CHANGING RATIONALES FOR GOVERNING THE CHILD

A historical perspective on the emergence of the psychological child in the context of preschool – notes on a study in progress

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This article is about a period of transition (1920–40) in the history of the Swedish preschool when Friedrich Fröbel's discourse on the child, which was the major discourse in the early days of the preschool movement in Sweden, gradually became replaced by the discourse of developmental psychology. The article's major concern is with the issue of change in preschool discourse about the child. Using the Foucauldian theme of governmentality, the article argues that change in preschool discourse is related to the emergence of new rationales for governing the child. In addition, the article argues that a comparison with the child that emerged in the context of schooling during the 19th century, is essential for the understanding of the post-Fröbel discourse about the child. It is suggested that the child of the post-Fröbel period is in fact the product of a reinvention of the evangelical streams of thought of the 19th century.

Introduction

My purpose in this article is to give an outline of my study, 'Psychology Enters the Preschool'.[1] 'Psychology Enters the Preschool' is about a period of transition (1920–40) in the history of the Swedish preschool when Friedrich Fröbel's natural romantic discourse[2] on the child, which was the major discourse in the early preschool movement in Sweden, was gradually replaced by the discourse of developmental psychology. The child of psychology that emerged from this period of transition has been with us until recently. My major concern is with the issue of change in the preschool discourse on the child. In fact, my concern is to open up a slightly different

angle of vision of change than that which is common in research on the preschool.

'Change' is not a neutral concept, but loaded with values and visions about the past, the present and the future. Furthermore, change is relative to the observer's (actor's) position. Viewed from the preschool perspective, there is a huge difference between the preschool child and the child of school age, with whom the preschool child is often compared. I do not deny that there are differences. Nonetheless, it is my understanding that the 'preschool child' has much in common with the 'schoolchild' which emerged during the 19th century. In addition, I argue that inscriptions of notions of change in practice are reality producing. Thoughts or ways of reasoning are not about the representation of realities, but about the making up of realities, different sorts of realities, including that of the preschool child (see Hacking, 1975).[3] The productive features of thought are even more visible in practical contexts like child pedagogy and childrearing, where thought is concerned with the guidance and governing of the child.

For the purpose of analysing such thought, the late Michel Foucault developed the theme 'governmentality' (or political rationality). According to Foucault (1993), modes of governing presuppose mentalities or ways of reasoning that pertain to different forms of rationalities. In western countries the political rationalities are mainly of a liberal character (see Hindess, 1992). In liberal forms of governing, whether these are concerned with individuals, families, an economy or a whole society, the targets of government basically are envisioned as free, self-governing, entities/actors (see Rose, 1993). Significantly, political rationalities are about the realization of practical aims; to instrumentalize or to inscribe in practice those very notions, ideas or visions, i.e. the idea of self-governing entities, that define a certain mode of political thinking. However, things and people cannot be dreamed into existence. In order to instrumentalize 'the world', there is need for knowledge – modes of knowledge that pertain to the parameters of a specific form of political rationality (see Latour, 1987; Rose, 1993; Popkewitz, 1996b; Hultqvist, 1997).

The theme of governmentality is an important tool in my study, since it provides for an analysis of change that does not simply repeat the dichotomy between past and present – a position on history which is central to preschool discourse on the child (see Hultqvist, 1990). From the vantage point of governmentality, the past is not conceived of as *past times* – history – but as a heterogeneous resource of materials – ideas, visions, concepts, theories and material practices – and as an open field of possibilities for the shaping and the reshaping of the present. The 'present' is defined as the set of problems and solutions that characterize actuality, i.e. the ways of reasoning and the modes and modalities for the inscription of political rationalities in practice. My concern in this article is to use the theme of 'governmentality' to open up a slightly different angle of vision of change than that which

is common in research about preschool. There are few studies that have explicitly sought to disentangle relations between categories of discourse and political rationalities. For the most part distinct lines of demarcation are drawn between the two.

The first part is about changes in today's discourse and practice on the child. I argue that the psychological child that replaced the 'Fröbel child' is about to be reinvented. In the second part I focus on a few categories of practical thought which I take to be central with regard to the governance of the child. These categories of thought have been used and reused throughout this century, not only in the preschool context but, as I argue in the following section, in the context of schooling. The third part is about the schoolchild. Two arguments are developed. First, I argue that the schoolchild is based on similar principles of construction to the preschool child. In fact, both 'children' are the products of a natural romantic conception of the child's development. Second, I argue that the child of the school (and of the preschool) is a historically contingent construction, related to problems of government. The fourth and final part is about the period of transition (1920–40), when the discourse of psychology gradually replaced the discourse of Fröbel. A few avenues of change are explored. In my opinion, these elements of the past are activated in today's process of the reinvention of the child.

Governmentality and mutations in discourse on the child

The psychological discourse on the child from the 1930s has been with us until quite recently. From the 1970s and onwards, however, new notions of the child emerged. While the post-Second World War discourse focused mainly on the laws of the child's development, today's discourse is increasingly concerned with the child's autonomy and their constructive capacities, i.e. their capacity for self-creation, as well as their capacity to act as an agent for social solidarity (see Hultqvist, 1997; Hultqvist and Petersson, 1997; see also Dahlberg and Taguchi, 1994; Näsman, 1995; Jenks, 1996).[4] The 'autonomous child', the 'constructive child' and similar concepts are not entirely new; newness rather is about the intellectual context that integrates these and similar concepts. In this section, I argue that change is about the reinventions of rationales for governing. New ideas on how to govern subjects/citizens have emerged, and these in turn are related to a shift in the conceptualization of the child.

I start with Basil Bernstein's (1995) distinction between between 'competence' and 'capacity'. Although Bernstein's approach to change relies on a sociological tradition, his diagnosis of the present is similar to the ones put forward in the literature on governmentality (see Hultqvist and Peterson, 1995; Cruikshank, 1996; Popkewitz, 1996b; Rose, 1996).

Following Bernstein, 'competence' is about generalized abilities inherent in the child (Bernstein uses the example of Piaget) and the task of

pedagogy is to enhance the growth of those abilities. 'Capacity', on the other hand, is more specific and task oriented. The pedagogy that follows from this type of reasoning is about trainability and the training of skills targeted to specific tasks. From the 1970s and onwards, Bernstein argues that the pedagogy concerned with the child's growth has gradually been replaced with a pedagogy concerned with the training of specific task-oriented skills. In addition, this reversal is related to a change in the form of social identity; from more introjective forms of identity to more projective or expressive forms of identity.[5]

Researchers working within the governmentality tradition would certainly agree with Bernstein, but for his explanatory constructs. For Bernstein, the reshaping of social identities 'ultimately' is related to current changes within the capitalist economy or – what Bernstein calls transitional capitalism – involving new modes of production and consumption. The governmentalists, on the other hand, would relate the new forms of subjectivity to changing rationales for government (see Rose, 1996). Government has become more decentralized and less universal in its aims and methods. These new forms of decentralized governing increasingly rely on the autonomy of the individual, their will and their capacity to respond and act 'in a flexible environment that contains a constant flux' (Popkewitz, 1996b: 10).

What is at stake here are very different notions of knowledge production. For Bernstein, knowledge is about the representation of reality 'out there'. For the governmentalists, knowledge is much more productive. It is part of the broader process of making up modern subjects through strategies and programmes for government.

Let me revert to the point where I started. What is 'change' from the governmental point of view? The 'autonomous child' or the 'constructive child' are not inventions of the 1990s. Similar notions of the child can be found in the context of school during the 19th century as well as in the preschool at the beginning of this century. It is easy to recognize the idea of the child as an agent of social solidarity both in the context of the early school and preschool. With the introduction of new and more liberal ideas on subjectivity, the child was heralded as the new person; the creator of that which is good and beautiful in the world. Roughly, this governmentality, combining a care for the individual's soul with the care for social solidarity, was also the guiding element with regard to the construction of the Swedish welfare state during the 1930s and 1940s.

Today's rationales for governing, however, differ from the rationales of the past in one important sense. They do not any longer, at least not exclusively, govern *in the name of society*:

> It seems as if we are seeing the emergence of a range of rationalities and techniques that seek to govern without governing society, to govern through regulated choices made by discreet and autonomous actors in the context of their particular commitments to families and communities. (Rose, 1996: 328)

If we agree with Rose, the concepts of 'autonomy' and 'constructivism' no longer operate within the same governmental frame of reference. They no longer have the meaning of being 'autonomous for the sake of society' or to 'construct solidarity for society'. They have very different meanings, attended to by Rose, of being autonomous and constructive with regard to a particular community to which the individual belongs. For the subject, whether it be a child or a grown-up, this withering away of 'society' makes available more local positions for speaking and acting. This tendency is clearly visible in today's discourse on the child's development. From the 1970s and onwards the discourse on the child relies, as noticed by Bernstein, to a lesser degree on ideas of universal laws of development and to a greater degree on locally developed specific skills, Bernstein's concept of capacity. Correlated with this tendency is the increasing *responsibleness* of the child, and the reintroduction of the *ethical dimension* within the field of early childhood (see Hultqvist, 1997). This adds up to a vision where the child somehow has left the psychological universe of natural laws (see Jenks, 1996). They have become a subject that is 'guaranteed' a certain freedom to act on their own, to be autonomous and self-reliant. This idea of freedom inscribed within the practices of childhood is the vantage point for the new decentralized rationales of governance. Freedom is the prerequisite as well as the end result of such decentralized forms of governing.

In this section I have argued that change can be understood as the reinvention of the conceptual tools for governing. These tools inscribe in practice new political rationalities for governing (see Popkewitz, 1996b).

Past and present political rationalities – a few analytical tools

How should the child be governed? What are the foundations for pedagogical activity? Those were the questions that were asked by the pioneers of the preschool in the early 20th century (see Hultqvist, 1990). As suggested in the previous section, these are the questions that we keep asking ourselves. I suggest that there are three categories that have been central to practical thought in the preschool context during this century, including the 1990s (see previous sections):

1. Nature–culture distinctions;
2. Continuity–discontinuity distinctions;
3. Idea of institutional uniqueness.

In this section I argue that these categories of thought are the constant elements of preschool thought, while at the same time undergoing change. In fact, they are *ways of reasoning that are informed by the changing rationales for governing.* In addition, I suggest that these categories are important for

the understanding of the 'schoolchild'. This last-mentioned assumption is explored in the following section.

