

Animal Husbandry in Human Zoos:

They tried to be good keepers, yet they mucked up maturation processes

Submission to the Senate Community Affairs References Committee
Inquiry into Children in Institutional Care

Desmond Morris wrote, "The city is not a concrete jungle, it is a human zoo". I submit that the human animal is reared neither in a perfect Garden of Eden nor in the "natural" environment in which it evolved. We are civilized! We have to live in "human zoos". The "institutions" should be designed to be reasonably natural habitats that do not "systematically dehumanized children". Your concern should be: that institutions do not thwart, distort or abort "child growth processes" or put the immature "at risk"; and that Australia can continue to learn from mistakes.

A "Process-Systems-Cybernetics" Approach

I submit that a "process-systems-cybernetics" approach might help senators gain useful insights into human maturation and relationships – and also into risks of child care practices of the past.

Evolution has equipped the human animal with an integrated network of organs, response systems and behaviour patterns, which determine what can be learned and at which stages of the life cycle. When shielded from appropriate input in some "human zoos", was there a greater risk of biological disorientation, malimprinting, fetishism and displacement activity?

Back in the 1960's I had occasion to raise the following questions:

- Can celibate vocation be artificially induced?
- Did traditional church attitudes, practices and power structures inadvertently put the immature at risk of other biological confusions and abuses?
- Is this a bioethical issue for "concerned Catholics", ethicists and the public to share?

Metaphorical crozier in hand, a patriarchal churchman could represent himself as a "good shepherd" serving "Higher Purposes". Tragically those purposes, might inadvertently violate the rights of the "sheep". There was a point at which over-protection – oppression, "coeducational deprivation", censorship, the cult of innocence, the cult of attempting to relate nuptially to God – became child abuse. These days there is evidence that better informed young are less vulnerable. However, without wishing to throw out the socially treasured clerics with the bath water, we must subject social or biological control practices to the reciprocal checks and balances of public, scientific and sceptical scrutiny. And the bioethical recommendations of your committee.

An ironic, but neglected, obverse to the "stolen children" were "stolen brides". If it was "disordered" for carers to separate the young human from its kin and culture, was it also "disordered" to thus gratify displaced maternal drives? Or was the exploitation of benefit to all parties? For those theologians who still employ the "essentially disordered" formula to human behaviour, I submit that a cybernetics approach is similar but more scientific and less dogmatic, because beyond our observation, Mother Nature may have functions, processes and systems unappreciated by us.

This "Feedback" Respectfully Submitted by

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Experiences, observations, opinions on the above invited:
[Church Zoos Revisited.](#)

You can download [Celibate_Bioethics.pdf](#) (226 Kb) from
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From Satirical Verses

read over 3ZZ ABC Access Radio, April 9 and 10 1976
(Paraphrase on Michel Quoist, chaplain to youth clubs)

A growing young lad called Mike
Was aroused by riding his bike.
His confessor said: "Peddle faster.
You'll be seized by your Master.
And be loved by your Lord on your bike!"