In search of Aristotle and Plato – Back door eugenics

“This is the next century
The universal is free
You can find it anywhere
Yes, the future has been sold”
(The Universal, Blur, 1995: Track 7)

Key Words
Boundaries, children, consumption, eugenics, ethics, fashion, grooming, metaphysics, management, parents, practice, otherworldliness, theodicy, wisdom.

Introduction
The issue of ‘work – life balance’ has become familiar and pressing, as modern organizations require increased commitments/obligations. These commitments/obligations have been mediated and influenced by the imperatives of efficiency, production and performance. In order to belong, and to achieve optimal and excellent performance, people are required to work more flexibly, longer and harder. Additionally, socio-economic success, affluence and prosperity is related to and enhanced by consumption. This paper will be situated in relation to this linking of production and consumption. There are of course many issues here. In particular I focus on how family life or the household is being revised in relation to these commercial and consumer imperatives. Indeed I will emphasize, also, how corporate interests have infiltrated the household and family. My thesis is that children are being groomed as/to be consumers. I thus ask – are commercial interests now the head of the household?

I will elaborate on, address and discuss the following. I suggest that traditional centers of authority – parents and teachers – are being compromised and even undermined. As parents spend more time at work, children are thus deprived of parental contact and bonding. Additionally commercial interests are being directed towards children as consumers. I suggest that this interest in, and molestation of, childhood being expresses “corporate grooming”. The paper discusses how the ethical fault lines of this fragmented parental bond, and interference with children as consumers, is concealed, sealed and represented as innocuous and natural. In short, commercial interests have become increasingly central to communal child raising and development (discovery, play, learning, wisdom e.g.).
Household management – wisdom and practice

We are all products of the household. We have all flown the nest. We may even be trying to manage and organize our own family budgets and structures. As such, the household is our primary experience of organized position, community and purpose (telos). Perhaps, then, our self’s first attunement with organized and structured ends. So, what I am introducing is something very familiar to all of us.

What I find particularly interesting about the notion of household is how it remains a place or site for hierarchy and domination. Household management (oikonomia) requires a sovereign or head - someone/ something that reflects and radiates, represents and embodies, eternal truth and light. Therefore the head of the household will be an intellect (nous) or knowing soul. Distinctively, then, an originating and primary centre or cause, whose purpose it is to mediate, and connect, the inside and the outside of the household. Thus regulate, and convert the household into a distinctive form with foundations, boundaries and limits.

We must note, clearly here, how the intellect (nous) or knowing soul is equated with sovereignty or the supremacy of the highest or sharpest point (arête). Nothing is able to go beyond or pass this central point or ceiling. So the knowing soul becomes the receiver and producer of divine wisdom (Sophia). The knowing soul represents and embodies the universal and the absolute. I turn here to Aristotle (De Animia, Bk III). The objects and products of the intellect are pure and untainted. Strikingly, the sagacious knowing soul expresses something otherworldly or a different power - uncomplicated and uncorrupted by earthly involvement (e.g. bodily mediation); or the limitations from other wider and competing worlds and universes – cosmos, nature etc. It would be quite foolish to suggest that our other embodied organs of knowing and consciousness – intuition, perception, sensation, tactility and imagination – play no part here. However, the knowing soul is accorded primacy and independence. The knowing soul becomes the primary cause and mover of worldly and universal things or phenomena.

I use the vacuum cleaner metaphor here to clarify and explain this. The knowing soul sucks up and absorbs all of our bodily messages. These messages then become contained in the space of the knowing soul. Perhaps like household dust stored inside the vacuum cleaner. As such dust and dirt are removed from the house and contained. Thus ready to be disposed of, and emptied. So, the body and our relations to what is outside become subordinated to, or dominated by, this universal prime mover. Notably, our relation to the world has been inverted or turned upside down. The knowing soul replays and recapitulates what we have initially experienced. However, this primordial experience has now been determined by the assignation and designation of concepts, ideas and representations (intellectual property, capital e.g.). These represent the universal.

The head or sovereign of the household, then, should and ought to represent and impart propriety. The head or sovereign should and ought to be able to appraise and oversee the population or place of the household. In such a pinnacled position (leadership e.g.), the paternal sovereign will therefore act in the best interests of, and with the best intentions towards, all family members. This entails and implies making careful, discerning and judicious decisions and judgments. Common sense decisions and judgments that are prudent and level headed. Common sense decisions and judgments that refer back to, and connect with, the specific ends and purposes of the household (form e. g.). So necessary action will be given a direction, focus and purpose. For
example, the need to discipline one’s children can be justified by the ends of household harmony. Conversely, we might also think of how the need to feed the family coincides with the administration and economics of the family budget. So, the particular differences (unruly children, hunger pains/ needs e.g.) of the household can be reconciled with the wider universal imperatives (administration, control, economics, common good e.g.).

Distinctively, then, the sovereign’s activity/actions become in a sense depoliticised and narrowed. The actions are justified and legitimized by the aforementioned imperatives of the household. Therefore, such practical actions also become narrowed. Literally, and directly, the ends (household e.g.) justify the means (action e.g.). What this enables is for wisdom and the highest good (arête) to be connect to the exigencies and demands of family life. Simply, wisdom is brought back down to earth, and made relevant and appropriate. Succinctly, fitted to demands of the household economic circumstances. In a sense, wisdom becomes fitted to, and rendered consistent with, practical action and function. We may appreciate here how wisdom becomes stabilized.

Above we appreciated how, in the first instance, wisdom appeared as something mythical and mystical. Wisdom represented the highest and most excellent virtue. Yet, wisdom could not be seen or placed as a known form or determined object. With no place, wisdom seems almost ‘airy – fairy’ and ethereal (pataphysical e.g.). Air constantly changes direction yet drifts and floats freely, anonymously and lightly. Air is immeasurable and incalculable. Air is weightless and fluid, circulating and breathing. But where is it? Air is all around, yet nowhere. Of course air is so crucial to life (oxygen e.g.). Air discloses nature. Air is divine, generous, passionate, sensational and wondrous. Politically, air refuses human cognitive reason. In turn, air expresses something, rather than nothing or vacancy. Remember, nature abhors a vacuum, tout court Elizabeth Wurtzsel (Prozac Nation).

Distinctively air expresses the aei - or that which is always is (Taminiaux, 2002: 22). As Maurice Merleau Ponty, Maurice Blanchot and Emmanuel Levinas have beckoned - il y a (Bernasconi, 1990). I mean here that air is something significant and experienced. Air is not nothing or nothingness, a vacuum or empty space. Yet quite simply, we quite can’t put our finger on it - air. Yet why is that we try our very best to deprive ourselves of air through industrial and technological advance (pollution, cleaning products, e.g.)? Indeed, we are limited and hamstrung by our inability to think and see air. But we can contact and perceive, touch and sense how air caresses, surrounds and envelops us. We bathe, and are immersed, in air. How is it that air avoids our mental faculties yet communicates with us, so silently? How is it that air is therefore so awe inspiring, venerable and wondrous? Such caressing and envelopment is indeed ethical, angelic and nonhierarchical (Faulkner, 2001; Irigaray, 1993, 2000).

Now, I have not gone off at a tangent here. Or tried to lose and confuse you - the audience/ reader/ crowd/ mob etc. What the Aristotelian knowing soul or intellect substantiates is a place of shelter, perhaps akin to the hollow of the maternal womb, against modification and change. A form of protection against our fear of being alone. This is expressed and gestured through our fear of being out of touch or out of fashion. Therefore, not belonging to the world and feeling inconsequential and insignificant, powerless and unimportant. The knowing soul represents and embodies sense making, comfort and security – a shelter from the nastiness and volatility of our existence. Perhaps, I suggest a (cold) comfort zone? We’ll see.
In order to produce stability (objects of the intellect e.g.) the soul has become separated and protected from the body through a clever and precocious man-œuvre or piece of skill. This sophisticated and sagacious sleight of hand or magic trick enables the soul to lose its ethereal and airy status. As such, the lived body can be circumvented or passed. Literally, the body becomes an epiphenomenon, and left behind/ forgotten. Remarkably, the soul may remain mythical and hidden. But at least it has been designated a function, position or role. The soul is not dysfunctional but operable and working.