In the first place, *the child is a natural creature.* This assumption was brought into the Swedish preschool context by pioneers like Ellen and Maria Moberg in the early part of this century.[6] Roughly, 'nature' for them meant 'belonging to a taken for granted social and *natural order*'. Religious ideas played a significant role, since nature in those days came to mean something like the Divine order, the order of God. Later on the interpretation of the child's nature was brought within the realm of psychology and biology, where it came to mean something else. In any case, 'the child' and the child's nature point to *something specific out there*, i.e. a kind of reality which is taken for granted. Knowledge, then, is about *representation*! Not even Alva Myrdal,[7] who took a critical stance towards the system of Fröbel, questioned this aspect of the conceptual framework of early preschool thought. Of course, she did not agree with the religious thoughts of Fröbel's system, but to her mind there was a rational core which could be extracted from the rest of the system and then put to use within an enlightened pedagogical practice informed by the emerging science of developmental psychology.

This brings us to our second theme, the *theme of culture* and cultural traditions. The idea of culture is closely related to this first conception of the child as nature. 'Culture' for the pioneers was that which is not nature, but that which is made by human beings in shifting historical contexts. In the early days of preschool, strict lines of demarcation were drawn between the two registers. When there is change, there is always a question of two registers; on the one hand natural changes which obey the laws of nature, and on the other cultural changes which obey the laws of culture and society. In the final analysis, however, both forms of change seem to be subsumed under the category of nature, in fact the Divine natural order (see Hultqvist, 1990). The idea of the preschool teacher as a *gardener*, which was a common metaphor in the early days of preschool, probably is a good illustration of this line of thought. Like the gardener, the preschool teacher is supposed to provide the conditions for growth or development. Development of the child is about the skilful adaptation to nature's plan. This way of reasoning is certainly reproduced in modern forms of preschool thought and practice. One obvious example is the so-called *Barnstugeutredningen* (coined in 1968), where pedagogy is considered to be a version of applied psychology. I revert to this theme in the next section. However, as I pointed out in the first section, the boundaries between what is pregiven and natural and what are cultural artefacts seem to be always changing; in the early days of the preschool the category of nature seems to have encompassed a great deal of phenomena that today would be considered to be cultural.

Third, the ideas about nature and culture in preschool are related to specific ideas about history. I would suggest that the main idea about the

child's history in the preschool context is one of *natural history*, while the history of preschool is largely conceived of as cultural and social histories. In the final analysis, however, it may be that all history in a preschool context is subsumed under the category of natural history. Inscribed in this version of history is the idea of a progressive adaptation of pedagogy to the child's inherent natural abilities. A good illustration of this would be Alva Myrdal's ways of reasoning with regard to Fröbel's system (see above). Today these ideas are under pressure. Constructivistic, pragmatic and relativistic ideas in current research and governmental programmes, probably, will result in the reworking of the assumptions of the past in accordance with today's set of problems (see Popkewitz, 1996b).

The concept of the child in the preschool setting also relates to other circuits of problems. There are not only barriers or divisions between nature and culture or between continuity and discontinuity; there are also *internally produced limits* with regard to other institutional settings and discourse. This way of limiting discourse produces *an idea of uniqueness*. The best example, probably, is the difference between the schoolchild and the preschool child. Historically this division has played an important role in the efforts of building up the preschool child. However, as modern research tends to show, there are many points of intersection between the preschool and the school, in fact many more than are 'admitted' to within the preschool discourse. Today these distinctions also tend to collapse due to present tendencies of increasing integration between different levels of the educational system (see Popkewitz, 1996a; see also Dahlberg and Taguchi, 1994; Rohlin, 1996). As mentioned in the introduction, these tendencies make available *new and unforeseen positions for the speaker or actor.*

In this section I have argued that there are three central categories of preschool thought. These categories are not only central to the understanding of the past, but they are also the vital elements of the ongoing reinvention of today's discourse on the child. On the surface, the postmodern child of the 1990s may not have much in common with the Fröbel child, but, as suggested in the first section, there is a common heritage to both children.

The construction of the schoolchild – a perspective on the preschool child

The internal perspective of the preschool tends to draw a strict boundary line between the preschool child and the schoolchild, making the former look quite unique and different from the schoolchild. In this section, I argue that the schoolchild and the preschool child emerge from the same or similar historical backgrounds. The argument put forward is used as a vantage point for considering the transformations of the 1930s, when Fröbel's discourse of the child was replaced with the discourse of psychology.

