Karen Malone
Marek Tesar
Sonja Arndt

Theorising Posthuman Childhood Studies

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Children: Global Posthumanist Perspectives and Materialist Theories

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Marek Tesar, The University of Auckland, Auckland, New Zealand

Sonja Arndt, The University of Waikato, Hamilton, New Zealand

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Karen Malone · Marek Tesar · Sonja Arndt

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Karen Malone
School of Arts, Social Sciences
and Humanities
Swinburne University of Technology
Melbourne, VIC, Australia

Marek Tesar
Faculty of Education and Social Work
The University of Auckland
Auckland, New Zealand

Sonja Arndt
Melbourne Graduate School of Education
University of Melbourne
Melbourne, VIC, Australia

*This book is dedicated to our Planet Earth,
and all children and their childhoods.*

Posthuman Childhood Studies: An Introduction

The past decades have witnessed a significant growth of research, theories, frameworks and ideas that link the everyday, mundane lives of children in their communities with their local and global worlds. However, there are very few texts for researchers and students that track the trajectory towards the integration of posthuman and new materialist studies in relation to children and childhoods. It was our colleagues and students, who asked us to write this book in order to provide a foundation for recent shifts in understandings of agency, thinking, being and becoming at the local and global levels, in which established and new theories speak to the changing climate and global discourses about children and childhoods.

This book is a genealogical foregrounding and performance of conceptions of children and their childhoods over time. We acknowledge that children's lives are embedded in worlds both inside and outside of structured schooling or institutional settings, and that this relationality informs how we think about what it means to be a child living and experiencing childhood. This book maps the field by taking up a cross-disciplinary, genealogical niche, to offer both an introduction to theoretical underpinnings of emerging theories and concepts, and to provide hands-on examples of how they might play out. This book positions children and their everyday lived childhoods in the Anthropocene and focuses on the interface of children's being in the everyday spaces and places of contemporary communities and societies. In particular, this book examines how the shift towards posthuman and new materialist perspectives continues to challenge dominant developmental, social constructivist and structuralist theoretical approaches in diverse ways, to help us to understand contemporary constructions of childhood. It recognises that while such dominant approaches have long been shown to limit the complexity of what it means to be a child living in the contemporary world, the traditions of many Eurocentric theories have not addressed the diversity of children's lives in the majority of countries or in the Global South.

In this book, we develop the foundations for and explore children's lived, embodied everyday mundane experiences and encounters through theoretical lenses that elevate life as entangled with tangible objects and materials. These might include artefacts, toys, homes, educational settings, landscapes, animals, food and

the broader materiality of representational concepts and objects, such as popular culture, air, weather, bodies, relations, identities and sexualities. The book is attentive to the mundane everyday relationships, in between "what is" and "what could be", with objects and materials. To address some earlier omissions in Eurocentric theoretical conceptions, the book draws on, among others, Māori, Pasifika, Australasian and Global South views of children, childhood and growing up. It provokes thinking beyond historically dominant and colonising views in contemporary Western and non-Western realities.

Aims and Intentions

The aim of this book is to combine and perform theories and philosophies that build understandings through everyday anecdotes of children's lives. In doing so, we draw on both text and digital media accounts of children, and also use and analyse artefacts constructed by and about children found in contemporary societies. Through these cross-disciplinary theoretical insights our intention is to elevate the complexity of children's everyday lives from a variety of perspectives, to encourage diverse understandings and deconstructions of research about children and how it constructs and positions children in certain ways. We contest universalising views of children's lives by exploring differences as well as similarities. Overall, we position the question of what it means to be a child within the broader story of the planet and the impending implications of the Anthropocene, and the contemporary conditions of the human and more-than-human world.

This book is intended to support both those new to the field of childhood studies and posthuman studies of childhoods, and established researchers in the study of children and childhoods. In 1998, James, Jenks and Prout offered their text *Theorizing Childhood* as a quintessential "go to" immersion into theorising children and childhoods through a new sociological lens. In this sense, the aim of this book is also pedagogical as it offers a posthuman response within educational thought to contemporary theorisations of childhoods arising from James, Jenks and Prout's positioning. Like *Theorizing Childhood*, this book continues to demonstrate "the centrality of childhoods in sociological theory and contemporary debates". Rather than rejecting sociology and the human, it builds on, re-articulates and offers new formulations of the anthropocentric and post-anthropocentric contexts of children's lives and experiences with and beyond human-centric ways of knowing and being.