Practical wisdom (phronesis) affords us the best of both worlds. We can claim, through the products of human reason, to be able to go on in the world. The knowing soul produces objects of the intellect (concepts, ideas, representations e.g.) that are depoliticised and formulated away from the problems of the world. Here wisdom is located and housed in concepts, ideas, representations, frameworks, boundaries, lines, borders, margins etc. So, wisdom (Sophia) in- itself discloses the highest good (malista agathon). Wisdom becomes bounded and branded, packaged and therefore marketable and consumable. Wisdom has a truth function - to disclose and unveil what is hidden. So wisdom becomes accepted and recognized as able to determine and represent consciousness, life and knowledge. Through this appreciation of wisdom we are able to belong to the world. Wisdom becomes absolute and transcendent. Wisdom is now a theme - a fixed position or state of consciousness. Wisdom now comes to represent being in – itself. As such, being is determined by technological wisdom. Human being is this way rather than that. Human life is thus contained and dedicated (in-itself) – correct, intact, pure. Thus a form or model, which provides a foundation for something to be compared and contrasted with, measured and set against.

Metaphysically, this appreciation and understanding of wisdom takes priority. It provides the dedicated and predetermined (a priori) foundation and framework for practical action or going on in the world. A technical strategy, then, that blocks and prevents the insidious moral evils and noxious substances of drift and despair from surfacing and mattering (meaning e.g.). Or coming up from air. As such, wisdom has technical or use value. Wisdom is thus appealing in this format. Wisdom can be combined and made to belong together with practice. Wisdom therefore can become a currency with exchange value. Consultants, practitioners, gurus, marketers, advertisers and other avant – garde reformers of life and organization are thus provided with fresh possibilities and inspiration and novelty. Or, as I will in due course discuss, provide new ways of entering the self and household. So wisdom has been rescued and retrieved from the aforementioned limitations of airiness. Yet wisdom and wonder are profoundly related. As Aristotle in Metaphysica (Bk 1, Pt/ ch 2: 692) had so infamously pleaded

“the lover of myth is in a sense a lover of Wisdom, for the myth is composed of wonder”.

Firstly, wisdom is now solidly connected to stability and instrumentation. Wisdom has become foundational and impassable. Seemingly, we are prevented from go any higher than human cognitive reason. We cannot get past the roadblock or tribunal of concepts, ideas, representations etc. Wisdom justifies and legitimates. Wisdom is devout, divine and spiritual; cleansed and purged of earthly imperfections.

Secondly, wisdom is tied to practical and depoliticised action. In short, action has been turned to making or production. Practical functional action has indeed been softened up. The household is the natural home of hierarchy, structure and order. The household, given its natural disposition and inclination for self-organization, provides the favourable
conditions for subservience to the sovereign or paternal rule. The household represents, and is understood as, a solid and isolatable object or known form. The household has particular structural features (family e.g.) and contains particular practices (discipline, budgets, cleaning e.g.). Quite literally, rule and domination becomes innocuous and inconspicuous. The sovereign is only doing what is appropriate and right in the circumstances. Through this logical combination of wisdom and practice, the sovereign is able to objectively differentiate between good and bad. The sovereign acts in the best interests of all. For the aforementioned avant-garde reformers and modernisers of management and organization, practical wisdom is indeed an admirable and precious virtue (arête). The display, and performance, of moral excellence, where the nature of what already is (aei) can be reconciled and attuned with what ought to be (household ends e.g.). As Aristotle, in Book Six of Ethica Nicomachea divulged, practical wisdom should be considered as a quality that “belongs to those who understand the management of households or states.”

What I have just announced is how something so soft and airy as wisdom has been given a definite place – the knowing soul. But here, the airy and ethereal nature of wisdom has become technical and instrumental, rather than immeasurable and incalculable. Distinctively, wisdom in this guise serves the best of both worlds. To recall, firstly, wisdom represents something divine and otherworldly, yet separated and unmixed from the body. As such, bodily involvement and lived experience has been left behind. Wisdom represents a place where we go to discover perfect and pure objective knowledge. A sphere or place where we will find and discover divine inner peace and self-knowledge (noesis).

And secondly, this now provides a foundation or strategic benchmark. A place shielded from modification and change. Despite continuous change and earthly problems, the knowing soul is a place, albeit mysterious and hidden, where we can go to find common and universal sense. Now, wisdom is appealing, attractive and marketable. Wisdom now softens political rule and domination. Wisdom can now be used and exchanged in practice. Wisdom can be the wide ranging, embracing and all-inclusive. Wisdom can be distributed and placed in objects or representations of the intellect. Wisdom can be discovered in the acquisitions, purchases and possessions of/ in/ for the household. Distinctively what the household consumes or the vacuum sucks up. Remember, nature abhors a vacuum. As such, nothingness and unaccountability is tidied up. A methodical means to legitimately regulate the problems – in this instance – of the household.

Wisdom then becomes a bureau de change. The practical dilemmas or unknowns (nothingness e.g.) of the household can be reconciled with technical knowledge (concepts, representations e.g.). We might consider how the unfolding dilemmas, events or unknowns of the household disclose the strange, unwelcome and the foreign. In short the alteritas of Otherness. Through practical wisdom the foreign, strange and unwelcome can be converted into the host currency of the paternal sovereign. The Other becomes the Same. Now, known and identifiable the threat has been reduced and no longer stands against, and opposes the Sovereign or constituting force. Oppressive rule and domination becomes innocuous and unthreatening, part of the natural order of worldly things and phenomena.

**Boundaries, children**

Now, I do not want us to forget this issue of naturalized rule or depoliticised action. In due course I will return to this. But I now will question the relation between the inside and
outside of household. Please recall how the paternal sovereign, above, is deemed to be the highest authority, who orders and structures the boundaries of the household. The sovereign is the ‘bread winner’ and must go out into the public domain or outside (work e.g.). Please recall the vacuum cleaner, and how dirt and dust is consumed and hidden inside. Nothingness is avoided. What I refer to here is the relation between the inside and outside. Please recall, how above we might understand the household as a known form. You might for example simply think of your house or home as having legal boundaries, which separate and differentiate you from your neighbour.

What is noticeable is how the boundaries, foundations and limits of the household can be legitimately accessed, entered and revised by that what represents, substantiates or embodies the authority or sovereignty of the omnipotent knowing soul. The boundaries, foundations and limits of the household can be legitimately breached and impeached by the products and objects of the intellect. But the knowing soul here, as disclosed, is indeed located elsewhere. The knowing soul in order to produce clear and objective outcomes must withstand and be separated from earthly contamination (e.g. bodily mediation). The knowing soul must not be compromised, swayed or undermined by the imperfect knowledge of the astronomical, cosmic, social and natural worlds and universes for example. Yet the knowing soul is free and unconstrained, revisable yet stable. Strikingly, the knowing soul is literally ahead or a-head. Untaxed by the body, the knowing soul can stay ahead of events. The knowing soul has clear view of everything. As primary, and unmixed from the body, the knowing soul represents the future. Anything that emerges or is outsourced from this plausible origin or foundation is therefore able to clearly show direction and leadership. As such, the regime of domination and hierarchy can easily revised and replaced by other forms of familiarity, that make sense. Regimes of domination and hierarchy, then, which appear to be depoliticised, harmless and innocuous. Regimes of domination and hierarchy that are free and unconstrained by boundaries (household e.g.).

As such, if parental care or the head of household is too exhausted and too tired from work, then there must be substitute or surrogate forms of divine wisdom that shore up this care deficit (Bunting, 2004: chap. 8) or unnatural vacuum. Or provide ways to conceal the ethical faults (Irigaray, 2000: 182) of undermining parental care/ authority. In due course, reconcile is and ought. If one knowing soul is attenuated (parent e.g.) another duplicate knowing soul can ‘step in’ to the role and function of management.

