraceptive methods<sup>3</sup> women are able to program, not only the best moment for them to become mothers, but also the desired number and the ideal spacing of their offspring. One can therefore state that theoretically, most French babies born today are desired and planned<sup>4</sup>, which results in a very positive attitude towards children and maternity in general. Taking this context into account, one has to remember that the so-called 'illegitimate children', born out of wedlock (43% in 2000, compared to 6% in 1967<sup>5</sup>) are also desired and planned, which is a unique and unknown phenomenon up to now in the French social context. The terminology associated with children born out of wedlock has also evolved tremendously, in ways of erasing former

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<sup>2</sup> Also among actresses (see for example, *Leur plus beau rôle*, Jean Depussé, in, *Objectif bébé*, Autrement, # 72, September 1985, pp.184-187).

<sup>3</sup> In 1995, 33.5% of women used the contraceptive pill (57.7% between age 20 and 24, 50.6% between 25 and 29, 42.7% between 30 and 34), the second medium being the IUD (17%) (Quid 2002). Thanks to Simone Weil, the first French woman to be Minister of Health, abortions were legalized in 1975 (1979 for the final application of the law) for pregnancies not exceeding ten weeks (twelve since 2001).

<sup>4</sup> One cannot forget that one pregnancy out of three is aborted (220.000 per year), to which one ought to add the abortions practiced in the neighbouring countries, when the confinement goes past the twelve weeks required. Whether the *pilule du lendemain* (the morning-after pill), allowed since 1999, will help reduce this number is still to be seen. See, "220 000 avortements par an : que faire ?", dirigé par Elisabeth G. Sledziewski et Agnès Guy, ed. Corlet-Panoramiques, 2002.

<sup>5</sup> Francoscopie 2003, p.148.



Births out of wedlock are so common that Jean-Paul Gaultier has put a baby in the bride's arms instead of a bouquet  
(With the kind permission of the photographer Daniel Simon & Gamma)

words like *bâtard* or even *enfants illégitimes* (illegitimate children) which experienced strong social discrimination. Nowadays, such children are referred to as *enfants nés hors des liens du mariage* (children born out of wedlock). Simultaneously what used to be called *filles mères* (single mothers) are presently referred to as 'mères célibataires', which erases the connotation of 'accident', favouring the aspect of *choice* that, more often than not lies behind the conception of their child.

Together with today's trend, the concept of *le mal joli*, the so-called 'lovely pain', which we used to associate with pregnancy and maternity, has disappeared.

Today delivery is also viewed as a fascinating and wonderful experience, the highlight of a woman's life, as though maternity had the power to make women feel 'high'. It has therefore become fashionable to look happy, in full bloom and in shape, with a beaming and serene facial expression which couldn't possibly be disturbed... In

order to achieve this goal, the pregnant woman has to stay beautiful and attractive. The so-called *masque de grossesse* (pregnancy mask) is not much mentioned anymore, nor are the early months' morning sickness. Whether this has to do with what Simone de Beauvoir calls 'an unconscious rejection of the unborn child'<sup>6</sup> remains to be proven, but the disappearance of the morning sickness is striking enough.

### **Pregnancy is beautiful**

A pregnant woman who does not feel especially 'blooming' or attractive might feel ashamed to show such feelings. She might be willing to hide them even from herself. The explosion of French books dealing with 'blooming in pregnancy' is striking enough. So are the testimonies of women's inner feelings about becoming a mother<sup>7</sup>. In an international survey conducted by the Japanese Prime Minister's Office in Japan, the USA, Britain, Thailand, Korea and France<sup>8</sup>, French women spontaneously answered that the reason they gave birth to a baby and raised it was 'just for fun'<sup>9</sup>. Another survey conducted by the Japan Child and Family Research Institute (日本子ども家庭総合研究所, 1998) shows that the number of mothers who enjoy child-rearing is still relatively low in Japan<sup>10</sup> (21%), compared to the US (71.5%) or Korea (53.7%). A survey conducted in 1995 in Japan, the US and France by the Alan Guttmacher Institute also showed that the number of desired

<sup>6</sup> in *The Second Sex*, 1949.

