

[Chapter 7]

The “Natural Method” of Childraising as an Example of the Ways of Relating Perspective and the Relational Principle¹

[URL: NaturalMethod]

SECTIONS (& perhaps subsections):

- I What the method is –
 - A Brief description; basic perspective / philosophy
 - B History / origins
 - C Current usage

[From this point on, the essay shows how the natural method is an inherent part of the ways of relating perspective – what the ways of relating perspective looks like when applied to child-raising.]

- II Takes the child’s interests fully (i.e., equally) into account
- III After doing so, you (the parent; usually the mother) try to satisfy them as best you can.²
- IV Making the final decision as an example of the 2nd-order criteria.
- V Trust in the parent is the first experience of the benign universe.³

¹SPC: The natural method of childraising has been one model that helped me clarify my thinking about the ways of relating perspective. I want to acknowledge the help of my daughter, Catherine Blood, in discovering and using the method in the first place and then explaining it to me in the course of many conversations.

²This is not a sacrifice of your interests to the child’s. It is often perceived to be, because the current practice is that the child’s interests don’t count at all, so that paying any attention to the child looks like a sacrifice of the parent’s interests. It is easy for me to slip into regarding Cathy’s 24/7 model as the only one, but it will depend on the mother’s capabilities. Infinite self-sacrifice is not a good model for a child any more than dictatorial rule is.

³This is a phrasing from Re-evaluation Counseling, but I believe many philosophies have the concept of the benign universe. Regardless, the point is that we are born into (and live within) a world for which we have already been formed – by billions of years of evolution, by tens of thousands of years of being humanoid, and by thousands of years of culture. Our cultural patterns and our very physical being down to the tiniest organelle exist to help us in the world. When we allow ourselves to look, the world is more benign than we realize. The natural method is simply one part of that – the protection of the parents is something we are born with.

- VI The fundamental importance of this raising for the child's entire life.⁴
- VII Objections to it:
- A "Creates dependence on the mother."⁵
- B "Doesn't ready the child for the realities of life, which is harsh, cruel, and indifferent to their interests."⁶
- C I'm sure there are other objections unknown to me. I want to give the full range of them.
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I Title of First Section

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⁴Why don't we support it, then, for God's sake?????!!

⁵The lazy slob image, as in that old science fiction novel about the people supposedly comatose but actually just enjoying having everything done to them. As if the infant (or an adult!) had no desire to explore and experience the world.

This is a different issue from a child's (or an adult's) *fear* of doing so. It is one thing to want to do something but not to do it because of fear; it is quite another to not want to do it in the first place.

⁶But why *impose* that image on them? If the world *is* in fact harsh and cruel, then they'll learn it on their own. Should I deliberately break their toys to prove that others *might* do so? Should black children be taught *not* to trust whites (and vice versa)? These things are often done in an attempt to protect the child against later pain, but we need to recognize that the lesson itself is painful and causes much later pain. For example, my father taught me his fear of gay men, a lesson that caused me (and, doubtless, the gay men I encountered) endless anguish later in my life, both as I strove to overcome those fears in me and beforehand, as I inflicted those fears on my own world.

I don't think it's wrong to tell children how we see the world, but we need to do so in a way that respects the contingency of one's own beliefs and the right of the child to make up h/her own mind. All we can/should say is, "This is my understanding of the situation, but I might be mistaken – even fundamentally mistaken. You'll have to make up your own mind about what makes sense to you in your situation. I won't disapprove if you choose to follow thinking different from mine."