We should not be surprised at how the family unit is anything but a mathematical form or unified geometric shape. Or simply some impenetrable private sphere or activity that occurs behind closed doors. The contaminating dirt and problems of the outside world of work and society have always seemingly found there way into the home. The home, as a space, then, is not impassable or empty. The security and comfort of the home can easily and readily be reached and breached. Our attempts to realize or understand the hierarchical nature of the household are perhaps doomed to fail. If we try to understand the family as a triad or triangle (father, mother, self e.g.) then the contaminations of the outside social world will always surface. As Gilles Deleuze (1984: 96 - 97) had so delightfully enlightened, the purity and innocence of childhood is continually spoilt and infected by the dis-eases pressures, stresses and strains of the adult world. The child shares and experiences the pain and suffering of mummy and daddy. So, whether it is the worries of having to pay the bills, or the absence of parents having to stay late or come home exhausted, we should perhaps move way from the myth of childhood innocence and naivety. Children experience their parents as fragments, having to
perform different roles, demands and obligations (parent, employee, consumer, manager etc). Additionally, our children are always on close proximity to the adult world. This is not secret. As such, it may be of interest for certain avant – garde reformers to manage this relation. Even bring this relation closer. Or close the gap completely.

Currently, the tropological notion of “hard working families” is valorized and elevated in the political discourses of Anglo – Saxon societies (United States, Britain e.g.). In the 2005 Labour Party Manifesto, strong families are represented and hailed as the bedrock of a strong society. Conditions (childcare polices, laws, tax breaks etc) should be put in place to enable parents to balance work and life (Bennett, G2, 14.04.05: 05; Freedland, The Guardian, 23.04.05: 19). As such, the family or household is integral to, and crucial for, a good society and the common good. The family still seems to capture the imagination and fill us with wonder and interest. We are all able to identify with the family. As already mentioned, it is the place or location where we began, and emerged into adulthood, from. Yet do we ever leave home behind? Or are we ever settled in place, given these aforementioned disturbances, interference and disruption? So, the family or household is not only an ideal model for self-organization and natural rule. Additionally, the family or household is connected to something much larger and transcendent – economic society. So the micro and the macro are connected, linked and related. What happens inside the household is crucial to what happens outside, and vice- versa. Notably, our productive capacity and need for future human resources is dependent on procreation/ birth and child raising. Surely it is sensible to take a healthy interest in, and nurture and protect, such a valued and hallowed institution then? Or is it sensible to close the aforementioned gap, and de-differentiate adult and child spheres. As adults we seem closer to death and the past than our children (Bloch, 1986: 36).

What we encounter here, then, is indeed a concern about our future. Will the world be in safe hands after our generation has departed? Do we care? Will we live on in our children? Will our children be able to atone for our mistakes? Will our children make a better job of things than we have done? What type of world will our children grow into? Searching questions that are perhaps well beyond the scope and constraints of this paper.

Yet childhood is a continual developmental process of curiosity and discovery, learning and questioning; thus a mixture of fearlessness, naivety and wonder. Children never seem to be fazed what they encounter. Children have the wisdom of youth. Some will invoke that banal trope “youth is wasted on the young”. As if the mysteries of youth are inefficient, deficient and dysfunctional. If children get knocked down, they get up again. Childish enthusiasm never seems to be diminished or exhausted by the answers that the world is this way rather than that (Neiman, 2002: 320 – 321). From this appreciation, we might consider how children seem to be entangled (Heidegger, 1962) in nature, and what is. As such, the search for reason, justification and legitimacy or answers are never complete. Wider metaphysical frameworks or established ways of understanding and doing things become attenuated and challenged. In light of what I said previously, children share in the difficulties that their parents experience. But equally children are optimistic and full of hope. In this sense children also have the best of both worlds. They experience the adult and outside world. But also they have the energy and optimism to question and challenge this. Children develop and mature in between is (nature) and ought (reason). As Susan Neiman (2002: 61) had urged wisdom (Sophia) and virtue (arête) depend on keeping these two spheres apart. Yet, what we try to do as human beings is bring these two spheres together. As such, we construct and install
(teleological) purposes and ends. We seek to go beyond the imperfections of other spheres, worlds and universes through industrial and technological means. We impose a design or form on the world. We state how human being in the world should be (superior e.g.), and what direction (progress e.g.) we are going in.

**The beautiful appeal of children and the ugliness of adulthood**

It is perhaps easy here to see the familiarities with contemporary organizational life. The metaphor of childhood has attained strategic worth (Costea, Crump and Holm, 2005; Frank, 2000, Ridderstrale and Nordstrom, 2002). Continuous and ceaseless changes require both innocence and forgetting. People must be oriented to the future. Continual reorganizations mean the continual making and unmaking of identities. As Rolland Munro (1998) suggested belonging must be kept on the move. People must quickly learn and initiate new ways of doing and performing things. Bureaucratic stabilities have been replaced by intoxicated work practices. Old ways of organizing must be forgotten. Distinctively, the practical ‘realities’ of more flexible organizing and changing must also be denied or represented optimistically and wisely. We might consider for example, the intoxication of greater insecurity or the need to work longer, more intensively and harder. These are perhaps, indeed, noxious substances. I refer you to my earlier pontification. Please draw your own conclusions here (insecurity, discomfort, nonsense e.g.). The installed and constructed purposes and ends are of competitive advantage and efficiency. So there is an obvious attractiveness for adults to rediscover their childhood in contemporary organizational life. There is an obvious ugliness for children to experience their parents as exhausted, anxious and ‘under the knife’ from increasing workplace pressures.

**Love of Sophia**

So, most recently, I discussed how child raising and maturation is crucial to our future. I also discussed the strategic attractiveness of the child for/ to contemporary flexible organizing. Bringing these two strands together, my appreciation here is that child raising/ maturation is thus not confined to interior boundaries of the household. What I want to consider, now, then, is that child raising seems to be communal rather than simply familial. I return here to theme of the relation between the inside and outside. For example, how has the child found its way, from the humble origins of the household, into management discourse and organizational design? How and why has the child become the subject of interest to, and interference by, ‘external’ parties or agencies outside the home? What sought of infections and diseases does the child pick up, and suffer from, as a consequence of this journey and molestation?

Notably, I express and suggest that we have not shaken off the double of fold of the Enlightenment. Please recall here how the historical period of Enlightenment (circa 1697/ 17th century) established an “attitude of modernity” (Foucault, 1984: 38). This epoch developed through the confluence of utopian childish optimism with transcendental knowledge. Distinctively, we can exit and escape immaturity (progress, change, transformation etc) through the organization of rationality. I say that we have not departed from this legacy, because Enlightenment brought child development lucidly and compellingly into the domain of organization, management and politics. Aristotle’s self knowledge (noesis) was re-distributed from the head of the household. The child was no longer merely a subordinate or incapable of reason. A departure from Aristotle then (McCumber, 1999: 63), that required that the child be seen (political interest e.g.) and heard (recite rational knowledge e.g.).
The dangers of ‘uneducated’ childhood wisdom such as drift and despair (parental suffering; evil e.g.) could be manipulated by immersion in, and learning from, the ideas and knowledge of the rational and formalised arts and sciences. Enlightenment was at work. Redemption and salvation could become universal and fixed in the consumption of rational knowledge and public goods. Hierarchy was being revised, but not extirpated. Power and influence was being diffused and distributed. The Enlightenment epoch increased and doubled, distributed and extended authority beyond the confines and boundaries of the home or household. The flaws of childhood would make sense and provide a ‘comfort blanket’. Through the consumption and learning of rational knowledge, and the products of rational knowledge, the contradictions of the world could at least be explained and understood. Childhood despair and discomfort, pain and suffering would not be diminished; but at least these existential difficulties could be justified by rational knowledge and public education. Sense making rather than existential security and comfort would be enabled. Those deploying and designing rational knowledge and public education – tutors and teachers – would empower the child whilst manipulating and controlling the child’s world. The fold or borderline crease of the Enlightenment then was announced.

Perhaps most strikingly, what emerges here is the ontological primacy that is once again accorded to the safe confines, and unlimited potential, of human cognitive knowledge and design. We must be alert to recognize that the chalice of authority here – education - is not in any way indiscriminate, unintentional, arbitrary or random. This is not an epiphenomenon. The status of prime mover or originary cause remains transfixed to disembodied rationality (knowing soul). Art and culture produced rational written information (literature e.g.) and stabilized pictures (art forms e.g.). Science produced epistemic knowledge through the rational analysis and investigation of nature (Newtonian laws e.g.). What this discloses is that alternative forms of commitment and explanation – family, church, god, religion – are being gradually emasculated and downgraded. What enters into the child, and what the child consumes – rational knowledge – will thus overcome deficiency and dysfunction. The child will be empowered and spirited through the consumption of rational knowledge.