We position this book as a critical bridge that connects historical studies and philosophies of children and their childhoods with contemporary scholarship and research. We acknowledge the important and ongoing contributions to the field, by recent work in areas such as children's geographies and environments (for instance, Kraftl's 2020 text *After Childhood*) or agency and nature (for instance, Taylor &

Pacini-Ketchabaw's 2019 work on Common Worlds), to name just a few. We hope that scholars and students across fields and disciplines will both benefit and gain inspiration from this book. We hope that, as a "critical bridge" and foundational text, this book offers new insights into a field that is continually evolving in new and previously unimaginable ways.

Book Overview

The book is presented in nine chapters and concludes with a glossary. Each chapter complements the others, as they develop a posthuman narrative mapping the shifting terrain and shifting from one chapter to the next. Chapter 1 emphasises the importance of re-reading the history of the philosophy of the child and childhoods. It traces the application of philosophical perspectives in contemporary child subjects as they are shaped by discursive and material aspects of this world. In this chapter, we argue for re-reading philosophical texts with a focus on childhood studies and children's education, and suggest that such a reading offers an insight into aspects of the classic texts that serve as a useful genealogical foundation on which to build our engagement and understanding of thinking with/on posthuman childhoods. Chapter 2 discusses the conceptual turn to the new sociology of childhood, to which we owe the attention to the child as a subject and the rethinking of what is childhood. This chapter unpacks key terms and serves as a precursor to posthuman childhoods. Chapter 3 with its multiplicities of theoretical perspectives portrays our thinking with theory, and introduces the Anthropocene and its impact as a contemporary context of childhoods. The first three chapters argue that new philosophies and concepts are needed to theorise children and childhoods in current times. They outline ways in which theoretical constructs can help to disrupt dominant or limiting constructions of children and their childhoods in order to make way for and deal in more nuanced ways with the complexities of children's lives. The first three chapters provide a necessary foregrounding of the state of the art of current thinking and scholarship.

Chapter 4 focuses on rethinking agentic childhoods situated in the Anthropocene and in uncertain times. This chapter disrupts conventional ontological views of childhoods where agency is held by humans, and often exclusively by adults, highlighting shifts from historical and sociological conceptions of agency from a rights-based perspective, and complicating conceptions with temporal and material complexities. Agency is theorised through a posthuman lens, as intra-relational, involving multiple human and nonhuman beings or forces. Recognising that children's agentic relations with the world are not new, but are always already there, the chapter offers a rethinking of children's agency within the posthuman turn. Chapter 5, on relational childhood natures, explores alternative pedagogies that support posthuman paradigms at this time of the Anthropocene, where we seek to expand our sense of ourselves with nature rather than outside of nature. The chapter tracks a range of ways to think about humans and their encounters, relations and response-ability

with the nonhuman world, and how they underlie different ways of considering children, childhood and pedagogies. This chapter continues to encourage the reader to make connections and ask questions, about the human/nonhuman relations as open enough to create new conceptual spaces that cater for children's contemporary experiences, while grounded in and moving on from the theoretical and philosophical foundations outlined earlier. Chapter 6, on entangling materials, curriculum and objects, takes further the notion of children's agency by re-reading New Zealand's early childhood curriculum *Te Whāriki* through a posthuman lens. This chapter situates the concept of curriculum and other regulatory or policy documents within the discourses that are being elevated in this book, in terms of a reconceptualised sociological perspective on childhoods. It applies the concept of curriculum as a useful tool for rethinking childhoods through the materialities of people, places and things.

Chapter 7 further develops the openings created in Chap. 6, by placing a posthuman lens on children's learning environments. In conceptualising children's learning environments through this lens, this chapter questions linear expectations and hierarchies of learning environments, promoting a sense of openness to the complexities of the relationalities at work in children's everyday situations and places. By reworking, rethinking and returning diverse conceptualisations of children's learning environments, the chapter opens to seeing learning environments as always affected and complicated by the powers of things and forces in and beyond the human. Chapter 8 builds on Chapter 7's focus on children's entangled realities with and in the world. It places a posthuman lens on children's lives and their affective relationships with human and nonhuman entities and things. The chapter provokes thinking beyond language, discourse and culture to reconsider the affective nature and influences of matter and materialities in children's lives. A dominant focus on language illustrates the reliance on social constructivist views, driving the chapter's aim to blur boundaries, and turn our thinking towards children's performances of their lives in multifaceted, more-than-linguistic, more-than-discursive and more-than-cultural ways.