<sup>7</sup> See for example, Jacqueline Dana, *Et nous aurions beaucoup d'enfants*, ed. Seuil 1979, Marie Laborde, *Bébé d'amour*, ed. Stock 2001, Hortense Dufour, *La gueuron qui pleure*, ed. Grasset 1999, Marie-Françoise Colombani, *Donne-moi la main, on traverse*, ed. Fixot 1989, Michèle Fitoussi, *Lettre à mon fils*, ed. Calmann-Lévy, 1991, etc.

<sup>8</sup> 『日本の子供と母親 - 国際比較』(Japanese Children and their Mothers - International Comparison), The Youth Development Headquarters, Prime Minister's Office of Japan, 1981.

<sup>9</sup> 'Just to enjoy child-rearing' (76.6%) (question 5, chart 2-2-1, p.193). By contrast, only 10.6% of Japanese mothers chose this answer. Answers concentrated more on *to contribute to a generation which will inherit the future society* (61.7%), and *to strenghten our family bond* (50.7%).

<sup>10</sup> For a study on this topic, see Muriel Jolivet, *Japan : the Childless Society ?*, Routledge, 1998.

births was the highest in France (66%, compared to 36% in Japan and 43% in the US). In the meantime, Japan had the highest number of unplanned pregnancies (36%, compared to 12% in France and 19% in the US).

In France, children are neither considered to be caregivers of their old-aged parents, nor bred to boost population. French women bear children for fun and for *themselves* which indicates a positive and a very egocentric or narcissistic view of the maternity process. This strongly underlines the shift from what one might call *la maternité doloriste*, where the painful and dark sides of birth are stressed, towards the *maternité flamboyante*, where the positive and 'blooming' sides of motherhood are stressed. A kind of shift from yin to yang...

The exaltation of maternity has resulted in the desire to show proudly one's curves. Not only are the blooming bellies no longer hidden, but they have become accentuated by scarves rolled around the womb.

### **The gentle art of bonding with the unborn child...**

As a result of the invasion of psychology in education, in the early sixties, a kind of *taikyô* (胎教), or antenatal training has become fashionable these days, so as to bond through 'play' and communication with the unborn child. All these aspects are to be found in new fields such as *haptonomie* and *sophrologie* and, to a lesser extent, in yoga especially tailored for the expectant mother<sup>11</sup>.

*Haptonomie*, which originates from the Greek word *hapsis*, to feel and *nomos*, law, is defined by the Dutchman Frans Veldman, who introduced it to France with great success, as being *une science de l'affectivité et du contact psycho-tactile* (a science dealing with affectivity and psycho-tactile contact<sup>12</sup>). The advantages are said to be numerous, but perhaps the most valued benefit is to associate and commit the father with the birthing process. Instead of being merely a spectator (as was the case with the psycho-prophylactic birthing method introduced by the Swiss Doctor Lamaze), he becomes an actor with the specific role of helping the mother to '*be with the child*', and detach herself from the pain of labor. The appealing side of this method is also to enable the couple to give birth to the baby *by themselves*, painlessly and without medication. This method is also supposed to prevent Caesareans, and to help switch on the bonding process as soon as the baby is born.

One of the leading French advocates for *haptonomie* is the *haptothérapeute*, Doctor Catherine Dolto-Tolitch, whose work is in line

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11 See for example *Le yoga de la femme enceinte*, by Dennis Boyes, éditions de l'Epi, 1980. See also, *Le coeur au ventre*, entretien avec Stella Cohen (who is a yoga instructor specialized in preparing pregnant women for delivery), in, *La mère* (Mother), Autrement, #90, May 1987, p.159-162.

12 See: *Haptonomie - science de l'affectivité*- PUF 1989 (translated from Dutch). See also chapter V (Voyage au centre de la mère) in, *Le bébé est une personne*, where Frans Veldman demonstrates his skills. See also, *Haptonomie : toucher c'est parler*, *Enfants Magazine* # 173, Jan. 1991. L'école des foetus, tu seras un surhomme mon fils..., *Le Nouvel Observateur*, L'haptonomie : une spécialiste vous répond, *Femme Actuelle*, # 314, Oct. 1-7, 1990, p.10-11, Haptonomie: communiquer avec son bébé par le toucher, *Parents*, April 1991, p.32-36.

with that of her mother, Françoise Dolto, who played a leading role in introducing psychology in child-rearing practices.