So, whereas science makes plain and discloses the causal connections of the world, art provides a communicative medium to package, brand and bound this knowledge into a pleasurable and unthreatening form or shape (book, model e.g.). Once more wisdom (identity) and practice (difference) are made to belong together (Heidegger, 1969: 28 – 32). Yet what is most acute here is how the God’s have retreated or been marginalized or downgraded. Our purposes and goals have immense spiritual cudos. Our purposes and goals will shape and form the world. Our predefined and designated purposes and goals will provide the contours to childhood development. In the absence and decline of God, the “love of Sophia” will again be secured and nurtured by something otherworldly and pure. The knowing soul was now distributed and extended. There are two notable points here.

Firstly, this political interest in the childhood development and raising is indeed conspicuous. The use of rational knowledge, and objects of the intellect, once again to appease and justify, conceal and console human discomfort and moral doubt, brings us into contact with theodicy and providence. Of course, we had now successfully interpreted God’s wishes and messages. Nature was full and replete with linear and causal connections. We were now the guardians and sovereigns of (the) God’s will. As such our responsibilities and obligations could be revised and increased in line with our
purposes and ends. Rational knowledge and human organization would allow God to enter into our bodies and souls. Albeit, indirectly and via a detour or check point – man as manager/ interpreter of God’s wishes and design. If we worshipped rational knowledge and organization we could become spiritually aroused and enlightened. Rational knowledge and human organization was indeed a surrogate parent/ God, allowing and enabling intervention and redesign. We had taken over the role of God. Our future was literally present at hand (Heidegger, 1962). We controlled and mastered our own destiny. The world was at one stroke literally and immediately able to be firmly grasped by both hands and thus technologically manipulated (Heidegger, 1977). The world was now literally an open horizon; and available for occupancy and possession. If our children could seize this opportunity, and plunder the world, we could progress and advance, through organized rationality. Through industrial and technological advance we literally could devise and construct final solutions; final solutions that would disclose rather than obscure why we are here, and how we are situated in the world. We thus seek to banish mystery. Is this why youth is so inefficient (waste) then?

Secondly, as I stated, earlier industrial and technological advance seems to work against wisdom, wonder and ethics. Environmental damage (deforestation, global warming e.g.) is being experienced. In our towns and cities, cyclists wear masks and children struggle to breathe or develop allergic reactions (asthma, eczema e.g.). We might consider here how cleaning chemicals (Bosely, The Guardian, 26. 08. 04) and junk food (Radford, The Guardian, 22.08. 00) join traffic pollution and industrial waste as environmental evils (breathlessness e.g.). It seems bizarre that we now struggle for breath and deprive ourselves of air. At least theodic management (causal connections e.g.) and the majestic providence of industrial and technological progress can make sense to us. Again, we consume rational knowledge as children. As Susan Neiman (2002: 56) has so vividly stressed, it is the Sovereign pedagogues or tutor’s role and job to correct the oversights of Providence. The pedagogue or tutor (authority e.g.) must bring together happiness and virtue, and underscore and shore up rational design. As such, through rational knowledge and the consumption of rational products grey areas can be brushed aside or hoovered up by the intervention of the knowing soul.

As such, the dangers of unbridled childhood wisdom become restricted and narrowed. In a sense, the child is given something with one hand (education, reason, understanding e.g.) by a different authority to that than the head of the household. Yet this doubles or folds so that with the other hand the child’s development and maturation is managed and organized. Not only do we witness a doubling of authority (parents, schooling e.g.). We also witness how the child’s curiosity becomes managed and enhanced by technical knowledge. Despair and disappointment at the world must not be an option.

**Reuniting and revising the household and economic management**

What I explicated in the first section of the paper was how action and rule can seem natural and even innocuous. In the second section of the paper I have explicated how childhood becomes communal rather than simply familial. In this third section I synthesize these two strands. I discuss them in relation to the contemporary nature of soft capitalism (Heelas, 2002; Thrift, 1996). I do not want to add a tangential line of inquiry here. Or add an unnecessary and confusing layer of complexity. I simply connect these two strands, and situate my discussion, in relation to emerging de-differentiation and amalgamation of the different spheres of human life.
Now I hope it is apparent how this is pertinent. We have moved from the interior of the household as the primary mode of authority to the outside of the household as an additional and complementary source of authority. As such, the spheres between the household and the public world have been joined. What I understand is that this is an ongoing historical process. For example, we might consider how the spheres between work and leisure, the public and private, production and consumption have been gradually brought closer together. Indeed, it may be argued that the dividing spatial gap, between these different spheres, seems to have become much narrower. Perhaps even indistinguishable (?)

Consumer goods, products and brands are developed with the emphasis upon styling and taste. These consumer items are cultural. We no longer simply want or are able to buy a functional television, for example. The television has many features, and now comes in many forms (different size, width, doubles as a computer etc). Additionally, we can define and extend ourselves through such material symbols. Does the television fit with our lifestyle (home interior, riverside apartment e.g.)? Will I be able to demonstrate my good taste and fine choice to my friends? Will they be impressed? As such, the household television is pleasing to the eye and the senses. The household television says something about us. There is an investment of the self in this product. When we look at this cultural artifact we are able to see something of our self reflected in the product. We momentarily become one through this mirror stage. So, capitalist production and consumption are designed, geared and oriented towards providing us with pleasure; thus stimulating and arousing our affections and fulfilling our desires. Simply, giving us all we want, all we could have imagined and all we could have asked for. Perhaps, we are provided with absolute meaning and fulfillment? Goods and products, then, which do not seem to be representations of rationality and instrumentality, but aesthetic and beautiful. As such, they no longer represent and signify a threat or strangeness. Allowing them to enter your person and home ceases to become a problem. As stated, the knowing soul has already gathered insides from primordial experience. The knowing soul has the key to your heart and home. The knowing soul or sovereign remains a-head by performing a triple function. To direct (what we want e.g.), send (heaven sent products e.g.) and give (what we want e.g.). However, where is taking (profit e.g.) in this performance?

Through participation in consumption and fashion we can overcome, or at least conceal and prevent, those aspects of our existence that seem to be so puzzling or defy explanation. Please recall earlier how I explained that practical functional action had been softened up. As I announce here, the television is seemingly no longer merely a mundane and dull functional object. Our activity of watching and buying a television has become much more complex (choice, features, decisions e.g.) and softened (affection, desire, self e.g.). We engage in emotional labour, tout court Hochschild. Our sense of style and beauty is appealed to. The inside of our home can be dressed up and fashioned by good looking, and nice worldly things or objects. We can live in gentrified designer pads or show homes (docklands, riverside, old church/ character property e.g.).

I am interested in, and surprised here by, how the household is no longer a separate and easily identifiable place. Indeed such a mundane and sedentary leisure activity –as watching the television – has received and be given a lot of thought and attention elsewhere. A lot of human resources (time, money, effort e.g.) are invested and channeled into developing products that are not simply functional; but now seem to define who we are. But as I stated earlier the private sphere of the household is
connected to, and inseparable from, something much larger and expansive. I have appreciated the example of the television because I hope it reveals and expresses how the intimate proximity of the household is entangled (Heidegger, 1962) in a broader field or assemblage (Cooper, 1998) of relations. The household reproduces and reflects the wider relations of capitalism. If we experience something as nice, unthreatening and pleasurable we are indeed likely to succumb to its wishes and charms. Of course, as we get older we do not so easily succumb to temptation (Bloch, 1986: 36). As such, childish susceptibility and ‘wants’ will be of interest to those seeking to avoid, undermine and weaken the values and habits of ‘cynicism’, criticality and past experience. As adults and parents we have ‘wised up’ to corporate scams and disingenuousness. Yet, we are also surprised by the subtlety and sophistication of new attempts to take from us, despite our hesitation, reluctance and wariness. We need to be on our toes, but work commitments and obligations (exhaustion e.g.) nicely ‘square these circle’, to hamper our criticality and reflection. Unsurprisingly, then, new ways have to be found to overcome these limitations of parental discernment and judicion. I have stated just one here (exhaustion e.g.). The familiar purpose is to sell, find new sources of profit and conceal these aforementioned past discrepancies. As such, ‘once bitten – twice shy’ or the vampire metaphor of capitalism (Godfrey, Jack and Jones, 2004, Roth, 1996: 224 – 226) must be denied or concealed. Notably, the vampire implies Satan and death. In short, evil and lifelessness. Quite simply, we find evil abhorrent. As such, we would try to avoid. Additionally, lifelessness means no profit and organization – apart from the funeral (Camus, 1942) and estate (inheritance tax e.g.). Both cases are antithetical, dangerous and subversive to selling and profit, temptation and resource use. Theodicy and providence are at work to deny evil and uselessness.