The state and the popular school

From the preschool point of view, the 'preschool child' is not the same as the 'child of school', in fact there is a huge difference. This argument has been repeated since the early 20th century. Preschool is considered to be much more child centred and concerned with the growth of the child's natural abilities. Preschool discourse, then, is about *competence* and not about the trainability of the child (see the first section on Bernstein). However, this is a truth with quite a few modifications. It is my understanding that the emerging discourse on the schoolchild during the latter part of the 19th century was almost identical to that of the early preschool. There was even an agreement with regard to the facts, i.e. the actual performance of the popular school. The leading pioneers of the popular school (Torsten Rudenschöld, Per Adam Siljeström, Fridtjuv Berg and others) were as critical on this point as were any of the representatives of the preschool. Both parties wanted to replace outdated modes of pedagogy and childrearing with more liberal principles of governing: the child-centred pedagogy and the self-regulating subject.[8]

If there is a difference, and I think there is, it is situated elsewhere. It is easy to recognize, but has not been the object of enough critical scrutiny. I would like to suggest that the major difference, and this is a disparity that makes a difference, is that school and preschool historically are differently located with regard to the governing authorities (the state). From the 1840s and onwards, the state school became the explicit object of the government through the state, while preschool for a long period of time was a purely local affair (the so-called Fröbel Institute in Norrköping is the paradigmatic example). Furthermore, the school much earlier became the target of scientific knowledge and professional expertise. One obvious example, of course, is the drive for normalization and the measurement of human differences, both of which are linked to the emergence of the school and other modern public institutions. Although the needs for differentiation and normalization slowly made their appearance in preschool, they did not have the same impact as within the school.

The human being as man and as citizen

Let me enlarge upon this line of reasoning. There is a growing body of research on governmentality, concerned with the set of conditions that led to the establishment of a common school. I do not repeat the different arguments here, but point to a few central ideas in this literature (see, for example, Hacking, 1975; Hunter, 1988, 1994, 1996; Popkewitz, 1996a, 1996b; Popkewitz and Brennan, 1997).

In fact they are about two things:

1. The emergence of the modern administrative state; and
2. The use of religious or pastoral discourse and practice in school.

According to this literature, the emergence of the popular school basically was about a new vision of the state's obligations. While the main concern of the feudal state was the defence and enlargement of its territory, the new discourse of the state that emerged during the 17th and 18th centuries increasingly became concerned with *the enhancement* of all of the state's resources, material as well as human resources. *Welfare* and *social peace* became the major concerns of the state. The state, so the narrative goes, became increasingly *governmentalized*. Although somewhat simplified in detail (see, for example, Hunt, 1996), it is my understanding that there is a great deal of substance in the main argument. This same process eventually led to the process of secularization of the state's discourse (see Hunter, 1988, 1996; see also Weber, 1930). Gradually, the concern with religious thought was replaced with rational thought, that is calculations and all sorts of descriptions – even qualitative ones – concerned with the objectives of governing. This reversal made visible a whole set of new issues and problems, i.e. the problems with dense populations in cities, poverty, problems of health, riots and so on (see Dean, 1991; see also Jones, 1996). In addition the new perspective became the impetus for a series of practical programmes for the reconstruction of society's institutions. Popular school was one of them; it even became the major site for the moral, intellectual and physical management of populations.

Let me now take this argument a bit further. According to Hunter (1988, 1996) the split between rational thought and religious thought and practice led to a split between the conception of human beings as citizen – involved in the mundane affairs of rational calculation – and man,[9] that part of the human being who was concerned with the salvation of the soul, with the 'whole man' (questions of ethics, aesthetics, etc.). Following Hunter, it was *the human being as man* which became the target of discourse and practices of the school.[10] Furthermore, man became conceptualized and inserted into practices of school through the practices of Christianity (or pastoral power to use Foucault's expression), linking the concern of the state – 'the population question' and the question of citizenship – with the concern of religious thought, which was about the salvation of the soul. In that way practices of the school became the surface and target for the emerging welfare state (Hunter, 1988). Eventually, religious practices were to be replaced by more objective and secularized practice (an obvious example of course is the education of religion).[11] Even so the links between present and past remain (see, for example, Popkewitz, 1996b).

It is my understanding that one of the sites for this linking is the distinction between nature and culture (see above). In the 19th century and the beginning of this century, 'nature' came to mean that which was undivided – the whole man. Due to life experiences (I would say modern urban life experiences) the child's substance became divided. What was hoped for was that the child eventually regained unity through the medium of culture

(Hultqvist, 1990).[12] This line of thought was central both with regard to the construction of the schoolchild and the preschool child. One obvious example in Sweden is Fridtjuv Berg. For Berg schooling was a *Bildungsprocess* (German *Bildung*). The aim of schooling was not a specialized person, but the harmoniously integrated individual, defined by the unity of their intellectual, ethical and aesthetic faculties.

For Fridtjuv Berg and other liberal writers during the 19th century, the *Bildungsprocess* provided for by schooling relied on the laws of natural development. *Bildung* is not about the imposing of principles that are external to the individual's nature, but about the nurturing and guidance of that which is already given the individual in the shape of their 'natural capital'. From this point of view, the mandate for the *Bildungsprocess* emerges from within the individual themselves – their nature. The individual need not be aware of this, since awareness of interest is not the beginning but the outcome of education and upbringing. Nature speaks about itself from the cultural point of view!