Launched in 1976 by a Spanish neuropsychiatrist, Doctor Caycedo, *sophrologie* (a word he created himself from the greek words *sōs* : harmony, serenity and *phrên* : psyché, soul, and *logos* : science) is a non-medically, assisted-delivery with the husband's help, but it lays more emphasis on relaxation, through meditation, borrowing breathing methods both from Eastern yoga and from the West.

Other birthing methods are supposed to be 'more intense' than Lamaze's psycho-prophylactic method. In his best-seller, *Pour une naissance sans violence*<sup>13</sup>, Frédérick Leboyer, the so-called *poète accoucheur* (obstetrician poet), recommends natural and soothing birthing methods to welcome the new-born. Michel Odent<sup>14</sup> suggests a 'rereading of Leboyer', focusing more on the mother he has been accused of neglecting while adding a new option for her, which is to deliver inside a pool. All these methods favor natural birthing suppressing the need for an epidural.

### **The background of child-rearing and child-rearing practices**

The new trend in child-rearing should be defined as the introduction and popularization of psychology. The reason Spock, who remains the symbol of the turning point in the fifties, was well received in France, is probably due to the fact that his ideas coincided with the younger generation's strong desire to react against the education it had received, which Alice Miller describes as 'poisonous pedagogy'<sup>15</sup>.

Before Spock, French child-rearing practices had been influenced, by Adolph Pinard (1844-1934) whose fame is mostly linked with the introduction of *l'éducation pastorienne* (child-rearing practices influenced by Pasteur). His main goal was to reduce the high infant

<sup>13</sup> Seuil editions, 1980.

<sup>14</sup> See, *Bien naître*, Seuil, 1976, Michel Odent used to work in Pithiviers, a suburb of Paris.

<sup>15</sup> In, *For your Own Good*, Farrar.Straus.Giroux, New-York, 1983.



Comic strip illustrating 'l'éducation pastorienne' used by the Ministry of Health to educate women and help reduce infant mortality. (In, Antoine Prost, *Histoire générale de l'enseignement et de l'éducation en France*, Vol. IV, l'école et la famille dans une société en mutation, (1930-1980), Nouvelle Librairie de France, 1981, p.71.

Pour faire passer dans les milieux populaires les règles les plus importantes de la pasteurisation pastorienne, le ministre de la Santé utilise entre les deux guerres l'image en couleur ici, la stérilisation des biberons. Mais c'est le geste qui compte, et il se veut impératif.

mortality rate (16% at the beginning of the twentieth century, 7% to 8% in the thirties and nine out of a thousand in 1993). He had to struggle with the lack of hygiene which had much to do with the lack of running water facilities inside the households, not to mention French provincial traditions hard to break in the countryside. At the beginning of the twentieth century, doctors wanted to be completely in control, their knowledge being 'scientific', as opposed to the more empirical methods still popular among the less educated strata of the population. Until then, education strongly emphasized the *dressage* aspect, of child-raising, i.e. the need to *discipline* or to *tame* a child, in a very similar way one tames a little animal. As the Vice-Admiral de Penfentenyo, father of 14 children, writes in 1940<sup>16</sup> : "The dressage, which is the basis

<sup>16</sup> in his *Manuel du père de famille* (Father's Manual), prefaced by Marshal Pétain.



*of a good education, should start on the first day*". He also strongly advises to let the baby howl its head off, promising that within two days time, it will have fully understood<sup>17</sup>. "*His first tantrum will not have worked, de Penfentenyo writes, and from then on your authority will emerge*".<sup>18</sup>

Between Pinard and Spock, tremendous changes in living conditions occurred. When all houses did not have central heating, one had to keep the baby's body as warm as possible, by using the *maillot*<sup>19</sup>, of which the *langes*<sup>20</sup> (swaddling clothes) are a remainder. French mothers' persistence to put their babies on a potty as early as 3 or 4 months, was also due to the lack of disposable diapers. Not having washing machines also meant the mothers had to hand-wash the household laundry, including the diapers. Thanks to the development of the textile industry, extensible materials such as *babygros*, became perfectly adjusted to the baby's body, keeping it nice and warm while allowing it to move freely.

### **Laurence Pernoud & Françoise Dolto : two French stars**

In spite of the tremendous number of books written on child-care, the two French stars are undeniably Laurence Pernoud and Françoise Dolto, their common denominator being the part they both took in introducing popular psychology into French child-rearing practices. Pernoud is proud to point out that her two longest running best-sellers have been updated every year since they were launched in 1965<sup>21</sup>. She was granted a medical award (*l'ordre des médecins*), but the fact that

17 Still in the early fifties, the author's cot was put at night in the kitchen, a place far enough to prevent the household from being disturbed.

18 Quote from, Antoine Prost, *Histoire générale de l'enseignement et de l'éducation en France* (tome IV), *l'école et la famille dans une société en mutation* (1930-1980), ed. Nouvelle Librairie de France, 1981, p.62.

19 An example of which is to be found in Georges de La Tour's (1593-1652) masterpiece *Le Nouveau-né* (The Newborn) presently in the Musée des Beaux-Arts in Rennes.

20 Still to be seen in Laurence Pernoud's list of layette.

21 *J'attends un enfant* (I Am Expecting) and *J'élève mon enfant* (I Raise my Child), Horay editions, of which ten million copies had been sold in 1992.



Laurence Pernoud's long-run best seller since 1965 for the expectant mother



Laurence Pernoud's long run best seller since 1965 on child-care

she is neither a pediatrician, nor a physician, but a psychologist clearly demonstrates the pre-eminence of psychology over the medical aspect of child-rearing practices. Pernoud and Dolto are said to have greatly contributed to debunking psychology, a 'sin' for which some professionals in the field are unlikely to forgive them.

### **Laurence Pernoud**

As Antoine Prost points out, Pernoud was a pioneer in the sixties, even if what she wrote might appear commonplace nowadays. Greatly influenced by Spock whose theories she has adjusted to the French public, Pernoud can be defined as being semi-permissive. She contributed to the dedramatizing of child-rearing practices. Not only did she explain to parents that many habits they were afraid their child might develop were not dangerous but perfectly normal, she assured them that each child would regulate his/her own rhythm and pace.

Although this so-called *nouvelle puériculture* (new child-rearing

practice) has been said to rid parents of guilt feelings, it is also extremely tough on them, because parents become entirely responsible, not only for the health and the well-being of their offspring, but also for their entire emotional balance and happiness.

One third of Pernoud's book is devoted to the terrible psychological devastations to be expected from the lack of love. As she states: *"The characteristics of this century is to have realized that the child's need for love equals that of vitamins...* She also states that *"without love, an adult may be sad but stays 'normal', but that a child without love becomes quickly abnormal because it loses the desire to thrive or to progress"*. As Pernoud puts it, *"When the baby is ready to smile, it needs someone willing **to receive it's smile**"*. When her book was first published in 1965, she certainly was a pioneer.



### **The Dolto phenomenon (1909-1988)**

Nearly two decades after her death, one still talks about the Dolto phenomenon because her impact and fame certainly are equal to Lacan's. In spite of 40 years of practice as a psychoanalyst in various children's hospitals in Paris, she only became famous at 67 years,

twelve years before her death. She fully believed in children, and the backbone of her theory results from talking to them, answering all their questions and never hiding anything from them, nor cheating them in any way. In dealing with spanking, for example, Dolto says it only serves to take the steam out of the spanker. She advises the mother to talk afterwards to the child, explaining to him/her that his/her mother was tired, stressed or overworked, and that she couldn't help spanking him/her, but that retrospectively, she hated, regretted or was ashamed of her deed. Dolto reassured parents, saying that children were always willing to forgive them, so talking afterwards couldn't erase what had been done but could, at least help straighten things out. Dolto repeated over and over that children needed to be told the truth, not only because they had the instinct to understand it, but because they deserved it, as *human beings*. Not only must an adopted child know that his/her parents are not his/her biological parents, but he/she deserves to know it at once, even if he/she is still an infant. Her *leitmotiv* was also that the baby is a person<sup>22</sup> and that it deserved to be treated as such. As has been written in Dolto's obituary, she has greatly contributed to replace the image of the *bébé animal* (i.e. the baby treated like a pet or merely considered a 'digestive tract'). She dared say for example that child-rearing in France, had been conceived roughly 'the same way as poultry is bred !'<sup>23</sup>. By using the concept of *bébé personne*, the baby is considered to be a *human being*, who thrives to communicate and whose intelligence is constructed through this medium<sup>24</sup>. In doing so, Dolto has originated a revolution which is said to have had the scale of a 'cultural revolution'.