The fashions, goods and products of capitalism are much more desirable, seductive (Baudrillard, 1988) and personable. Participation in such practices can provide us with ‘retail therapy’; and an escape from, and refusal of, the difficulties of daily life. In a sense our boundaries and defences come down. The younger we are, the more easily we are persuaded and susceptible, influenced and tempted, gullible and trusting. We desire and crave life. We will attach ourselves to anything that fulfills this hope and optimism, or mediates our different stages and experiences of adolescence. We might think here of crutches, props and dependants; or ways and things to overcome our loss, and experience of ageing (Bloch, 1986: 38 – 39). Theatre or tragedy - I am not sure. Notably, all members of the household, even the very youngest, can recognize and become attached to such pleasurable objects. I recall here how the television presenter and celebrity, Lowrie Turner, articulated on a Channel 5 talk show the Wright Stuff in 2004, how whilst bathing here youngest daughter, she had become amazed and surprised (wonder e.g.). Her youngest daughter questioned her mother. She had asked “mummy do you have an unsecured personal loan?” Her daughter, aged under five years, had absorbed knowledge and information from daytime television. We must then be on our toes, and not relaxed in the (dis)comfort of our own home. We might consider here how a variety of information media – television, radio, computer – export and relay these images, messages and symbols into our home. They are not merely function tools or mundane objects. As such, the goods, products and objects of capitalist production are inclusive. They have a broad ranging appeal to everybody or the mass of people. Of course this variety of audio/ televisual media record information. But this information media also transmits, relays, distills and supplants information. I do not think it would be foolish here to suggest how this is part of the cultural circuit of capital (Thrift, 1999). A variety of agencies or avant- garde reformers come together, and combine, to
communicate and relay (Miller and Rose, 1990) the images, messages, symbols values and wishes of capitalist production. As such, wisdom can be contained, located and discovered, beneath the surface, in visible objects and products. Wisdom can be strategically and intentionally located for a particular purpose. Wisdom is therefore practical and technological.

We may witness and appreciate how we have not traveled very far, from the beginning of the paper. Once again, and familiarly, the household and the economy are reunited and revised. Through household management or Oeconomica (McCumber, 1999: 63), the private sphere of the household is made to belong together with the economy in new ways. To reiterate, the head of the household acquires, possesses and understands the quality of practical wisdom (phronesis).

What I notice, raise and bring to your attention here is the objects of the intellect or knowing soul – consumer goods and fashions – are indeed inclusive and extensive. All members of the family have potential access to them. So, the depths of the family have been surveyed and engaged. Moreover, the details of individual family members have also been appealed to and notified. Products and fashions cover age ranges. Even as I was growing up, there were inspirational role models (footballers, pop stars, movie stars e.g.). We might recall how boys will be play with toys, and girls will dress up and experiment with make up. I do wish here to become embroiled in issues of gender. I am simply suggesting that this is not an absolutely new or unusual phenomenon. As such, it remains difficult to be immune to this process of capitalist production. It is perhaps harder now. Initially through the media, maybe, or through the playground or schoolyard, we have all encountered consumption and fashion, from a very young age. However, what I interpret and understand to be different is that consumption and fashion are now crucial to economic success. And this has resulted in, and produced, a deepening and intensification of less pronounced, nascent and past cultural and social practices. What I interpret and understand here is that we have become less suspicious of, and indifferent to, the consumption of rational cum aesthetic goods.

The seductive and manipulative 'must have' and 'must be like' ethos of participation in fashion and consumption I argue is not simply experimental and playful. What I suggest is that previously we might have had a 'take it or leave it' attitude to consumption. Consumption is compelling. One might consider this to be authentic consumer and existential choice maybe? As more compelling (intensive e.g.), it is perhaps easier to give/join in and not stand aside. As such become part of the crowd, and not stand out. I argue that this is problematic. I suggest that capitalist production has assumed, and been given, priority. And here, what I understand and interpret is that childhood raising and development is being influenced by, and made to be coincidental with the requirements of a specific societal maintenance and direction (future e.g.). Additionally, child raising also provides new sources of profits. In due course, this requires the legitimation and strengthening of a 'natural' consumerist ethics. What I understand and interpret here is that this contributes to the undermining of previously existing centres of authority. So, this historical process has reached a new and different stage.

It is now much easier (conditions e.g.) to participate in, accede and succumb to consumption, in western society. For example, the availability of cheap credit, keeping up with the latest turnover of goods and the fashion trends that empower you to become like one's inspirational role model. And this is so individual. There appears to be nobody telling you to buy, or standing over you with a stick and forcing you to become
fashionable. As such, if you are dissatisfied, the connections and links of capitalist production will remain robust. Your disappointment and debt is your fault. No one else is to blame. You should have no reason to doubt the motives, sincerity and integrity of participation in practices of consumption and fashion. What is so unique about this Aristotelian perfect plot (Da Poetica, chap. 13: 1453a 10 – 20) is that the adolescent/teenage problem of self – harm is evinced. At stake here is how corporate organization is utilized to groom children as individual consumers. I will now discuss this.

**Shopping and fucking, breeding and grooming**

The word groom or grooming should not be viewed as a tangential line of inquiry or unnecessary distraction or moment of drift. Groom/ grooming is very much implicated in, and established by, the Aristotelian otherworldliness (Sophia, arête e.g.) that we encountered in the first section of this paper. Groom/ grooming is very much bedeviled by a concern with, and focus on, impassibility and absolute or universal transcendence. To groom, or construct regimes of grooming, is to position one self as representing and embodying the highest and sharpest point (Sophia, arête). To groom is to reconcile the aei, or that which already is, with the ought (should/ must be e.g.). To groom or engage in grooming is to perform the wishes of the highest good (malista agathon), and to serve a set of schema of singular purposes or ends (telos).

Groom/ grooming is a practical activity. It refers to smartening, cleaning, wiping, maintaining and preparing. Some common examples are cleaning household surfaces (work tops e.g.) or preening the body’s surface (make up, removing blemishes e.g.). We should not be surprised that this is a crucial component and resource of managing. Management comes from the Italian maneggiare and to handle or train horses (Lennie, 1999: 22). Integral to this, then, is not only a concern with biological species and bodies – animals. Also, very clearly located and noticeable here is a particular instrumental part and usage of the body – the hand. The hand, of course, through touch and contact allows us to manipulate (mould clay, handle tools e.g.) and seduce (gestures, arouse e.g.). We might, also, consider sexual differences and patriarchal power relations (Irigaray, 1993, 2000) and how the male groom joins with his possession or trophy – bride to be (bridegroom). We might, in reflection take a moment to consider and question – does the horse want to be groomed? Whose voice decides the horse’s fate? Does the horse enjoy being groomed? Does the horse enjoy wearing a harness and stirrups? Now is not the time to stray to the Deleuzian man- horse- stirrup relation (Cooper, 1998).