In Chapter 9, we map how the posthuman and new materialist philosophical and methodological shifts and framings developed throughout this book have changed engagements with researching the child and contemporary childhoods. This final chapter reconnects to Chap. 1, by adding a further exploration of using philosophy as a method of inquiry, that takes us into the kinds of complications that adding a posthuman lens to researching children and childhoods might entail. The chapter offers a range of perspectives on what this could mean, affirming the value of philosophical thought as a crucial grounding of posthuman research paradigms. Following the trajectory of researching on, about and with children and their childhoods, this chapter revisits some of the earlier conceptions of children as immature, to build up to contemporary thought on researching with and by the child, through a posthuman focus.

The book concludes with an Annotated Glossary which outlines the (sometimes contested) ways in which particular words or concepts have been used in this book. The glossary gives insights into particular meanings applied in our approach to

collective thinking about children and childhoods through posthuman and new materialist lenses. We trust that this book will serve as a framing of histories and shifts that have led to current conceptions of childhoods, and that its genealogical approach will provoke lively engagements in discussions and conversations with those new to the field and well-established scholars whose work we humbly honour and draw on, with colleagues, with us and with children. We are exceptionally thankful to all of our students, colleagues, reviewers and thinkers who have, over the years of writing this book, provided us with critical and supportive feedback.

Finally, and by way of an opening, we lead into the book with a poem, illustrating the thingness and the materiality of objects that draw us in. This poem evolved from an encounter with an oyster shell and leads us to thinking in the co-relational ways that we elevate in terms of children's relations with and in their worlds throughout this book. The shell was located in a midden site, possibly used by Aboriginal people for cutting, or that is what it felt like, in this sensorial encounter. This shell, like this book, is a bridge between historical and present ways of being.

Fingertips running along edges
Wanting for penetrating skin, drawing blood
Teatree smells playing on an ocean breeze
Sand and shell grit between toes

Thumb knows its place
Slipping effortlessly into a worn groove
Cutting through the air
Tracing a ghostly shadow

Lost tracks and traces
Buried deep beneath the earth
Revealing secrets
Troubled in unruly graves

Wind swept cliffs
Moving towards the future
Straight ahead
Don't look back to the past

Promises of modernity
Languish in spiralling ecologies
Who were you?
What have you become?

Author Karen Malone 2018

Oyster shell found by the ocean close to a midden site of the Boonwurrung people, Kulin Nation, Mornington Peninsula, Victoria. *Source and Photo credit* Karen Malone

    We hope that readers will enjoy and take inspiration from this book. Taking up a posthuman lens not only shifts how we experience the world and our relationships with/in it, but deeply implicates us all in the ethical imperative of being and becoming as an ongoing, often uncertain process in the world. This book shares what we hope will be a step further in this process.

Melbourne, Australia   Karen Malone
Auckland, New Zealand   Marek Tesar
June 2020   Sonja Arndt

Contents

Chapter 1
History and Philosophy of Children and Childhoods

Abstract Outlining the complex relationship between childhood studies, philosophy and education, this chapter maps the story of the child and childhood, from a non-biological and non-medical perspective tracing philosophical perspectives over time. In the chapter, we interweave conceptions of the child subject with the philosophy and history of education, acknowledging the instrumental and important role these disciplines play and perform in shaping views on the child, childhoods and children's educational futures. While illustrating how particular historical views on children and childhoods can help us to understand their lives and realities, the chapter foregrounds philosophical and theoretical perspectives. It considers how they are useful foundations to challenge and elevate contemporary understandings of children as subjects, and their relationships with both discursive and material aspects of this world. This chapter serves as a theoretical foundation for the concepts and shifting positions in childhood studies towards a posthuman lens.

Keywords History of childhoods · Philosophy of childhoods · History of education · Childhood studies

We start this book with a chapter that outlines the long, winding, complex relationship between childhood studies, philosophy and education. Mapping the story (or genealogy) of the child and childhood, narrated from a non-biological and non-medical perspective through philosophy, is not a straightforward task. As we examine the past, we will interweave the story of the child subject with the philosophy and history of education, acknowledging the instrumental and important role these disciplines play and perform in shaping the child subject, childhoods and children's educational futures. The first chapter of this book illustrates how particular historical philosophical perspectives on children and childhoods can help us to understand their lives and realities. At the same time, the chapter demonstrates the application of philosophical and theoretical perspectives as useful foundations that challenge and elevate contemporary understandings, of children as subjects and their relationships with both discursive and material aspects of this world. This chapter serves as a

theoretical foundation for the concepts and shifting positions in childhood studies that this book engages with.

The philosophy of childhood can potentially rupture and offer alternative ways of thinking and being in relation to the established ways of governing and resulting productions of childhoods in diverse educational settings. The figure and purpose of the child include many diverse categories, and often is subjected to institutional terms of reference that are both ontologically and epistemologically problematic. Challenging the boundaries of what it means to be a child and an adult, of childhood and adulthood as categories, is what philosophy ponders, as a disciplinary possibility for theorising and disrupting these categories at all ontological, epistemological and ethical levels. These terms—children and childhoods—are not only contested and challenged through philosophy: as Matthews (1994) argues, to understand the philosophy of childhood is perhaps to understand philosophy itself. He argues further in his book *Philosophy of Childhood* that something that portrays and encourages any form or shape of a relationship with childhood: "any developmental theory that rules out, on purely theoretical grounds, even the possibility that we adults may occasionally have something to learn, morally, from a child is, for that reason, defective; it is also morally offensive" (p. 67).

Philosophy of education and childhood has the capacity to shape and offer multiple discourses around children and their education and care (Peters & Tesar, 2018). However, the philosophy of children and childhood is often considered to be a contested notion. The epistemology and ontology of childhood education is tightly connected with the history of philosophy itself, as well as with the history of children as subject and their childhood as a construct (Tesar, 2015; Tesar & Arndt, 2019b). Understanding and interrogating the very idea of childhood from a philosophical perspective relies on historical collaborations and philosophical tensions that underlie the theories of education and practice of pedagogy (Tesar, Rodriguez, & Kupferman 2016).

This chapter argues for a re-reading of philosophical texts in relation to childhood education and childhood studies (James, Jenks, & Prout, 1998; Stables, 2008). This re-reading utilises the notions of "children" and "childhoods" as a lens through which we approach classic texts. We note, that in this chapter we will portray European white male philosophers as the dominant contributors to the philosophy of childhood. However, throughout the book we will also highlight why this is problematic (see, for example, Chap. 5). John Locke's and Jean-Jacques Rousseau's well-known philosophies of the rational and free child, respectively, together with Thomas Hobbes' view on childhood, are critical in shaping our current understanding of the child as well as the response from the society. Comenius, a Czech philosopher, known in Central Europe as Jan Amos Komensky, is considered to be one of the most important seventeenth-century enlightenment philosophers, on which "modern" education was shaped. Comenius had a strong focus on the notion of common languages and emphasised the notion of universal schooling, and the origins of progressive education can be traced back to his scholarly writing. Comenius also published what is now often considered to be the first philosophical text focused directly on young children, *The School of Infancy* (1631). Other important philosophers whose focus

was on the education of children of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries were the Swiss Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi and German Fredrich Froebel, both of whom were immersed in the philosophy of the early years, and advocated particular pedagogies and teaching methods for young children. While Froebel is considered to be the founder of the "modern" notion of kindergartens, Pestalozzi utilised many notions from Comenius' theory and philosophy, exploring pedagogy and methods that were relevant to and at different times implemented in numerous educational settings. As such, the story of philosophy and education is in these instances quite pedagogical, focused on the treatment of the child as a problem—to shape, to change, to mould, to educate—and different perspectives regarding whether the ideal was to maintain the status quo or to create a better educational future for all.

These philosophical theories and pedagogies have foregrounded much of our contemporary thinking and as such have opened up discussions around children and their childhoods (Tesar, 2017a). Historian of childhood, Hugh Cunningham (2006), argues that childhoods are invented and not universal, across time, cultures and societies:

> We don't all agree on when childhood begins. At conception? At birth? At some point beyond babyhood? And we certainly don't agree on when it ends. At puberty? When we leave school? When we leave home? When we cease to be financially dependent on our parents? When we are of an age to be criminally responsible, or to have sex, serve in the armed forces, buy alcoholic drinks or drive a car? (p. 14).

