

# Born as an Original – Died as a Copy

by Henning Köhler

Translated by Ted Warren

*At the end of the 1960s it was stated that a catastrophe in education had broken out and we should consider the better times in the past, in which most parents, educators and teachers acted intuitively correctly.*

In the 1970s Lloyd deMause began researching the history of childhood in terms of the relationship between adults and children. The following is a short summary.

Until the 13th century, child murder was a daily event and giving away children was the rule. In the 14th century there were severe contrasts ranging from the ideal of the devoted mother (inspired by the Maria presentations in art) to the continued practice of brutal ambivalence. In the 18th century the dominating motive was to break into the core of the child's soul to rip out any immorality at its roots. "One prays with them, rather than playing with them. They were often beaten but no longer regularly whipped." (The phase of intrusion.)

From the 19th to the 20th century, the principle of socialization dominated: adjusting to the established society through education and behavior control. More subtle forms of conditioning were to make open brutality unnecessary. Yet beating children remained a socially acceptable option. "Spoiling children" became the deadly sin of education. By the 1970s the socialization model was criticized in parts of liberal society and the form of relationship called "support" was favored. According to deMause it was based on the realization that children know what is best for themselves in "every stage of their lives." He emphasizes that people are still not able to imagine education as anything other than socialization, though his book speaks of the hope for change.

The historical overview is shocking. Psychiatrist J. Louise Despert reached the same conclusions in his own studies. They brought him to the history of continual "heartlessness and cruelty." (deMause) Two things must be said about this.

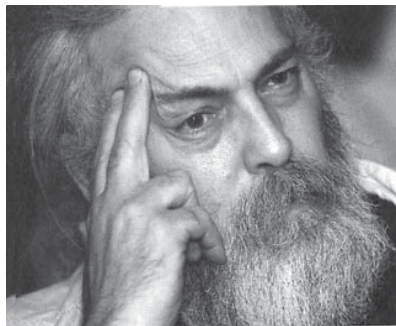
The first: Today, leading educational books praise famous behaviorists from the 1930s and 1940s, such as John Watson, who published a form of the principle of conditioning as the solution to problems. They do not propose beatings but “sanctions” and other forms of punishment.

The second: In these books it is stated that by the end of the 1960s, the catastrophe in education had broken out and we should consider the better times in the past, in which most parents, educators and teachers acted intuitively correctly. If what they considered to be normal educational behavior in the 1960s was intuitively correct, then to hell with those intuitions. It was misunderstood. As long as the type of relationships are merely “supportive” and not extended to broader fronts, the words of the author Edward Young will be just as relevant as they were in the 18th century: “We are born as an original and die as a copy.”

**Literature:**

Lloyd deMause, *Hort ihr die Kinder weinen. Eine psychogenetische Geschichte der Kindheit*, Frankfurt a.M., 1977.

**About the author:** Henning Köhler is a curative teacher, author, and director for twenty-three years of the Janusz-Korczak Institute, a curative pedagogical clinic and place for consultation on education and youth which he founded in Nürtingen. He is a lecturer at the Seminar for Waldorf Pedagogy in Cologne, Germany, and at the Institute for Pedagogy and Medicine in Verona, Italy. Twelve years ago he initiated the professional development program for consultants for specialized educational questions. Link: [www.janusz-korczak-institut.de](http://www.janusz-korczak-institut.de).



*Henning Köhler*