Groom also expresses a determinate mode of being, existing and living (to be an apprentice or servant e.g.). Not only, registered here is an ontological verdict on, and prediction of, human being, existence and life. Additionally, grooming is combined with a theological judgment and decision on the nature of the aei. A judgment and decision on that which already is and exists out there - life and living, and our humanity and place/role in the world. Now this might seem strange that ontotheology (Heidegger, 1988: 118; 1961, in Malik, 2000) would appear here. But please recall how the rational man has taken over the moral responsibility and supervision of God. Theodicy and providence are now located and invested in meaningful and spiritual public goods. Our doubt and suffering can be marginalized or concealed by participation in the consumption of public goods (education, fashion e.g.). Consumption has become spiritual and divine (theology). Consumption provides a crutch, prop and ligature at times of melancholic loss and crisis. Consumption is also, therefore, ontological, expressing what and how things exist and live. Consumption expresses what is best in human life. Consumption
confirms the universal and absolute. Consumption joins and de-differentiates the micro (individuals e.g.) with the macro (economic prosperity e.g.)

What I see here is how corporate organization and commercial interests are indeed grooming children as particular known forms (consumers, individuals, age range, niche markets e.g.). Additionally, I see how grooming and racial breeding are related. If children can be successfully encultured at a young age to make consumer choices and purchases, then this will prepare children for the adult world. We might be able to buy our children’s affections. Certainly, given the current emphasis on doing more from less, and the difficulties of developing acceptable and workable legislation (child care e.g.), parenting is made more difficult by the demands of the workplace. In this sense, consumer items and products may become substitutions or surrogates for the parental bond. Material goods can replace human affection and care, as the household is undermined by workplace obligations, and the must have/ must be like ethos of consumption and fashion. This is not fanciful at all. We might for example consider “pester power” (Lawrence, The Guardian: 28. 04. 2003) Children are empowered; put in charge of their own mini- budgets (pocket money e.g.) and have cash cards. On shopping trips, children can pressurize and pester their parents for the latest brands, fashions (clothes e.g.) and products (food e.g.). And even household architecture, design and home building are now influenced by maybe the need for a separate parental breathing space or providing children with their ‘own’ personalized demarcated areas (bathrooms, play/ games room e.g.). Pester power now influences the purchase of probably the largest single purchase that we, as adults, will ever have to make – the house (Weaver, The Observer: 09. 05. 2004). Whereas we may have just, if lucky, had an only bedroom (small space, cramped conditions e.g.), or had to share (siblings, hand me downs e.g.), now whole floors (two up – two down e.g.) are/ will be occupied by children. Areas that will, if designated, prevent physical parental access. Of course, such spaces will be kitted out with televisions, computers, game boys etc. So, a particular kind of access and innocuous natural rule will still prevail. For those who are familiar, Harry Enfield’s teenage character – Kevin – might have had all his dreams and wishes answered. His contempt for his parents (“I hate you”; “it’s so unfair” e.g.) will perhaps be solved by such independence and control. As the parent recedes, consumption steps in. Natural and harmless rule then.

At stake here, then, is how in new ways our children are apprentices and servants of a consumer culture. I reconnect here with the current flexible organizing and changing in the workplace. It is difficult to see who is leading whom. Is the tail wagging the dog - or vice- versa? Has the mountain moved to Mohammed - or vice- versa? Why do organizations have an interest in the child? As adults we are increasingly dressing and looking like we are younger (plastic surgery, corporate dress codes, dress down days, celebrities e.g.). We no longer want to accept our natural decline. Heidegger no longer matters. Death has become unfashionable (ageism in the workplace, uncare of the elderly, old values e.g.). Corporate organization must become funky and playful, in order to attract tomorrows talented human resources and today’s graduates. Marx’s gravedigger metaphor has been inverted. Potential for decline and criticism (parental wisdom, criticality, skepticism e.g.) is attenuated by ‘getting at’ the younger generation. With parents consumed by new workplace requirements – for holding down a job and belonging – then it is harder to fight pester power. Those old wives’ tales and maxims ring true. There are indeed ‘more ways to skin a cat’; ‘if at first you don’t succeed’ or there is always a solution to, or ways round, the problem – in this case parental wisdom. This is not as fanciful as we might like to believe or accept. As Jonas Ridderstrale and
Kjelle Nordstrom requested (2000), disturbingly and crudely, “shopping and fucking” are motivators of tomorrow’s human resources or today’s youth. Notably, is it our children who are shaping the future or organization? Or has organization shaped our future? Or are they entangled? Has the future been sold then?

We see in the “shopping and fucking” trope how there is indeed a concern with procreation and breeding. The values of capitalism seem to have fiercely infected and molested childhood development. Rather than a critical mass of anti capitalists (gravediggers e.g.) the goods and products, values and beliefs of consumptions have been strengthened. We might see here how the family is a recording surface (Deleuze, 1984: 120) for the reproduction of soft capitalism (desire, pleasure, affection, revolution e.g.). Consumption and fashion is a continual process of revolution and instability — new products, latest look, new role models and heroes etc. So whether it is the schoolyard or the inside of the home children represent the opportunities for lifetime brand loyalty and recognition and thus new and secure sources of profit. Obligation and loyalty is indeed fashionable and profitable.

Deleuze’s representation of the family as a recording bodily surface for the desires of capitalism connects with grooming — cleaning, maintaining, preparing and servants. Through consumption, the child and household can be ordered (lifestyle e.g.), transformed (self-enhancement e.g.), prepared (consumer organization e.g.). So, the child and household can be cleaned up, decontaminated and purified. Old values and old authority replaced and modified by dominant modes of production and welfare. Commercial organization can provide ways of consoling and concealing the problems of parental absence, friendship, self-doubt etc.

Grooming children to be consumers appears to be sensible, i.e. adulthood, consumer loyalty. The head of the household possesses the quality of practical wisdom. As I stressed, what I see here is how other centres of authority are undermined. Communal raising and childhood development now means that our children are shared and fragmented in new ways. We have come so far from, yet remain so near to, Aristotle’s knowing soul. As I stated at the beginning my question is ‘are commercial interests now the head of the household?’ Natural and innocuous rule is now evinced in the ‘nice’ soft products and goods of capitalism. Therefore, both the inside of the household (pester power, media, workplace exhaustion e.g.) and the outside of the household (schoolyard socialization, peer surveillance e.g.) are entangled and in communication.

At stake here is how our children are being produced for the community. We might consult Plato, from two thousand years ago in The Republic (chap. 7), how sharing the child is eugenically and morally sensible. We have seen how the centre of authority has shifted over time. As Plato stressed, it is the job of officials/legislators to take charge of any children who are born. In this way we can construct safeguards against the deterioration and degeneration of the strains and breeds of the human race. This will be in the interest of the common good (malista agathon), and the organized unity of the community. Our future will be safeguarded. The interests of our children will be best served. Now this does not seem to be at all implausible or pretentious. As the head of Lloyds TSB, Brian Pitman (cited in James, G2, 18. 04. 05) has explained, and vowed, high achievement and progress can spring from children wanting to outdo their parents. So, as Plato and the aforementioned Deleuze recommended, children do not merely witness, as bystanders, the denouement of capitalism. “They (children) act as apprentices and servants in all aspects of war”. War of course involves competition,
strategy and demonstrations of rationality. I will leave you to ponder on this. If from an early age, our children can be exposed to and groomed by brands, fashions and marketing campaigns then “they’ll have no difficulty in following the older people who are their guides to safety if necessary”. So, we encounter that familiar pragmatist trope – sense making and heedful interrelating.

The politics of child raising – back door eugenics

What seems so striking about the trope of “shopping and fucking” is that our children have been included and factored into the equation of profits and economic success. The family is represented as a particular type – hard working. The child is represented as a particular type – consumer. As said no one thing seems to be in overall control. Our children are in training for labour from early age. Breeding and grooming relate to purification and ordering. Our children, therefore, no longer simply play and learn, discover and critically question. Our children, notified and represented as consumers, have become resources to be used, ordered and enhanced. Child labour has taken on a much cleaner look. Schoolyards have become a market place (Caulkin, The Observer: 06. 04. 2003). Through the home and various media, are children can be directly appealed to and targeted (household partition e.g.). This occurs through the obvious (advertising e.g.) and the not so obvious ‘product placements’ (programmes, films, professional sport, pop stars e.g.). Once again the Enlightenment love of Sophia has resurfaced. Consumption, competition and entrepreneurship have now come to represent and appoint the excellent, supreme and superior racial species of human being. Distinctively, through consumption and fashion children contribute to, and endorse, consumer competition and customer choice. Children will impact on the bottom line. Their buying power and decisions will contribute towards corporate success. As now pre-school children or “tinies” (Lawrence, The Guardian: 28. 03. 2003) recognize and respond to brand advertising (loans e.g.). To recall from earlier, children now influence our largest ever purchase.