Philosophically, there has been an idea that childhood is in a way a performance of modernity: a modern invention to colonise, treat, mould and shape the notion of "childhood" as suits and serves the adults. In such a discourse, children's childhoods have become a product—an artefact in fact—of modernity. Such a modernist perspective and view on childhood was emphasised by French scholar, Philippe Ariès (1960), who wrote the text *Centuries of Childhood*. This, to date, remains one of the most seminal contributions to the history of childhoods, and one of the most compelling, despite a continued hesitation around Ariès' argument from some scholars. The debates his work have prompted have become a productive exercise in understanding the history and philosophy that was often forgotten, neglected and not considered important. What Ariès argued was the intention to shift the perception and the spotlight in thinking about childhood from the universal and top-down measures of prominent figures, towards the elevation of the experiential, more common day-to-day, mundane occurrences of childhoods, often ethnographic in nature, in subjective ideas, feelings, case studies on how human subjects understood themselves.

Ariès claimed that in medieval society there was no apparent child-centred approach and children were deemed in need of protection by the family. The structure of the family unit was very limited and children left home at a very young age, seen as so-called "little adults". There was no economy associated with children and their development, and as such, the line between the child and adult was extremely permeable. Furthermore, there were no services or agencies to support children. This is contradictory to the time of modernity, where a growing number of products and provisions were provided directly to, and for, children. In particular, the idea

of public, free and compulsory schooling cemented the way we understand children and their childhoods, and the way they are considered in contemporary times. Products such as children's toys, children's clothing and children's stories were virtually non-existent in medieval times. In short, as Ariès (1960) argues "in medieval society the idea of childhood did not exist" (p. 125).

To write this influential, yet controversial text, Ariès conducted methodical investigations of medieval archives, diaries, philosophies and any writings that focused on understandings of age or development in relation to children. Furthermore, the focus of his examination was any literature and artworks, including paintings and sculptures and children's clothes, games and play. All of these examinations in his studies pointed to the notion that in medieval times children were subjects performed and understood as miniature—or little—adults. As Ariès argued, "medieval art until the twelfth century did not know childhood or did not attempt to portray it" (p. 31). This view is reinforced, says Ariès, by the study of medieval children's clothing, which was generally simply smaller versions of what was fashionable for adults. For example, infants wore baby clothes that were generally the same for boys and girls, but at about the age of seven children moved on into smaller versions of adult outfits. This changed in the times of modernity, both within the educational institution and in the family. The ideas around public educational institutions, that define schooling, shape our understanding of childhood.

On the other hand, an American social thinker and scholar DeMause (1976) portrayed the history of childhood as times when children were abused, hurt, tortured and even killed—and different pathways of parenting and care were developed based on these experiences. De Mause argued that the care for a child, children's rights or welfare were not part of the public discourse in pre-modernity, and the child-centred approach, including a focus on well-being and community, and education and care, was only slowly starting to develop from the time of modernity. Similarly to de Mause, others have contested Ariès' perspective (Pollock, 1983), in particular, the notion that childhood did not exist during medieval times, and the idea that childhood is an invention of modernity. These critiques suggest that Ariès' work lacked any study of children, and that in order to make the claims that he did, he needed to address the real, actual parent–child relationships as they occurred in the medieval history, rather than relying on secondary ideas around childhoods. The other arguments from historians are that medieval times cannot be viewed as only cruel, that cruelty was not a form of "normality of mundane and everyday life", and that very strong sentiments over children existed in those times. The other critique, of a more methodological nature, is that Ariès' study was generally restricted to the very literate upper and middle classes, while omitting experiences of lower classes (not necessarily surprising given the scarcity of extant records and documents focused on the lower classes).

The idea of childhood was influenced in the nineteenth century, on the one hand, by the abolishment of child labour, and the rise of the importance and the political influence of schooling experiences for children, and on the other by the pressing need for children to be institutionalised in order to be governed. While poverty was still a significant contributor to the education and the experiences of children's lives,

the child-centred approach and policy as a way to mould and shape childhood were in place. The twentieth century has become known as the century of the child, and has had a very clear focus on family, interactions, education and care. This focus included an involvement of many agencies that are relevant and needed in a child's life.

Children and Childhoods

The notion of "childhood" cannot be considered outside of the realm of contemporary narratives. The concerns of what is childhood, and who is a child, have been part of longstanding philosophical debate. Many ontological and epistemological positions are present in these categories of children and childhood and are grounded in the contemporary conditions of the eras in which they were conceived. As such, when we talk about philosophy in current contemporary times we cannot avoid the contemporary time of the Anthropocene (Tesar, 2017b), which we will discuss in depth in this book (see Chap. 5). These conditions are, however, through some other notions, at a time when there is growing pressure on human subjects not to historicise, but rather greater and greater emphasis is placed on the implementation of an agenda of globalisation and related ideas that have and will, most likely, continue to managerialise and marginalise childhoods, in order to govern and police children and their childhood experiences, and argue for the best interests of the child.