There is a peculiar rationality to this process of *Bildung* as envisioned by Berg. Not only is *Bildung* the rational tool for the individual's self-realization, but for the realization of the welfare of society. The link between the one and the other is the principle of *natural selection.* Natural selection is rational both ways. On the one hand it corresponds to the individual's need for development. Each individual should be given the opportunity to develop all their potential. On the other hand, the proper distribution and development of abilities will increase the total sum of society's forces. In other words, this principle of *natural justice* provides for the *prosperity of individuals*, a *social peace* – a rational distribution of life chances – as well as *social welfare*. All is rational. In the final analysis, even society is rational:

> The goal of society is justice, namely the right of each and all to free development of all the good powers of his [*sic*] nature. The view that the state is a huge machinery, an immense mechanism of cogs and wheels that are being replaced continuously when worn out, is false. The state is rather an organism of autonomous cells, renewing themselves through the development of new cellular individuals from the constant supply of new living materials.
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> The health of the state is conditioned on the principle that everything will be put in its right place. It is the same with society. The 'tissues' of society must be renewed continuously, through the incorporation of similar materials from a never-ceasing stream of the rising generations. If the supply were to be diverted from its natural cause through artificial means, symptoms of disorder will appear in the society's body. To prevent this from happening each new member of the state must receive the proper guidance to assure that he or she will find the way just to those 'tissues' to which he [or she] naturally belongs. For the educational system to act on behalf of the welfare of society, it may not hinder the talents of anyone, independently of [their] social class, from finding [their] right place in Society. The educational system diverts from its mission, if it should in an arbitrary way intervene in the course of natural development. (Berg, 1921a: 50)

In Berg's vision then, the impetus for the *Bildungsprocess* comes from within the individual, their natural drive to become a whole man.[13] From the vantage point of governmentality, however, man is rather the historical problem that was raised with the governmentalization of the state. Man and the *Bildungsprocess*, that was to realize the individual's essence, were put together from 'the moral and material grab-bag of Western culture' (Hunter, 1996: 148), not least the practices of Christianity. In fact, much of Berg's writings is about practical issues; how individuals ought to conduct themselves as moral subjects, the role of aesthetics for the formation of the self as well as other types of problematizations, all of which are reminiscent of the practices of Christianity.

The heritage of Christianity is even more visible in the writings of Torsten Rudenschöld.[14] For him the *Bildungsprocess* was about the dissemination of the values of Christianity throughout the social body.[15] The mechanism for this, as suggested by Rudenschöld, was the natural distribution of rights and privileges between the classes, the so-called *ståndscirkulationen*. For Rudenschöld, the principle of natural distribution of abilities served two purposes. First, to increase efficiency in society and second, to improve on the social climate between the classes. The latter would be brought about through the mingling of the social classes as they moved up and down the social ladder. This was supposed to bring about a *new mentality* modelled on the ideal of Christian fellowship. In addition, Rudenschöld's ideas on efficiency and morality brought *the living and active body* to the centre of his attention – as in the writings of other liberal thinkers of his time.

When reading Rudenschöld one gets the impression that the *Bildungsprocess* is something more than just nature's work. It involves the use of a whole series of practices concerned with the proper conduct of the self and the body. It is about procedures for the enhancement of the body's powers, how to maintain one's health, how to conduct one's self in the economic domain and so on. Rudenschöld developed a series of programmes for the actual reinvention of man and society along the principles mentioned. Central for Rudenschöld was the creation of a common school, but he explored a few other alternatives like liberal societies and the so-called workers' colonies (see, for example, Rudenschöld, 1845, 1846).

What is fascinating about Rudenschöld is his practical ambitions. For Rudenschöld like Berg, Siljeström and a few other pioneers, thought was not supposed to be moving around in the thin air of traditional philosophy, but to be inscribed in practice in order to make thought real.

Eventually, Rudenschöld's ideas became appropriated and reworked by scientific discourse. Even so, there are remaining links between the past and the present. The idea of activity was present in Swedish discourse well before John Dewey and other pragmatic thinkers were imported to Sweden; it later became the object of the scientific work of Carin Ulin, one of the pioneers in the Swedish preschool context. Commentators on Ulin usually state

that she imported her ideas from the USA and the work of Arnold Gesell, and then she put them to use in the so-called KFUK Pedagogical Institute (YWCA).[16] There certainly is such a connection, but I would like to suggest that there is a 'deeper' cultural influence that goes back to Rudenschöld (there are others) and his action-oriented views on the body. Another 'activist thinker' that ought to be mentioned in this context is the Austrian researcher Elsa Köhler, who became an influential figure in Sweden during the 1930s and 1940s; both with regard to school and preschool. In addition, there is a link between Rudenschöld's and Berg's ideas on 'the distribution of power and rights', and the Swedish educational debate in the 1950s on similar issues (see Husén, 1988).[17]

The discourse of psychology, in fact, did provide a suitable link between man and citizen, between the individual and the population: the two poles of government. On the one hand 'normal development', 'normal growth' and similar concepts could be linked to the population question, and on the other hand the same rationale, now focusing on the individual, could be used to understand and improve the mental and physical powers of the individual subject (see Rose, 1996; Walkerdine, 1984). From this point of view, the practice of mental testing that emerged with Binet and others and the psychology of development (Gesell, Piaget and others) are just two sides of the same coin (see Walkerdine, 1984).[18] It is my understanding that these two routes were the two major ones used, when the preschool child was reinvented during the period 1920–40.