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<sup>22</sup> It is her statement that Bernard Martino borrowed for the title of his book *Le bébé est une personne*, Balland, 1985.

<sup>23</sup> In, *Autoportrait d'une psychanalyste (1934-1988)*, (Self-portrait of a psychoanalyst), Seuil, 1989, p.169.

<sup>24</sup> See *L'Express*, #1939, Sept. 8, 1988.

### **The Dolto charisma**

It has been said that Dolto specialized in psychoanalysis the same way as a priest enters religion. Not only was she extremely committed to children and to her job, but her warm personality, which made her look like the grandmother everybody craved for, greatly appealed to the public. Parents feeling at a loss and/ or out of control deeply longed for wisdom which used to be passed on from one generation to another. Ironically, they were the ones who had so strongly reacted against their parents who came for advice, although Dolto's answers had nothing to do with what their parents would have said in the same situation.

### **The popularity of *madame soleil*<sup>25</sup> and / or of a disk-jockey**

Dolto's charisma was established in 1976 after she was granted air time to answer parents' problems on France's national radio (France



Françoise Dolto's answers on air

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<sup>25</sup> Madame Soleil was a popular astrologer, answering questions on radio programs in the sixties.

Inter) for ten minutes a day. In spite of her growing popularity<sup>26</sup>, she was suddenly dismissed, “with the same concern one would have dismissed a disk-jockey”<sup>27</sup>. Another aspect of her charisma had a lot to do with her talent as a narrator. She strongly resented analysts but it is said that her magic wand was definitely Freudian theory. Dolto’s way of being revolutionary was to resist the experts’ obscure theories and to lower it’s application to everybody’s level. She criticised Lacan for his complex theories, but after she told him that she didn’t understand a word of what he was theorizing, he told her that she was actually putting into practice all his theories. Although she was obviously versed in the psychoanalytical theory, her fame was due to her *‘inspired intuitions’*, and to her strong impulse to always find positive aspects in any situation. What mostly appealed to the public was her intuitive perception of the child.

Dolto’s critics were mostly men who, resenting her fame, accused her of having generated a *‘doltomania syndrome’* and of being responsible for the parents’ *laxisme branché* (fashionable/ affected laxity). Her critics also accused her of having generated des *bébés doltoïsés* (‘undomesticated brats’, see caricature). This may be why her last writings strongly reacted against permissive attitudes.

Before being famous, Dolto had the reputation of being crazy. Her fellow psychoanalysts even called her *la folle* (the mad one). She confessed of having suffered from being marginal. Considering that she was born in 1909, she was extremely ahead of her time and therefore appeared rather disturbing. Dolto did not hide the fact that her values were far from her parents’.

Dolto had a tremendous impact on the mental care of the orphans in

<sup>26</sup> Her Q & A have been published in three volumes under the title, *Lorsque l'enfant paraît*, ed. Seuil, 1977, 1978, 1979.

<sup>27</sup> In *l'Express* magazine, *op.cit.*



the state orphanages (la DASS), on abused children and on children of divorced families<sup>28</sup>. She strongly recommended that the juridical language be reformed, stating that 'parental *authority*' should be replaced by 'parental *responsibility*' and that the so-called *right* to see one's children' ought to be replaced by the *duty* to see one's children. She also pleaded in favor of asking the children with which of his/her parents he/she thought he/she could grow in a better way<sup>29</sup>.

It is difficult to say whether popular psychology has adapted itself to the social trends of society or if social trends have answered the *need* for psychology, but one might say that in spite of its popularity, popular psychology has had to cope with the current illness the French family suffers from. There has been a dramatic increase in the number of divorces<sup>30</sup>, resulting in three million children having divorced parents, not to mention the increasing number of blended families or single parent households.