Some of the strongest and most significant statements about children and childhoods are represented in the document *Convention on the Rights of the Child* (UNCRC) which the United Nations uses to frame its notion of the child (United Nations Human Rights, 1989). This document in many ways defines contemporary understandings of "the child". In Article 1, it defines the child, and his/her relationships with childhoods, as a young person under the age of 18 who has particular rights, related to his/her wishes, episteme, regardless of gender, abilities, ethnicity or race. Article 1 articulates the central idea relevant to both a philosophical and policy framework. These ideas disrupt policies focused on the idea of clear boundaries, and lead to uncertainty, using troubled language and definitions that benefit from in-depth examination through a philosophical lens. Philosophy acts as a method that questions what we—as adults—understand children and their childhoods to be (Tesar, 2016).

We base this book on an argument that all philosophy is somewhat relevant and important for the philosophy of children and childhood. Philosophy as a discipline becoming the field of philosophy of children and childhood allows for a potentially productive space, using work that could be otherwise, for instance, monopolised and labelled as "developmental", if not dangerous. Recognising philosophers for their contributions to the ideas, discourses and thoughts about children and childhoods is provocative and allows the further development of understandings of what it means to be a child, what is childhood, and raises questions and concerns around child-rearing. For instance, Swiss philosopher and psychologist Jean Piaget is one of the major personas in the philosophy of children and childhood (and developmental

psychology), whose work has been consistently considered by critical scholars as potentially detrimental to the child. Oppositional critiques in the postdevelopmental studies of childhood, in particular, have often positioned the work of Piaget as limiting. These views are considered more deeply in Chap. 2 where theories of childhoods are explored. However, beyond the critiques and under close reading, Piaget's work uncovers strong philosophical contexts and ethical currents that still have value in contemporary thinking. As Matthews (1994) states, parts and ideas, and particular contexts of Piaget's thinking are the basis of educational theory and ground us in a very important philosophical foundation to the contemporary childhood policy environment. Piaget's thinking, that has come to be labelled as developmentalism, has thus become just another philosophical proposition and wondering, both ontological and epistemological in nature. However, as has become clear in the past decades of policy decision-making, his thinking also carries very strong ethical implications and imperatives. Policies and pedagogies imbued with Piaget's legacy have become the mainstream grounding for Developmentally Appropriate Practice (DAP), one of the most common theoretical manifestations of policy for children and childhoods, including appropriate and desired behaviour management. DAP has caused and continues to lead to considerable tensions, resistance and even revolt among scholars, practitioners and activists.

The Evil, Rational and Free Child

As mentioned at the start of this chapter, several philosophers have significantly crafted and devoted their philosophical work to the subject of children and childhoods. In the seventeenth-century political writings of philosopher Thomas Hobbes, children were very unruly, and the role of adults—parents or teachers—was to respond to mind, to shape and to mould them. There was a clear need to control the child in Hobbes' work. Hobbes (2011) saw children as savage and, in a certain respect, as evil. These notions arose from the statement that all human subjects are born in original sin, and children need to be regulated and controlled, predominantly by their mother. English philosopher John Locke (1821), on the other hand, had a different philosophical stance: he considered children as subjects that were empty, and in his scholarship this argument functioned as the fabled tabula rasa (blank slate). Tabula rasa means that children required all input by adult subjects and was a view to be represented by the family and society alike. The result was that children could ultimately become productive subjects in society. Hence, Locke's version of child subjects was considered as dependent yet productive. There were no innate or other inherited natural capacities, and children must be always reminded and ever minded, a sense that was very much pushed and shaped by the parents and the society.