My aim in this part of my article was to point at similarities and differences between the schoolchild and the preschool child. I have argued that although there are differences, both the preschool child and the child of the school are modelled on the conception of man, i.e. the whole individual envisioned both in the discourse of Fröbel and the leading pioneers of the school. My next and final step is to explore the changes of the preschool discourse during the 1920s to the 1940s. It is my understanding that the rereading about the formation of the schoolchild will provide me with a suitable position from which to describe the transformation of the preschool child during the 1920s to 1940s. In addition, it is my opinion that this rereading of the past may shed light on current changes in the discourse and practice about the preschool child (and generalized even with regard to a few other children).

The reinvention of the preschool thought on the child during the 1920s to 1940s

The building up of the popular school and the preschool during the 19th and 20th centuries were not singular events but part of the construction of a new social infrastructure, in Sweden commonly referred to as the 'People's Home' (see Hultqvist, 1990).[19] Basic to these diverse programmes, that made

up the 'People's Home', was the *socioliberal view on government.* Roughly, social-liberalism states that government should pay equal attention to the liberties of the individual, i.e. their right to the development of all their abilities and likewise the legitimate force of communal values and norms. This language was used by Fridtjuv Berg, Torsten Rudenström and the other pioneers of the popular school when they spoke about the child's *Bildungsprocess.* It was also used by the pioneers of preschool. From the mid-1920s and onwards, the different strands of social-liberal programmes were integrated with the emerging welfare state. The basic terminology of social-liberalism survived change, but the moral character of the early discourse gradually became less visible when the language of Fröbel was replaced with the language of the social sciences, not least the language of psychology. The fate of Fröbel's discourse is bound up with this process of reinvention.

In this section I present a brief sketch of what I take to be the major avenues of change. First, I argue that the formation of the welfare state during the 1920s and 1930s raised the need for a new language and new tools of government. Second, I argue that the Fröbel child became reinvented along two major routes: through the introduction of mental testing and through developmental psychology. Finally, I make a few suggestions about the direction of change. I argue that although Fröbel was replaced with the child of psychology, the evangelical undercurrents of traditional discourse survived change.

Avenues of change

The language of psychology introduced a difference with regard to the Fröbel tradition in relation to which the language of the preschool evolved. Of course it was more *technical,* but the discourse of psychology was also the carrier of *new sets of relations* with regard to government.

In the beginning of the 19th century, the governance of the preschool child was a task for the local community, for the pioneers themselves, of course, but also for the local authorities who provided the necessary support for the maintenance of the kindergarten. As long as the purely local context prevailed, the language of kindergarten was quite 'functional', but with enlargement of the context for government during the 1930s it became evident that 'kindergarten' lacked a technical *language of expertise*, that is, a language for *governing at a distance* (see above). The kindergartners were clearly able to run a local practice. They could even transmit this practical knowledge to their colleagues, but the way they spoke about the child or about other aspects of their pedagogical practice – mostly in metaphors – could not easily be transmitted to administrative centres or to other centres of calculation and computation (see Latour, 1987). The new language had to be imported from elsewhere, i.e from the social sciences. One example of this renewal of language and the tools for government was the measurement

of intelligence that was introduced in the preschool context during the 1930s.[20] It deserves to be mentioned, however, that the preschool pioneers themselves were not too concerned with the problem of mental measurements. These needs came from elsewhere – from the science of psychology and from the administrative needs of the school authorities.

The introduction of mental testing in the preschool is one of the avenues of change, but there are a few others. One is the invention of the psychological laboratory at the KFUK in Stockholm (Carin Ulin); another example is Elsa Köhler's.[21] Through these and other channels new ways of reasoning about the child were inscribed in the practices of preschools.

On a more general plane of sight, there were the influences from abroad. Reform movements throughout Europe and the USA brought the 'new language' to Sweden, not least in the shape of the so-called *'new psychology'*.[22] The new psychology focused on the category of life[23] and not, as in Fröbel's discourse, on the universe of God's nature. It is my understanding that this reversal of thought favoured empirical and more technical views on the preschool.

There is a general agreement in today's research that this change made a difference (see Hultqvist, 1990; see also Johansson, 1992). However, the Swedish debate on these matters has mainly been about influential figures like Elsa Köhler, Hildegaard Hetzer and Charlotte Bühler, assuming that the principles of study, methods and results of research are the only important entities of their achievements (see Johansson, 1995). To my mind this is only 'half of the truth'. Following the lines of reasoning the theme of governmentality opened up, my suggestion is that the language of psychology is part of building up a new and more technically sophisticated way of governing subjects/citizens. In the final analysis, however, the child had to be reinvented through the 'rethinking' of the past – Fröbel, Rudenschöld, Siljeström and Berg, to mention just a few of the pioneers.[24]

From the governing of the good nature to the governing of the psychobiological nature

Like the discourse of the popular school, the early discourse on the preschool child is about human perfection. Perfection – physically, morally and intellectually – was the end state of a *Bildungsprocess*, that included not only the individuals but population as well. In fact, it is about the *mobilization of all the good forces* at all levels of society, for the urgent task of the reinvention of social life (on this see Jenks, 1996; see also Hultqvist, 1990):

> We make a false diagnosis when we assume that the intellect occupies the seat of honor in our times. On the contrary, it is darker, and we must be able to return to common sense. This can be done by going back to the child, that inspiring creature, that renewer of the race and the society. Let us come to the child like the Wise Men, laden with rich gifts and led by the star of hope. (*Barnträdgården* [Kindergarten], 1934: No. 4, 68)

Inherent in this vision is the liberal ideal to set the child free. The child must be released from the restraints of the old order, i.e. from the traditions and conventions of the adult society in order for the child to be able to realize their (and the person's) full potential. Within this narrative on the child, government had to take on a liberal character. The child was posited as a free being, their natural state of being, and freedom in turn, as a *principle of government*, became the necessary tool for the mobilization of the child's nature.