The reduction of human being takes on a disturbing new emphasis then (from teens to tweens and finally now to tinies). What next? Hook up the ultra sound scanner? One might consider cloning and DNA here. As Jurgen Habermas (in Skidelsky, New Statesman, 2003) recently suggested genetic engineering and genetic interventions will be liberal- democratic. And, such the ends of racial breeding, social engineering and eugenics will be performed and sought through effectiveness of private markets. The invisible hand takes on a different meaning. I will leave you to ponder on this. What I do argue is that we are witnessing the deepening and intensification of the machinisation or instrumentation of human life (Heidegger, 1961, in Mallik, 2002). I am disturbed and amazed, but not unsurprised, by this.

Inspired here by Martin Heidegger, the attempt here is to breed a race of future human resources that will recognize and accept consumption and the values of the customer (du Gay and Salaman, 1992) as innocuous and nonthreatening; natural rule indeed. This is developed away from the house and then applied onto the household surface. Social change can be achieved. We see here how children are groomed and represented as new source of profit; therefore, resources to be used. Additionally, we see how wearing the right branded clothes, or imitating role models will develop and enhance the self. Consumption will act as a surrogate parent. Consumer goods will provide meaning and gratification. Theodic consolation in the face of mummy and daddy having to make ends meet, or keep up appearances, by working longer and harder. Furthermore, we see how childhood is ordered. By grooming future consumers, and inculcating the values of the
customer, tomorrow's human resources are being trained and prepared today. They are already in process. Moreover, they are coming down the production line. But will they be right first time? Will they be minus defects and 'wear and tear'? Will they be ready for use? As seemingly natural and innocuous, yet reductive and totalizing, I suggest and request that this evinces is back door eugenics. Like the tradesperson's entrance – round the back; and out of sight and out of mind. Private (markets e.g.) here means secret and hidden from view. Handy. I do not mean Charles here.

So, we directly encounter again the relation between communal child raising and political organization (Rose, 1989). Consumption, competition and enterprise are not only interrelated and linked. As outlined, they emphasize the highest good and most excellent. What human being should and ought to be. This is a concern with the purification and channeling of bodily energies towards particular ends. Consumption, competition and enterprise symbolically represent a prearranged plan and determination of life and living. The playful energies (discovery, curiosity, learning e.g.) and the wisdom of the child are thus not left to emerge without interest or interference. Notably, this modifying of energies is crucial to individual self-development. As Heidegger (1988: 87) energy is related to self-actualization. We are of course familiar with this in human relations theories of the workplace. However upon reflection, energy here is not simply action and potential without direction or constraint. Energy means to work, and to labour. Energy means to stand on one’s own – isolated and detached. Causes and causation, complexity and uncertainty no longer feature. Energy is not untrained or emergent, but the outcome, effect, or the end product. When the child becomes an adult he/ she will have to stand on his/ her 'own two feet' (empowerment, in- dependent, in- formation e.g.). The child will exit from immaturity (Foucault, 1984) - able to think, independently, for his/ her self; and able to look after his/ her self (political back stabbing, welfare e.g.). But this is not any random or choice standing. Wisdom is not unbounded and unbridled. The child will literally will to power (Heidegger, 1961: 65) from an early age, influenced and molested by the dominant ethos and values of consumption and the customer.

But of course, consumption, competition and enterprise represent and substantiate industrial and technological progress. Again, why do we try to deprive ourselves of air? Childhood wisdom and immaturity becomes disciplined and directed towards mastery and empowerment over the earth (Heidegger, 1961; in Mallik, 2000: 105). The child literally becomes represented and symbolized as otherworldly. Our future will be in good hands if the child becomes a consumer, and a future human resource, motivated and gratified by “shopping and fucking”. Strikingly and distinctively the love of Sophia once again means to efface and deny cause/ causes, limitations/ complexity, and the wider world. As long as the latest trainers or mobile phone are purchased and displayed, we need not concern ourselves about the conditions of globalised production (child labour, slave labour, environmental pollution e.g.), or the diseases of affluence (parental absence, stress, insecurity e.g.). Again, will the children come out right first time at the other end of this production process? Will this 'natural' Kanban system work? Or is this just simply the production of mass again? Or will our children turn into known forms (consumers, human resource e.g.) on demand? I will leave you to appreciate the manufacturing and production metaphors here.

Now corporate organization and commercial interests serve to seduce and manipulate the child’s world. This is indeed an ongoing but revised historical process (post-bureaucracy e.g.). As Heidegger (1961: Vol 1; Mallik, 2000) had voiced this is a historical- metaphysical process. In place of the Gods we have installed metaphysical
thought that emphasizes universal design and final causes. Consumption and the 
customer ethos have not only entered the household, but also the schoolyard (fashion 
rather than dull uniforms, mobile phone’s rather than undivided boring lesson focus e.g.). 
Consumption and the customer have indeed been superimposed on previously the 
previously existing relation between the household and education. Now, do we have a 
 hierarchical pyramid, with children and consumption at the top, and parents and 
teachers at the bottom? For me, avant-garde corporate marketers and advertisers now 
possess and understand the quality of practical wisdom (breached household 
boundaries e.g.). And as I have just stressed, this in process has undermined and made 
parenting (pester power, old values e.g.) and teaching (classroom discipline, uniform 
rather than status e.g.) more difficult and troublesome (discomfort e.g.).

I see the values and ethos of consumption and the customer as updating and revising this metaphysical – historical process. I began with the interior of the household and natural rule. I then followed this to the Enlightenment and the consumption of rational knowledge. I have finally reached now the undermining of these previous centres of power, by childhood participation in consumption and fashion. In the final section of this paper I will now appreciate how participation in fashion and consumption undermines these traditional centres of authority (teaching e.g.). I focus on the case of two Essex schoolgirls who were excluded from normal curricula lessons for having extreme fashionable hairstyles. 

Fashion and asocial corporate responsibility
As already requested child development and raising is communal. And currently through the values and ethos of the customer and consumption this has produced strong interest in the wisdom of youth. Adult behaviour, and one might think of celebrities as a particular example, have sought to refuse the visible signs of the ageing process. One might recall again plastic surgery, or commercial organizations becoming funky and playful. While the adult world of organization seeks immaturity, our children continue to crave and long for adulthood and maturity to arrive sooner rather than later. To what extent corporate marketing and branding has hastened and facilitated this process is not only complex, but also debatable. Underneath the practices of fashion and consumption, our children have not bypassed or become immune to the problems of growing up (self-harm, desire/need for parental bond e.g.). So our adult craving for youth and immaturity is perhaps rather more pronounced and has increased now. But what I see and understand here is that this reversal, and even de-differentiation, of young and old has produced something warped (Plato, R: chap. 11). 

Our traditional values of authority, respect and discipline seem to be under attack. This has posed problems for school discipline. Our ability to spend and devote time to our children also seems to have been compromised by the work ethic. Family stability is influenced and compromised by globalised labour movements and human resource requirements. Maybe this is good or bad? It is certainly debatable. This works against and undermines our parental responsibilities (more time at work, exhaustion, commitment e.g.). I will only skirt over this issue relating to work-life balance here. There are many issues here such as keeping up with the Jones’s, and wanting to also consume and have the latest lifestyle. We also want to look good, young and active. To recall, we want to refuse the ageing process. My concern is at how childhood participation in fashion and consumption clashes with these traditional and previously held values.

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Fashion expresses a style of consumptive behaviour (ten Bos, 2000: 6) that is antithetical to traditional forms of discipline and governance. Through fashion we can express and dress our bodies and selves. Fashion then seems to express our interest and curiosity in the outside world. Fashion concerns how we relate to the Other. Fashion is then related to discovery and experimentation, breaking down how things ought to be. Fashion may not rely on wider metaphysical framework. So, fashion provides a way of living with what is current, and thus defies conformity. Fashion is concerned with novelty and difference. But also, fashion is a way of socializing and integrating us into the wider society. Fashion is then concerned with both autonomy (unique self e.g.) and solidarity (social bond e.g.).