French philosopher and thinker Jean-Jacque Rousseau's version of the child and children also considered them to be very much dependent subjects, and in need of support and protection. However, the danger for him lay mainly in the dilemma that adult subjects, and those who govern children and childhoods, contribute to the

construction of the apparatus of control, production and invention of children—his view was that they serve, through parenting but mainly through education, primarily to corrupt the child and children and to remove their innocence and inherent goodness. Child subjects thus require protection from other subjects, and become very much in need of resistance from the powers that are there both to nurture and to develop them at the same time. In Rousseau's (1957) *Emile* he understands that childhood is a contested subject and clearly articulates that "[c]hildhood is unknown" (p. 33) and pursues this narrative in his analysis of human subjects' false search for the adult within the child. Rousseau critiques the view of children as "little adults" and argues that "[e]verything is good as it leaves the hands of the Author of things; everything degenerates in the hands of man" (p. 37). Thus, children in his work are innately uncorrupted and good, and very much positioned in harmony with nature. For him, it is the education that children receive from adult subjects (parents and teachers) that ultimately spoils and misshapes their development. The protection of a child subject from adult subjects is thus both a concern and a problem: as Rousseau accuses, adults "would gladly cripple them to keep them from laming themselves" (p. 43), which is caused, in his view, by adults' fear for (and distrust of) children. Rousseau protects children's rights: "[n]o one, not even the father, has a right to command the child what is not for his good" (p. 85). In Rousseau's view, children should first learn about their rights, and then about their duties (Fig. 1.1).

Fig. 1.1 Situating children in nature, Campus Creche, Hamilton, New Zealand. *Credit* Sonja Arndt

In Rousseau's logic, the entire institution of education is problematic: "[e]verything is folly and contradiction in human institutions" (p. 82). These institutions corrupt childhoods and their "natural inclinations" (p. 85). However, childhood is a specific construct, as Rousseau claims, it represents particular "ways of seeing, thinking, and feeling, which are proper to it" (p. 90). Finally, when he speaks to young teachers, and focuses on governing childhoods and children he advises teachers to do "everything by doing nothing" (p. 119). While Rousseau suggests that childhood is a specific time, he calls for careful consideration of methods and techniques; an emergent curriculum; knowledge of each individual child; an education without verbal lessons, where a child learns from his own experience and for a return to nature. The overarching concept that Rousseau portrays as essential in a child's education is freedom. However, it was not until the early twentieth century, in the work of the influential educational thinker Dewey's (1916) that the child was perceived as capable and imbued with a form of individual agency. While Dewey argued that any form of learning should be very clearly directed and purposeful, his work also clearly notes a shift in the subject positioning of the child subject, as one who should be managed, regulated, and that is at a very uncritical and unthinking stage of human development, that is often barely tolerated, or even subjugated.

Philosophy of Childhoods

Philosophy of childhoods is the philosophical study of children and childhood. This is in radical opposition to the traditional view of children as biological, growing children from infancy onwards, that are in perpetual development and thus ontologically incomplete. Similarly, philosophy of childhood challenges the simplistic view of the child as a victim ensconced in a reified time, space and era which exists out there and can be researched in laboratory conditions. The philosophical study of childhood thus challenges the established and dominant thinking about children and childhoods. As such, philosophy of childhood is conceptualised and understood as a field of applied philosophy and the theoretical study of childhoods at the same time. This positioning creates a particular dichotomy which draws from established branches of philosophy in epistemology, ethics, axiology and politics to raise and address questions of children and childhood issues, aims, methods and problems, and of associated children and childhood-related policy, pedagogy and curriculum. Like any field, it has multiple histories, approaches and models of practice. Philosophy of childhood is a diverse intellectual enterprise with roots going back to the great philosophers of the Western tradition, most of whom engaged with educational issues in some way, as well as to Indigenous thinking and child-rearing and Eastern philosophies.

From the outset, it is important to note that the Western education and philosophy of childhood has a well-established written history and related philosophical systems. However, this does not mean that non-Western or Indigenous philosophical systems are less ontologically or epistemologically developed. Western childhood education

and philosophy of childhood is "heliocentric", stemming from Greek philosopher Socrates, who conceived of education as inseparable from philosophy and politics, especially in the preparation of citizens (children). This idea has had a fundamental influence on young children and as such provides a foundation that is summarised in the Greek concept of *paideia*. *Paideia* denotes the transmission of cultural norms, in order to educate citizens of the polis in ways that lead to "the right way" or excellence. This idea of childhood education through *paideia* incorporates both theoretical and practical subject-based schooling, and includes the intellectual, physical and expressive act of education (in traditional historical terms of mostly boys or males).

The philosophy of childhood and children tends to draw on a rich philosophical history and points of connection with histories of and contemporary issues in education. Through the reading of classic texts of the Ancient, Medieval and Modern schools, philosophy of education and the field of childhood education can be characterised by successive and overlapping historical phases that "take turns". Perhaps, one such turn in the post–World War II era is the so-called analytic revolution in philosophy, and the institutionalisation of the field of childhood and childhood education, and as such the adoption of methods and approaches from analytic philosophy. As this chapter is more skewed to the Western tradition, it traverses the area of classical philosophy and the early modern periods to modernity (and post-areas). However, it is important to note that the term "classical" might also be considered in relation to Chinese, Indian and Arab classical texts.

Childhood education in the age of the Enlightenment centred on scientific principles and was held responsible for embodying and transmitting various ideals, including universal access and literacy, individual liberty and political unity (and separation of child and adult), that have largely influenced childhood and childhood education for decades. French philosopher Rene Descartes was one of the leading representatives who initiated a scientific revolution. He helped to define modernity as the search for certainty and defined a philosophy of subjectivity. His body of work influenced the way we consider children and childhood education through the prism of dualism. Major philosophers (some also before-mentioned) in the Early Modern period included Francis Bacon and John Locke, who pioneered British empiricism, Jean-Jacques Rousseau and his take on childhood and nature, and thinkers of the Scottish Enlightenment, principally David Hume, wrote specific texts or made occasional observations on education. Notable among the Enlightenment philosophers was German thinker Immanuel Kant. Kant's moral and political philosophy bequeathed a tradition that emphasised an ethics of autonomy as the basis of human freedom that trickled down to philosophy of children and childhoods.

In the early twentieth century, as we mentioned above, John Dewey was a figure of major importance and enduring influence, both in the first period of "progressive education", when he wrote *Democracy and Education* in 1916, and thereafter in the 1980s, when his work was revitalised, especially at the hands of another American philosopher Richard Rorty, who extended pragmatism through his treatment of naturalism, liberalism and ethnocentrism. English philosopher Richard Stanley Peters was one of the architects of the analytic revolution in philosophy, which was based on the "linguistic turn". He argued that it was the task of philosophers of education

to clarify key concepts of familiar and theoretical discourse. His work and that of his colleagues in the "London School" reinvented the tradition of liberal education. All of these thinkers and philosophers have helped to shape and define the study of childhood and children as a philosophical field. Their work is critical to shaping our understanding of childhoods and children as we both understand and contest them today.

Since the 1970s and 1980s, philosophy of childhood and children's education has become more diverse, with the development of socialised fields and new areas of interest that are based around subject, objects, arts, animals, geography, indigeneity and also politics. Political orientations such as feminism, multiculturalism, cosmopolitanism, citizenship education, and Indigenous and intercultural education have all recently shaped the field of childhoods, and as such the histories and diversities of the contemporary fields of childhood education and childhood studies.

Histories of Childhood Education

The fundamental question for philosophy of children and childhood is the concern of epistemology, ontology and ethics. Central questions revolve around the nature versus nurture debate; the possibilities of knowing and knowledge; and the question of the order, performance and potentials of ontological development. These enquiries are, of course, very important, as we may be asking questions, such as: What is the criterion for the constitution of knowledge? Who decides what knowledge is important? Who should have access to knowledge? How should knowledge be judged, changed or modified? Should all children have access to all knowledges, or should there be limits placed on who can be exposed to certain knowledge, and on when this exposure should take place? Questions of epistemology from the ancient Greeks onwards have also involved questions about ethics, and wider questions about the politics and discursive contours that shape different societies.

All of these questions relate to children and childhoods. Should knowledge be experienced though Dewey's progressive blending of the disciplines? The classical tradition revered abstract, universal forms of knowledge. The Enlightenment spoke to eternal truths about rational man as the fount of knowledge but separated experience from a priori forms of knowledge through Kant. Locke considered access to knowledge as integral to the maintenance and sustenance of the social contract, whereas Rousseau considered the polluting effects of society to sully the power of knowledge. All of this shapes and influences childhood and how we think about it. Have we reached a state of post-epistemology (knowledge) in the philosophy of education, as Peters and Burbules (2004) claim? In other words, we may ask, are we over Jean-François Lyotard's legitimation crisis in knowledge, or have we somehow reconciled the grand narratives of modernity in education of children with the small narratives of postmodernity?

The twentieth-century post-war context allowed for a flourishing of the analytic tradition, in which a liberal philosophy that draws very heavily on certain aspects