Ideas normally do not grow out of nothing, and they are seldom completely new. It should not come as a surprise, then, that this same idea about the freedom of the child was basic to the constitution of a developmental psychology. The point I would like to make here is that the evangelic undercurrents are not only present in the discourse of Fröbel, Berg and others, but they are also part of the building up of the discourse of psychology itself. What I am suggesting, then, is that the evangelic undercurrents survived change *not* because the traditional elements of discourse became transferred to the discipline of psychology, but because they were already present in psychological discourses on the child. Let me use an example to illustrate this line of thought, In 1912 Maria Montessori sketched the foundations of modern scientific pedagogy and psychology in the following way:

> The fundamental principle of scientific pedagogy must be indeed, the liberty of the pupil – such a liberty as shall permit a development of individual spontaneous manifestations of the child's nature. If a new and scientific pedagogy is to arise from the study of the individual such a study must occupy itself with the observation of free children. (Montessori, 1912: 69)

Like the missionary themes that I have reported on, Montessori argues that the child *needs to be set free* in order to realize both themselves and the scientific study of the child's nature. Should freedom not exist, the nature of the child will remain invisible, and should the last-mentioned condition prevail no scientific study of the child is possible. Of course, this quotation is not enough to establish the evangelic undercurrent sustaining psychological discourse, but there is ample evidence to show that psychological thought in fact is intertwined with the evangelical thought of the 19th and 20th centuries. In a study by Walkerdine (1984), she holds the view that Piaget's thought on the child's intellectual development is linked with the idea of goodness. According to Walkerdine, the theme of Piaget's theory (and I would like to add Arnold Gesell, another influential psychologist of the 1920s and 1930s; see Gesell and Ilg, 1946) is not only about the natural unfolding of human reason, but a way out of the moral and existential dilemmas of modern social life. (See also Jenks, 1996, for similar arguments.)

The Swedish case is not an exception to the rule. The psychobiological nature of the child that replaced traditional discourse during the 1930s can hardly be described as only biological in type. It was invested with the moral issues of the past. The following statement, which I take as paradigmatic,

was made by Carin Ulin, one of the founders of Swedish child psychology and child pedagogy:[25]

> The most important general principle for all pedagogues, regardless of their other views, should be that they promote the children's sound development in both body and soul. To be able to do this it is necessary to have thorough knowledge of the laws of development, since both the children's physical development and their spiritual development are bound by laws. Respect for the laws of nature is an imperative requirement. (Ulin, 1951: 120)

Obviously, Ulin's statement is more than a statement of facts, it is a moral obligation. This type of moral obligation is added onto the 'purely' technical guidance of the child, providing the art of governing with *a* sense of direction;[26] perhaps not as visionary as in the early days of this century but there is still something left of the evangelic style of thought that accompanied the discourse of Fröbel. It is my understanding that this missionary thought is present in today's constructivistic and pragmatic social science thoughts and in the diverse programmes for the reshaping of subjectivity that I referred to in the first section.

It is perhaps an irony that the post-Fröbel discourse should repeat the figure of man. Man is not a state of nature, but, as I have argued, a project of government and of culture (see above). As such it is tied to and limited by its historical conditions of possibility.

Conclusions

From the vantage point of governmentality, change in discourse and practice of the child is related to change in the rationales for governing. This has been my main argument in this article. In my historical argument developed in the third section, I argued that the discourses on the preschool child and the schoolchild rely on similar historical sources, the modern invention of man. From a general point of view, my study might well be regarded as a genealogy of modern man, the man that emerged with the governmentalization of the state. However, if this is my object, my study certainly is not about man as such, since there is no such figure,[27] but about that special version of man that appeared in the context of the school and preschool during the last century. This figure was soon to be replaced or transformed by psychology and educational science from the 1920s and onwards. However, as I argued in my last section, the psychology that replaced traditional discourse on the preschool child did not stand outside the evangelic currents of traditional thought; those currents were inscribed within psychology itself.

Notes

1. This study is supported by the Council for Social and Humanistic Research.

2. For Fröbel the newborn infant starts its life as a whole being. This wholeness of being, however, is lost on the route to adulthood and must be regained through the medium of culture,

i.e. through education and childrearing.

3. This point of view does not imply a denial of the fact that human beings 'have a biology', but it does imply a certain scepticism with regard to various 'taken-for-granted assumptions' about the relation between theory/concepts and reality.

4. Similar conceptions of the child were central in the early preschool discourse, i.e. wherein the child was conceived of as an agent of community and social peace (see Hultqvist, 1990).