Leading psychologists such as Dolto had to adjust to the situation, and instead of trying to prevent the inevitable, all they could do was to soothe the child's increasing burden. The same tendency is also to be found surrounding the debate on working mothers. After warning them about the evils of letting go of their children too early, psychologists and/ or pediatricians have had to adjust to the mother's strong desire to work outside. "*If the mother cannot bear to stay home*, comments Dolto who would rather see her stay home for the first three years of her child's life, *then let her go to work !*" All Dolto could do was to side with Brazelton who stressed the notion of '*quality care*'<sup>31</sup>. Could it be that French women's determination to work overcame the impact of

<sup>28</sup> See for example, *Quand les parents se séparent* (When parents split), Seuil, 1988.

<sup>29</sup> "*Avec lequel de ses parents il pense pouvoir le mieux grandir*".

<sup>30</sup> Presently one couple out of three (one out of two in Paris) are divorced.

<sup>31</sup> See for example, *Working and Caring*. A Merloyd Lawrence Book, Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, Inc. 1983.



psychology?

### **Why has it become so difficult to raise a child ?**

Recently, the French pediatrician Aldo Naouri<sup>32</sup> observed that at the beginning of his practice, in the mid sixties, parents used to bring him children, asking him to help them thrive, but that today they ask him to help them raise a balanced child<sup>33</sup>.

The famous *pédopsychiatre*, (child psychiatrist) Marcel Rufo echoes his opinion, stating that when he was doing his medical internship he would treat infant sicknesses such as dehydration, but that “*now that all children are beautiful, tall and in good shape, parents are asking themselves, “Will he/she be intelligent/clever/sharp ? Will he/she be happy ?”*” A pediatrician has no answer to these questions, admits Aldo Naouri. He says that he could barely pay attention to what the parents had to say, and to the way they expressed themselves before trying to cure the child. This is how he came to realize that the body was expressing what could not be said in any other way. For this reason, one could consider him a pioneer of the *pédopsychiatrie* (child psychiatry).

Marcel Rufo<sup>34</sup> also warns against the religion of ‘happiness by all means’. Similarly Boris Cyrulnik warns parents against what he calls ‘the stress to be happy’ (*le stress du bonheur*), advising them to give their children a chance to be bored. Armelle Le Bigot’ head of the ABC society (*former Institut de l’Enfant*), who claims to be a psychosociologist, deplors that children are not allowed (i.e. given time) to dream anymore. Another *pédopsychiatre*, Daniel Marcelli reminds us

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32 Author of, *Une place pour le père*, Seuil, 1985, *Parier sur l’enfant*, Seuil, 1988, *Les filles et leurs mères*, Odile Jacob, 1998, *Réponses d’un pédiatre*, Odile Jacob, 2004.

33 Communication made during a symposium about fatherhood and motherhood (“Mère” Père”- où en est-on ?) in Tokyo at the Institut Franco Japonais, 7 December 2002.

34 Author of, *Œdipe toi-même! : Consultations d’un pédopsychiatre*, Anne Carrière, 2000, *Frères et sœurs, une maladie d’amour*, Fayard, 2003, *Tout ce que vous ne devriez jamais savoir sur la sexualité de vos enfants*, Anne Carrière, 2003, etc.

that, not so long ago, the child's sole purpose in life was to succeed in his father's business, and that it was much easier to become a blacksmith than to become happy.



In a much debated book<sup>35</sup>, Evelyne Sullerot warns parents about the dramatic damage that the family in turmoil might have (or already has had) on the child. She speaks about a delayed-action bomb, and instead of *recompositions familiales* (blended families), she talks about *décompositions familiales* (family decomposition). Sullerot underlines the point that there are no happy divorces for children, and that the children who are born out of wedlock are even more fragile because their parents are more prone to split than if they were married.

A problem resulting from the present situation is that parents, who do not believe any longer that their love will be eternal, tend to cling to their children, in a very possessive and addictive way. Referring to single mothers' overprotection, the *pédopsychiatre* and psychoanalyst Caroline Eliacheff even speaks of '*platonic incest*'<sup>36</sup>.