For me, however, fashion has become much more organized and managed. And additionally, fashion does indeed undermine the social bond. Thus, fashion as consumptive behaviour has become increasingly branded. In particular, those that children now imitate (pop groups, football players e.g.,) are highly managed (young, look right, look good, sell records, Pop Stars television programme e.g.) and highly branded (football boots, shirt sponsors, commercial endorsements, management companies, elite brand – The Premiership e.g.), and constant revolution (new younger bands, new football shirts e.g.). Fashion has moved away from authenticity and liberation. The attempt is to control and govern fashion. As Rene ten Bos’s (2000: 6) Barthesian judicition allows, fashion is indicted by manipulation and seduction. I follow this prompt here, and refer you to my point about theodicy and providence. Want I will pursue here is how fashion is alienating. Yet as innocuous (self enhancement e.g.) and harmless, we have seemingly accepted ‘uncritically’, that fashion is not alienating and counterproductive. As I have requested the parental bond is being compromised by a work ethic, which produces exhaustion and insecurity. Parents have to work longer and harder. More of the self is required in contemporary organization. As such, there is less of the self for quality interactions with one’s children. As Madeleine Bunting (2004) has pointed out this produces a “care deficit”. I see here how fashion and consumption have become surrogate parents. Fashion and consumption provide ways of concealing the ethical fault lines (Urinary, 1993: 1982) and flaws (Plato, R: 288) of a society that prioritizes material gain and acquisition, and requires more of the parent to be used and resourced. To recall trainers, mobile phones and other status symbols are desirable and fashionable. If parental devotion and commitment is attenuated, then at least you have the (cold) comfort of the latest accessories.

But here fashion as consumptive behavior is indeed uncontrollable and ungovernable (ten Bos, 2000: 5). Fashion undermines parental control (pester power e.g.) and school tradition (rules, uniform, discipline e.g.). As such, indirectly, social cohesion is undermined by corporate interest and corporate requirements. In short, I suggest and recommend asocial and parasitical corporate responsibility (taking without giving e.g.). As Gilles Lipovetsky (1994: 228) had emphasized, despite the unruly nature of fashion, social cohesion preserves generational differences (child – parent e.g.). In short, respect for and maintenance of ‘old’ beliefs and values. The communal child raising of fashion and consumption, where parents and teachers are undermined, and their roles devalued (non-commercial aspects e.g.) undermines such a community. Consumption, fashion and enterprise are desirous of excessive freedom and hedonistic pleasure. This is a denial of pain and suffering, through the theodicy of the aforementioned life plan. As Emmanuel Levinas (in Bernstein, 2002: 258) voiced, this denial of pain and suffering (parental absence e.g.) refuses and prevents an ethical response. As Plato (R: 303 - 4)
voiced, the reversal and de-differentiation of young and old undermines parental respect and wisdom, and school discipline. To incite Plato

“teachers are afraid of their pupils and curry favour with them, while pupils despise their teachers and their attendants as well. In short, the younger generation starts to look like the older generation, and they turn any action into a trial of strength with their elders; meanwhile, the older members of the community adapt themselves to the younger one’s, ooze frivolity and charm, and model their behaviour on the young, because they don’t want to be thought disagreeable tyrants”.

Isolation and warped responses

This is apparent, given the current concern of school discipline and ‘feral’ youth culture. I refer here to the exclusion, from normal school life, of two girls, from different secondary schools in Essex (England), to explicate and reflect on the above concerns raised in this paper (www.thisisessex.co.uk: 15.06.2001; www.bbc.co.uk: 23.09. 2004).

Both girls indeed symbolize the ‘middle’ “tweenage” category. One girl was twelve. The other girl was fourteen. Yet, in both cases the school rules clearly and strictly stated that hair colour should be natural and neutral. Both girls had extreme hairstyles. Red highlights had been inserted into their hair. This hair colouring was not cheap (sixty pounds). Indeed, a similar price for the removal. Pester power perhaps? The hair colouring was also professionally performed (salon.e.g.). For the schools’, standards had to maintained. One thing might lead to another. Both girls’ parents were surprised at the different schools similar responses. They felt their daughters’ hair colouring was subtle, and the discipline and punishment harsh and an overreaction. The different schools’ elected to isolate the girls’ from mainstream school life (friends e.g.) and normal curricula activity (lessons e.g.). They were even supervised when going to the toilet. Moreover, the girls’ were given a short time frame in order to comply with the school rules, and return their hair to its natural colour.

What this case highlights is the tension between ‘modern’ (regulation e.g.) and the ‘post modern’ (fashion e.g.). I do not like the latter term. The school’s response seems to be remarkable and hostile. We put prisoners and the very worst offenders in solitary confinement. Isolation is tied to depravation (human contact, communication, talk, companionship e.g.). As human beings we existentially dread, fear and tremble, tout court Keirkegaard, being alone. As Erich Fromm (1984: 16) strikingly observed

“The possibility of being left alone is necessarily the most serious threat to the Child’s whole existence”

Yet here we have the wise management practice of isolation. The girls are severed and detached from her friends. It is through relations with others, that we overcome our alienation. They might contaminate their friends with their unruly fashion. The girl expresses the wisdom and courage to undermine the school rules (questioning, discovery, curiosity e.g.). However, the girl can be isolated, represented and targeted as a known object (schoolgirl e.g.). As such, the girl is removed from the complexities and problems of commercial interest or parental absence. The problem is contained. It is the girl(s), and only the girl(s) who is at fault and to blame. Wider difficulties and complications are removed.
So the response and action to the problems of undermined school authority is to dominate and humiliate (shame e.g.) the child. To, reduce and marginalize the girls as known objects and bad. But this is what commercial and corporate interests also indulge in. By reducing and marginalizing human being to a known object allows us to act instrumentally, and calculate on what should be done. The problem of Otherness is solved as, and reduced to an, epistemic question. Theodicy is at work. The action and solution can be justified by an appeal to universal representations and end purposes. The combination of practice and wisdom once again, where purpose, form and universal understanding meet. Here, the girls’ development is harmed by the humiliating practice of isolation (domination e.g.). At the same time teaching is made harder by the incursion of fashion and brands into the schoolyard (market freedom e.g.). Parenting is also made difficult by pester power and work commitments. And, organizations target consumers and age ranges rather than the evocative and moral child. For me, what this illustrates is that we are entangled (Heidegger, 1962) in something warped (Plato, R). As commercial organization has increased in power and centrality, other centres of power and obligation are being/ have been undermined. The response, in this case, was, to conceal the ethical fault lines of school rules and commercial infection.

Concluding paper remarks
This is indeed a complex and huge area. There is no way I could possibly hope to be robust on all points. I have had to skirt round and steer away from a lot of topics and issues. This paper is not intended to wade into, or act as a consultancy device for, the problems of school discipline or decline of the family. However, what I have raised attention to is the historical metaphysical process, which frames our understanding of communal child raising and the determination of life. Sadly, I have also been unable to state clearly that this process is not linear and uniform. I see socio-economic change being attempt by policy makers, legislators and other reformers and modernizers in many different ways. For me, classical metaphysical thought (Platonic – Aristotelian) provides a way to legitimize, frame and develop ideas, practices and solutions etc. Ways to change and determine human life in accordance with universal and totalizing principles and values. I see here how the child as Other becomes an epistemic rather than ethical question. For commercial marketized organization, the targeting of children makes good business sense – brand loyalty, new profits, future human resources etc. Again, I do not claim this to be ideal or absolute. This is only an indication of how commercial interests have become ascendant and pivotal to the organization, development and reform of society. This works to decenter and undermine parents, teachers and children alike. As I shown through the case of isolation, the contaminating dirt and debris from this change process is evident. So, I do suggest that we (will) all experience the consequences of; whether we have a family or children of our 'own'. We are not immune or separated from this. As such, this is an issue of care and concern for all of us as human beings; this concern relates to our common humanity. As such we must ask is it wise that commercial interests are so pivotal to communal and familial child raising? Therefore, should we love this Sophia? I am now breathless, and therefore will stop at this point. I am going outside to ‘get’ some air. I’ll have to wait a moment, though. The road is busy. Where’s my mask?

References
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