5. According to Bernstein, 'projective identity' is about flexible modes of adaptation, that are directly linked to instrumentalities of the market (see Bernstein, 1995).

6. It goes without saying that the idea of the natural child extends further back in history, i.e. to the writings of people like Rousseau, Pestallozi, Comenius and (of course) Fröbel.

7. See Myrdal (1935). Alvar Myrdal was an important figure in the Swedish preschool context during the 1930s and 1940s.

8. It deserves to be mentioned that practices of the preschool were considerably less child oriented than was *thought* about preschool.

9. Many commentators have been worried about Foucault's declaration that man is an invention, and that the figure of man is likely to disappear (see Foucault, 1970). However, Foucault is surely not the origin of such a statement. Erik Gustav Geijer, an important figure in the Swedish 19th-century debate on school, expressed the same opinion, when he stated that *man is a recent invention* (see Thunander, 1946). For today's reader, the word 'man' is surely recognized as being part of a sexist vocabulary. However, historically, 'man' has in fact been used to express ideas about human beings, men and women. It is in this historical sense that I use the word in this article.

10. The distinction between man and citizen can be discerned in the discourse of pioneers of the Swedish School. One obvious example is Fridtjuv Berg. For him school is eventually about achieving citizenship, but first the subject must be a child; and that child is modelled on the conception of man.

11. Another medium was the education of aesthetics. On this see my notes in Hultqvist and Petersson (1997).

12. In addition, this is also the site for ideas on continuity and discontinuity. The narrative on the reunion of that which had been lost is also a narrative on the temporal unfolding of a task that is given to the child; a progression of which the end is the 'whole man', or the good life and so on. One obvious example of this is Fridtjuv Berg's writings about the education of aesthetics (Berg, 1921a, 1921b).

13. This notion is also part of the preschool context. See the preceding section: pedagogy as applied psychology!

14. Rudenschöld is often referred to as the founder of a modern Swedish school.

15. For Rudenschöld it was about the realization of the kingdom of God on earth. Similar visions emerged in the USA during the 19th and the early 20th centuries, see Popkewitz (1986).

16. During the 1930s, Carin Ulin developed a psychological laboratory modelled on the laboratory of Arnold Gesell. This was the first attempt in Sweden to build a body of research on the preschool and the preschool child. Up to that point research on the child was restricted to the schoolchild. Later, during the 1960s, a similar laboratory was established by Stina Sandels.

17. There are a few notes on the connections between the 19th-century discourse on school and modern Swedish educational research in Hultqvist and Petersson (1997).

18. Both Arnold Gesell and Jean Piaget rely on similar intellectual traditions to Fridtjuv Berg. According to this tradition, reason is a product of human nature. It is inscribed in the child as a human biological heritage, which is supposed to develop through a series of stages before it finally achieves the adult type of rational thought. As pointed out by Walkerdine (1984), however, this is not an empirical fact about human beings but a vision that is inscribed in the practices of science as well as in systems of pedagogy.

19. The 'People's Home' is a vision for the type of large-scale community projects that evolved in Sweden during the first decades of this century. It became the leading metaphor in the building up of the welfare state during the 1930s and 1940s.

20. Here I focus on the work of Professor John Elmgren and his collaborator Stina Sandels.

21. Elsa Köhler played an important role in this context, and so did Carin Ulin. Carin Ulin has a exemplary role in this study, in that she created a set of relays between psychological research, teaching and practical work in preschool at her institute. Through this relaying system the new psychology, its results and methods of enquiry became inscribed in practice. Elsa Köhler played a similar role with regard to the so-called Fröbel Institute in the city of Norrköping, but she did not use the 'laboratory' as a model for the dissemination of the tools and the results of psychology. She conducted research in actual situations in schools and preschools.

22. Important channels for this renewal were journals like *Pedagogiska Spörsmål* (Pedagogical Questions), *Skola och Samhälle* (School and Society) as well as *Barnträdgården* (Kindergarten).

23. In the 1990s the category of life is reused, i.e. in the context of life-long learning projects (the idea of the information – or knowledge – society); see Hultqvist and Petersson, (1997).

24. In discourse about current changes there is much discussion about neoliberalism, neocapitalism and postmodernism. While useful to a certain extent, these terms tend to disguise the fact that today's changes are not entirely 'new' but are the outcome of the reinvention of past ideas and practices. For a convincing argument, see Popkewitz (1996b).

25. Elsa Köhler, another important figure in the Swedish context, held the view that the empirical study of the child by his- or herself could give rise to a naturalistic ethics. Similar ideas evolved in many of the western countries, e.g. in the USA (see Ross, 1972).

26. Carin Ulin performed many detailed studies on the child's psychophysical development, not least the development of the child's hand and finger coordination (see Ulin, 1943, 1949). Despite the many detailed studies of parts of the child's body Ulin never lost faith in the idea of the child as a *whole being*. In this and many other respects she remained faithful to the traditions of the preschool.

27. Man as such does not exist, but what does exist is the generalization of the local versions of man. Man, the child and so on are so many versions of local discourse that have been generalized and used as normative guidelines in social practice. Popkewitz convincingly argues that discourse 'inscribes a normativity that reintroduces the issue of exclusion' (see Popkewitz, 1996b: 19).

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