<sup>35</sup> *Le grand remue-ménage* (The Great Chaos), Fayard, 1997.

<sup>36</sup> Coauthor with the sociologist Nathalie Heinich of, *Mères et filles : une relation à trois* (Mothers and daughters : a triangular relation), Albin Michel, 2002.



The child king : survey on spoiled children (Le Point Magazine, 14 December 2001)

In her book *Peut-on être une bonne mère ?* (Is it Possible to be a Good Mother ?)<sup>37</sup>, the psychoanalyst Christiane Olivier accuses the parents of being too narcissistic in their child-rearing practices. She says that, it is as though they were answering their *own* needs, while pretending they were answering their *children's* needs. In *Enfants rois, plus jamais ça !* (So much for despot children !)<sup>38</sup>, Christiane Olivier says that not only are parents not bringing their offspring real happiness when they spoil them, but that they are frustrating them from growing up, «*because a child who has had every one of his/her desires fulfilled is bound to become psychotic*».

In his book, *L'enfant, chef de la famille* (The Child, Head of the Family Household)<sup>39</sup>, the *pédopsychiatre* Daniel Marcelli warns parents against the danger of compensating family dysfunctions by giving material goods or by granting the child too much weight in the decision-making process, putting him/her at the head of the household. In, *De l'enfant roi à l'enfant tyran* (From King to Tyrant Children<sup>40</sup>), the

<sup>37</sup> Fayard, 2000.

<sup>38</sup> Albin Michel, 2002.

<sup>39</sup> Albin Michel, 2003.

<sup>40</sup> Odile Jacob, 2002.

clinical psychologist Didier Pleux advises the parents *'to take the risk of being hated'*. Marcelli also speaks of *désamour momentané de l'enfant* (a temporary loss of the child's love), before stating *"what parents fear more than anything else is to jeopardize their children's love"*. But, reassures Christiane Olivier, *"if you punish them, they will love you all the more"*!

*"When Françoise Dolto said that the child is a human being,"* says the psychoanalyst Danielle Dalloz, author of *Où commence la violence ?* (From where does violence start?),<sup>41</sup> she meant *a person to be (une personne en devenir)*, who needs boundaries and limits. *"Yes the child may be a person, but he/she remains a "small" person who is not supposed to be a tyrant"*. In, *Vos enfants ne sont pas des grandes personnes* (Your Children Are Not Adults)<sup>42</sup>, the clinical Psychologist Béatrice Copper-Royer, also stresses the fact that never has Dolto meant that parents should rely on their children to support them emotionally, the same way a friend would. *"Stop being afraid of your children!"*, echoes the psychiatrist and family therapist Jacques-Antoine Malarewicz, author of *"The Little Prince Syndrome"* (*Le complexe du Petit Prince*, Laffont 2003).

In an interview for *Le Monde*<sup>43</sup> Didier Pleux says that it is alright to be bored on Sundays, because if children don't learn to deal with frustration, parents are bound to breed parasites like Tanguy (the hero of Etienne Chatiliez's film, launched in 2001), unwilling to leave home to live by themselves.

*"Another reason one has to deal with frustration, says Marcelli, is that, unlike animals, men must learn not to jump on the first female to satisfy his sexual needs"*. Being unable to deal with frustration, also leads to addictive behaviors towards food, alcohol, drugs, tobacco, not to mention TV or computer games.

<sup>41</sup> *Pour une prévention chez le tout-petit*, Albin Michel, 2003.

<sup>42</sup> Albin Michel, 1999.

<sup>43</sup> 6-7 April 2003.

Freud might have said that whatever she will do, the mother will always be wrong. The demographer Louis Roussel gives us a piece to meditate on when he says that every society breeds the children it deserves.



\*

Image of the recent trend of 'parents copains' (parents as friends) and of the *kat* (a society which values youth above anything else) Launched in 1997, the brand Le Comptoir des cotonniers, boasts of using 'real' mothers and daughters for its campaigns and/or advertisements. Psychologists warn parents not to fall into the trap.  
\* *In*, Le Figaro, 15 mai 2003.