Available online

<http://lumenpublishing.com/journals/index.php/lumenss/index>

e-ISSN: 2458-1054; ISSN-L: 2284-5747

**Logos Universality Mentality
Education Novelty,
Section: Social Sciences
2017, Volume VI, Issue 2, December, pp. 47-49**

**About “A History of Childhood. Children in
the Western World in the Middle Ages”**

Ecaterina CROITOR

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.18662/lumenss.2017.0602.04>

Covered in:

Google Scholar; Index Copernicus;
Ideas RePeC; Econpapers; Socionet; CEEOL;
KVK; WorldCat; CrossRef; CrossCheck;
ERIH PLUS; J-Gate.

©2017 The Authors & LUMEN Publishing House.

Selection, peer review and publishing under the responsibility of
LUMEN Publishing House.

How to cite: Croitor, E. (2017). About “A History of Childhood. Children in the Western World in the Middle Ages”. *Logos Universality Mentality Education Novelty, Section Social Sciences, VI(2)*, 47-49. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.18662/lumenss.2017.0602.04>

About “A History of Childhood. Children in the Western World in the Middle Ages”

Ecaterina CROITOR¹

Abstract: The paper of Mr. Colin Heywood, titled “A History of Childhood. Children in the Western World in the Middle Ages” is about children and childhood, an incursion in the past and an invitation to examination in order to construct on scientific basis a social system which would offer optimal conditions for the physical, mental and social development of children. Historical and sociological perspectives are fascinating for the reader by employing accessible examples and language.

Keywords: child, childhood, social roles, supporting net.

“A History of Childhood. Children in the Western World in the Middle Ages” written by Colin Heywood, professor of Economic and Social History at the University of Nottingham, was published in 2017 at TREI Publishing House, translated by Ruxandra Visan from English. The book is edited by Silviu Dragomir- psychotherapist and Vasile Dem. Zamfirescu - psychoanalyst, professor, philosopher and writer, influenced by the writings of Constantin Noica, Friedrich Nietzsche, Sigmund Freud and Carl Gustav Jung. Probably the background of the two editors explains that the book was published under the theme “Psychology for everybody” although we can certainly assert that the historical, anthropological and sociological perspectives are dealt with the same complexity as the psychological and psychoanalysis perspectives.

There is no need to argue that we have all been children at the beginning of our life therefore at least some of the elements presented in this book are accessible to every reader, regardless of culture or professional background and we can involuntarily and with nostalgia or curiosity ask ourselves: “Was it the same in my childhood?”. The topic, one of major interest in all times (although from different perspectives), can be found in the Romanian or international literature in different works that bring to our attention the spiritual point (Dolto, F. ,2016), of view in bringing up children, the psycho-social perspective of a child’s (Cury, A., 2005), Children’s Rights (Hodgkin, R., Newell, P., 2004) or the manner in which we can construct a

¹ PhD, The Doctoral School of Sociology, University of Oradea, Email: ecaterina_croitor@yahoo.com.

new basis for education by developing the best qualities of each child such as: civic conscience, responsibility, the capacity of making decisions and tolerance, and especially the capacity to dream and have self-esteem. Studies in the field of child sociology (Wells, K., 2015).bring completion to a frame in continuous adjustment, in accordance with the changes of the society throughout the time.

The goal of the book, as declared by the author himself, is to highlight the essential problems of the history of children and childhood, and it achieves its goal by examining aspects such as family identity, childhood games and fantasies, sad experiences and abuse inflicted on children throughout the times, the stages of human development, among which childhood is the one to forge our character. Considered an “imperfect” creature in Antiquity, mystified by the romantics of the 19th century, then believed to be “an incomplete organism” and a “passive receptacle for the adult’s teachings” (neo-behaviourist school), the Child is “handed” over from a society to the other, in the search not of a mere description of individual children but in order to understand in a theoretical form what it means to be a child.

The book consists of three parts. The first, titled “A journey through childhood concepts” focuses on childhood as a social construct, specifying that, throughout the times, the notions of *child* and *childhood* have had different meanings. Different societies will have contrasting ideas regarding fundamental problems such as the duration of childhood, the traits that distinguish between adults and children and the importance of these differences.

The second part of the book- “*The years of childhood: the relationship with the parents and the playmates*”, brings in the foreground the process of raising children, how was this process implemented in the past and in what manner the relationship of the child with his/her parents and his/her peers will influence his/her future life. There is an abundance of examples of rites of passing: giving birth to the child, christening, choosing the godparents, welcoming the child into the community, the role of the familial faces (nurse, parents, other relatives or playmates) in the child’s life and the degree in which they assume responsibility in raising the child which will lead to influencing the long term development of the child’s personality. There are present in this part of the book a sum of problems ranging from infanticide and the abandonment of children to games and fairy-tales, the adaptability of children to different circumstances in life being especially highlighted.

The third part: “*Children all around the world*” considers aspects such as work, health and education of children. The book mentions the age at which

children were put to work, their duties- whether they were appropriate or not, the place they worked: in the house, on the farm, in a factory. The historical periods taken into account range from the early Middle Ages until the World War I. From the examples he uses, the author highlights the fact that, whether working full time outside the home or helping their parents with house chores, children were considered valuable members of the team. The tension between work and school led to a series of conflicts between family members in the 19th and early 20th century, and the statistics presented by the author regarding the fluctuation of working children highlights the state intervention in the process.

The strengths of the book consist in the plurality of approaches: we can find in it the perspective of children as well as that of the parents, and, more than that, the relationship with the institutions that influence their lives, the interaction between them: children with the parents, teachers, doctors, employers and other categories. Also a strong point of the book is the themed approach towards the topic instead of the conventional chronological approach.

A fascinating reading, as profound as easy to comprehend, a book that invites the reader to meditate on essential aspects of the history of children and childhood, this work represents also an invitation to study and analysis because the social and cultural changes that affected children have had an impact on the whole development of today's society.

Acknowledgment:

Article elaborated within the doctoral studies of PhD student Ecaterina CROITOR, with the title: *Operationalizarea metodei managementului de caz in domeniul protectiei copilului de catre furnizorii acreditati de servicii sociale din NE Romaniei*, the Doctoral School of Sociology, University of Oradea.

References:

- Cury, A (2005), *Părinți străluciți, profesori fascinanti*, Bucuresti, Editura For You
Dolto, F. (2016), *Despre copilarie*, Bucuresti, Editura Philobia;
Hodgkin, R., Newell, P. (2004). *Manual pentru implementarea Conventiei cu privire la drepturile copilului*, editie revizuita. Bucuresti: Vanemonde.
Wells, K. (2015). *Childhood in a Global Perspective*, Second edition, Chichester, United Kingdom: Polity Press.