1 Where Do Children Come From?

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Is there such a thing as childhood?


“‘In the Middle Ages, children were generally ignored until they were no longer children.’” (p. 168)


“Childhood is thus to a considerable degree a function of adult expectations.” (p. 9)
Why bother with childhood?


Simulation study supports the thesis that slow human growth followed by a rapid adolescent growth spurt may have facilitated rising human fertility rates and greater investments in neural capital. In effect, because dependent offspring are growing slowly, their energetic needs are relatively easy to meet. By adolescence, children should be better able to acquire their own caloric needs, so a growth spurt makes sense. It provides the somatic basis for child-bearing.

My weaving together biological and cultural anthropology is currently out-of-fashion. But I would cite the late Don Tuzin’s chastisement of Marshall Sahlins—the great nay-sayer of the biological or evolutionary perspective. “Sahlins, it seems, would have us ignore these contributions and indulge in that sterile narcissism toward which anthropology is fatally tempted, viz., the reifying error entailed in the autonomy of culture…” (p.67n). Tuzin, Donald (1980) *The Voice of the Tambaran: Truth and Illusion in Ilahita Arapesh Religion*. Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press.
Outline of the Volume

On the subject of neontocracy vs gerontocracy, I found this quote revealing: