

Introduction

Many of us have had the feeling that something wonderful was about to happen, that life was full of promise and that we would play an important part in making the world a better place. This passion and idealism blossoms during adolescence as we look at the world with completely new eyes. In this program we are going stretch our limits by discovering completely new ways to look at young adults. As in the other interviews in this series, Joseph Chilton Pearce will challenge us, in this case by asking that we consider that adolescence might actually be very different from what we think it is. He suggests that adolescence may really be the cumulative effect of both false education and a failure to fully develop our potential. Please read on as Joe helps us discover how the passionate search for ideals and ultimate models, which begins during adolescence, brings us to *Evolution's End*—the threshold of pure spirit.

Joseph Chilton Pearce

Let's look at the adolescent as a member of a genuine group of, lets say, the mid- teens or perhaps even simply the teens, even though adolescence is by and large an arbitrary category, a recent creation for a group of people who have no place: since there is no room for them in the economic scheme of things, an artificial category has been created. Nevertheless, there are some very genuine things about adolescence that I would like to take up.

I've done many workshops with Betty Stailee of the Steiner School, the Waldorf School, and the college in Fair Oaks, California. She has turned out a remarkable book called *Between Form and Freedom*, which is a study of the adolescent, published by Cygnus Books. *Between Form and Freedom* contains some marvelous insights. There are three facets of the adolescent I would like to bring up that are not ordinarily mentioned. You will find these, I'm sure, quite resonant with you. The first of these characteristics—idealism—is one that we've already taken up. It starts around age eleven, but hits a kind of critical, acute level by about fifteen. The average person may look at the adolescent and say that idealism is the craziest thing they've ever heard, they don't have an idealistic bone in their body, look at their models, and so on.

But in actuality—Betty made this so clear to me—they are acutely, painfully idealistic. This starts at about eleven and grows until to about fourteen or fifteen, when they start looking at the world through totally different eyes.

This is the age when suddenly our children start dropping behind us on the street; they don't want to walk right with us. Have you ever had that happen? For years my children looked up to me as though I were God; I liked that very much. And suddenly they hit this certain age and they're looking at the old man and noticing he has dandruff, he's kind of bald, kind of small, and not so much after all. In schools, our little children march in beautifully, say good morning teacher, and they're loving and obedient and so on and all of a sudden they hit this age and they're looking at the teacher and they say, what do you know; they're challenging the teacher every minute. The teacher is offended by this, threatened by it. What's going on? Well, it's nothing of their own doing. They're looking at the world through a prism, with a new perspective, and they're looking for a model that will match their idealism. That's all they're doing.

And they're looking at us through this idealistic frame of reference that has suddenly appeared and they find us falling short. They weigh us and we are wanting, as the statement goes. We're offended by this but we have to understand that at this point they need a model that matches their idealism. And what are we giving them? Quickly examine the models we give our young people.

Who are their models? Pop stars, rock stars, movie stars, sport stars, the Donald Trumps, at best maybe the political stars, and so on: these are their models. On every hand—and I say this without indictment, no one means to do this—the models betray what the young person is looking for. They simply betray them. They don't match up. They're not what they're after and they don't fit the need. And since what we give them is not appropriate, they keep looking. And at a certain point—which is happening earlier and earlier—what happens? In place of the idealism comes despair, a loss of hope of finding a model, cynicism, anger, frustration, and the adoption of models who represent the exact opposite to what they're really after. And this comes about from their feelings of futility and helplessness: they'll never find what they really want.

So they do choose antiheroes. Instead of those who measure up to the virtue and uprightness that they felt at age eleven, they pick the punk star who says don't kill me I'm already dead. That's what they wear on their t-shirts, *don't kill me I'm already dead*. And they all practice at this, they play it. They have to be tough, sophisticated, and cynical, to deny their idealism. Why must they deny it so vigorously? As MacBeth said, "The lady doth protest too much." They deny vigorously because it's too painful. Their loss of idealism is too painful to them so they pick anti-models and, of course, society is anxious to provide those for a price. Billions of dollars are made from the frustration and rage of young people.

Now let's take the second thing about the adolescent, which will start up somewhere around fourteen or fifteen and by sixteen is so painful that it is literally a weight in a person's life. I call this the *great expectation*, is the feeling that something tremendous is supposed to happen and supposed to happen *right now*. Young people wait for it instant by instant. I spoke about this with a radio announcer, one of these tough guys who batters around his guests and plays the tough role. I asked if he could remember being an adolescent and feeling that something tremendous was supposed to happen in his life. He said, "What do you mean remember it? I've been waiting for it all my life and it hasn't happened yet, I don't think it ever will." He continued, "I thought every corner I turned it was going to happen; every time I went up over a little hill it was going to happen and it never did." I love that; this feeling of great expectation really speaks for us all. Everyone knows the constant anticipation that something is supposed to happen.

My favorite example was a letter from a young man in a university back east. His parents in New Mexico said he loved his third year of college. As a junior he was a star in every way: he was an athlete, he was popular, he made top grades, everything went his way. It was wonderful. He loved his school more than ever, but something happened that he had to try to share and there was no one to share it with except his parents. He told how he awakened one night with "the cold hand of terror clutching my heart." And he said, "What it was, I suddenly remembered that since I was fourteen I'd been waiting constantly for something tremendous that was supposed to happen and I woke up in the middle of the night realizing that I was almost twenty-one and it had never happened yet and the thought occurred to me, 'suppose it never happens and I never even know what it was supposed to have been?'"

The issue wasn't that he couldn't bear the disappointment of it never happening, but that he couldn't bear not knowing what it was supposed to have been. This is the adolescent. I think of George Leonard writing in *Esquire* about in his sixteenth year in Atlanta, Georgia. He and his young friends would get together for bull sessions that would last all night long, exhausting all topics—women, sports cars, racing, and so on—until they finally got around to this terrifying subject. There's also this gesture toward the heart; he spoke of an anguished longing so intense we knew it could never be assuaged. And the problem is, it can't even be articulated. It can't be put into words. All the young person can do is kind of futilely gesture toward this great anticipation of something tremendous that's supposed to happen.

The third issue is the feeling of hidden greatness as a person. Hidden greatness. At sixteen I was working a full-time civil service job; I was quite an anonymous little person but I was just exploding with hugeness inside. I completely fooled myself. I used to think that even though I'm walking down the street a complete unknown, if they—you know how teenagers always refer to "they"—just knew who I really was they'd all stand back and make way for me. But I didn't know what constituted this greatness myself or how I was ever going to let everyone know about it. Doesn't that register with us all during that teenage period? This feeling of secret hidden uniqueness; that feeling that nothing like me could have ever happened before?

When I first read Thomas Wolfe back in the 30's, his books—*Look Homeward Angel*, *You Can't Go Home Again*, *Of Time and the River*—were huge monuments and remarkable works because he expressed this whole thing as perfectly as it's ever been expressed. So did Salinger in *Catcher in the Rye*. You'll pick up a lot of this from that. So what's going on with this plight of the teenager? Look back to those growth spurts and developmental periods: first there are birth, age one, four, seven, eleven, and then we speak of fifteen as the end, the final stage. Piaget didn't see signs of any further developmental stages. But Rudolph Steiner did. He stated that the full mature ego doesn't appear until age twenty-one. He spoke of many further developmental stages. But none of the biologically oriented developmentally astute believe this. Carl Jung spoke of further stages, but no one else did. Now we do know that the brain seems to mylinate completely and there are no further detectable brain growth spurts.

Marianne Diamond says, "Well if you challenge the brain enough, it will continue to develop throughout life," but all of this is on a different level than we talked about before. We're back to the three levels of the brain. I must call this hypothetical, even though I know it's not. The first fifteen years have been devoted to coming into dominion over this whole physical process and all learning that has taken place has related to this, and rightly so. Then by fifteen sexuality has appeared and what is sexuality all about?

Well, it's still drowning us in the physical re-focusing our attention on it. It's a very happy drowning. We become completely hormonal and vitally aware of our bodies at that point. And we become locked us into our society because only through regular social channels can that sexuality achieve it's end. All of this is essentially physically oriented to complete the species. At the same time, intuitively the young person knows that they're erratically incomplete. Here we approach conclusion that current research is heavily indicating. It's a big debatable issue and there is no consensus, but there is strong suspicion that the great frontal lobes—evolution's latest thing—are absolutely not developed at fifteen.

What I find most exciting—I've mentioned it three times already—is that these frontal lobes are still laying down their tracks throughout childhood. They are still completing their development throughout adolescence and not fully mature and ready to function totally until early maturity. Therein lies the key to what the adolescent is all about. They realize this incompleteness. Why do they always gesture toward their heart? They do so because this is felt as a great yearning of the heart. This isn't just metaphoric, it's felt physically as a pressure in the heart that comes up like a lump in the throat.

Thomas Wolfe spoke of it as the "great bursting in the throat of this anguished longing." This is the intelligence of the heart. We have to go back to what we were talking about: all those recent discoveries of the role the heart plays, particularly with the limbic structure and its organizing functions, the emotional relational brain. The heart is an endocrine gland. And then we have to go one step further and discuss the **singulet dire*s area of the limbic system. According to Paul McClean, this highest part of this great secondary or mammalian brain system has what he calls "species survival itself" and branches directly into the frontal lobes.

Now briefly and hypothetically, the reason that anguish is felt here is because this mysterious unified field within us is literally longing for expression, and it's full opening into it's expression can only take place through it's instrument called the brain. All the rest of this brain structure has been devoted to what? To simply giving us our experience of a physical life and a physical body and our interaction and relationship with it, our ability to procreate and do all these other things and keep the show going. Now we're ready to open up an area that is absolutely un-programmed.

Paul McClean said that the frontal lobes have to do with compassion, a kind of universality, sympathy, love, nurturing, and care as exemplified by that which is awakened by the infant/mother interaction at birth: a passion that seizes the mother's whole life and directs her to nurture that infant at all costs. Why? It's connected with those frontal lobes. Now we have the possibility that through that mother/infant interaction the mother is able to access her own frontal lobes and all of the possibilities they contain. The child is literally teaching the mother instant by instant, and this teaching that might lead her into her own greatest realms of being.

In his recent book about sexuality—a very profound work—George Leonard gives strong indication that at its highest levels sexuality literally accesses the frontal lobes. Now in nearly all of our spiritual traditions we have the idea of denial. Evolution's mission is this: to wean us away from our identity with lower evolutionary structures and instead use those as the foundation of a move on to higher evolutionary structures. It's that simple. We've intuitively known this for a long time. What, then, have we tried to do in the past?

At the root of nearly every great spiritual system—this isn't to denigrate them, they're all mind-boggling and vastly beyond me—is the concept of denial, which comes about as they form into strict religious structures. How are we going to wean ourselves away from the lower structures? Well, we try to deny them. We try to cut ourselves off from them. In periods of great religious frenzy back in Greece, young men used to emasculate themselves on behalf of a goddess. Why? To try to cut themselves off from all aspects of the lower structures. Of course, this is tremendously self-destructive and not what evolution is about at all. Elkhart said, "When the higher incorporates the lower into its structure, it changes the lower into the nature of the higher." And it was George Leonard who caught onto that about sexuality. This is something I claimed in my fifth book, *Magical Child Matures*: that this intense emotional peak of adolescent love could itself be a way to enter the whole realm of the spirit, but that something happens and it generally ends in disaster.

This is part of what the adolescent period is all about: a longing for completion. I made a serious error in *Magical Child Matures* and perpetuated it in *Evolutions End*. I saw this longing in adolescence to be a longing for the opening of another development period. I was exactly right about that. There's no question. There are a lot of books coming out now about post-operational thinking—what should happen after fifteen. Some brilliant work is being done.

At fifteen there should be a brain growth spurt instead of a closure. There is no way around that. Then at regular three and one-half to four year cycles, we should go through a series of developments precisely as we did during the first fifteen years. There's no question about it. And these should be the discovery of what we could call the *wave-form* aspect of the particle world that we have created and come into dominion over. Simply put, the ability to move up into higher and higher echelons, or realms, of the creative process. This is being recognized little by little and it makes perfectly good clear sense.

The only problem is to assume that this great inner venture of the spirit won't work on the part of the adolescent. Adolescents just don't fit that pattern. Why? They are completely locked into their hormonal life and their life in this body; the great delight in the body and the desperate need to move out into the social world and prove themselves. All of which is a critical part of nature's plan. But, as they go out to explore the world and all that it offers, exactly as they should, becoming a part of society and becoming parents and all of that, at the same time everything should be preparing them for the final maturation: the movement into the realm of the unknown, the true spiritual realm that evolution is pushing us toward.

I believe that from about fifteen to thirty we're simply going through a developmental period to lay the groundwork, the bridging between, the localized experience here in the world and the totally non-localized experience of what we generally lump under the heading of the spirit. What we need is a new lexicon of the spirit. We need a completely new vocabulary to cover this; I think we've ruined all the old words concerning it. They're tarnished. They've been overloaded with such nonsense that they're no longer much worth to us.

Carl *Ume said, "When a symbol loses its power, you simply have to let it go." Most of our great symbols have lost their power and I think it's because of their misuse. We need a new symbology of the spirit in this period of transition from our complete embedment in this marvelous, joyful life of the body to the joyful life of the body of the spirit. And it's always the body, there's no doubt of that. Even when we move into a hypothetical pure spiritual world there would still be the body. In the transition stage that is adolescence we lay the groundwork for this final stage which should occupy our mature years to unfold; if it did you would certainly find a different ball game than we have today, with the great despair we have in our older people, and so on.

Gail Sheehy's book *Passages* was similar to some of the young improvisations and has something to be said for it. I thought there were some profound errors, but there's no need to go into that. If you're looking at these stages through the eyes of the world it's folly. You won't really get a clear image that way. You have to look through the eyes of the greatest beings we've ever had if you want to get a clear idea of what it's all about.

I think *post-operational thinking* is a good term for this intermediate period that the adolescent moves into. We would then find the overall cycle of our life falling beautifully into this cycle of competence patterns. Our first fifteen years have roughed in the whole ball game. The second fifteen years we need to fill in the details by getting out there and doing it, becoming it, taking it on ourselves to be that great figure, the adult, the parent, the member of society, and so on. And then comes what? The period of practice and variation? Yes, in a way, and the moving into the realm beyond our identity or continuing to be locked into an identity associated with the lower structures.

This is that anguish of adolescence. The adolescent is totally hormonal on the one hand and enveloped in an anguish of longing on the other. If you have talk to him about misplaced libido and so on, how he must discipline himself and give us this and give up that and the other if he wants to know the spirit, something is wrong. I look at the great disciplines which have depended on denial and see it as best a trade-off. Incorporation of the lower into the higher and transformation fit much better into the evolutionary pattern. Transcendence, moving beyond, but as you move beyond everything goes with it or it's not a whole movement. So that's what is involved in adolescence and that's evolution's intent. Adolescence is the preparing ready for the opening of and focus on the frontal lobes—but the frontal lobes aren't even complete yet, they're not complete until early maturity.

Now you wonder, what could frontal lobes possibly have to do with anything? I ask you to recall again what all current scientific evidence strongly points toward: our universe organizes itself within the neurons of our brain and presents itself to us that way. We interpret it as an external event, which it is, as the result of this operation. This isn't to deny the reality of the outer world, it's simply to say that our perception of the outer world is an interior construction by the brain's system.

And the brain system, with it's trillions of neural connections and possibilities, can translate the whole universal scheme of things into our experience of perception. If it can do that—and these great frontal lobes represent a huge chunk of it—remember that it's estimated that only about 10 percent of the neocortex is actually developed. It might all be involved, if the integrated circuitry is, but we don't develop a great deal of it. There's a difference between development and usage; you use it out of default because it's going to respond. But with lack of development it responds very weakly.

I've used the analogy of usage as opposed to development because this would take care of all the arguments of the scientific people if they would just look at it. In regard to muscles, as I say my warranty is running out, times getting late, but I'm very active. I'm sure I use every muscle in my body every day. But if I should show you the sad strings hanging about my limbs you would see a striking, unbelievable difference between them and the huge dirigibles, the enormous balloons on the arms and chests of our muscle men and women who push weights. That is, both of us use our muscles, but one of us develops them. The difference is astonishing.

We all use everything in the brain; the issue is how much we develop. We use it by default, we have nothing to do with it. But there is the possibility of developing it. In studying some of the recent work of Jay *Dackenbaugh and others in dream research at the University of Virginia, Stanford University, and up in Canada, suddenly it occurred to me that dreaming is one of our most undeveloped intelligences. It is simply awaiting development. Carl Jung laid out a magnificent plan of action to start developing dreaming as an intelligent activity and now it's getting into full swing. Some of the things you can do with that modality are awesome. I haven't gotten into any of that today and I won't have a chance, but you ought to look into what's going on in group dreaming, shared dreaming, lucid dreaming, and so on. We're beginning to discover that we can develop it rather than just use it. And the same thing is certain of the frontal lobes. What then do the frontal lobes have inherent within them?

You want to know? Nothing. Nothing at all, because they have inherent within them everything. At a certain point everything is nothing. That is, they represent the total and complete unknown. The unknown. Now the interesting thing about the frontal lobes and the realm of potential which they have inherent within them is that you discover their possibilities only through interaction or participation with them. The unknown articulates or forms according to the nature of your entry into it; you're constantly getting a "knowing" that is a reflection of your own way of moving into the unknown. I tried to get into that in the last two chapters of my book, *Evolutions End*; it's a rather tricky subject.

I refer you to Meister Elkhart, certainly one of the primary heroes of my life, when he said, "To enter into that you must drop everything known." He also said, "No name, no identification, no knowing can be carried into it whatsoever." He called it "the cloud of unknowing." Other people have written about the cloud of unknowing. What does it mean? Well, you're entering into darkness—the unknown—but it articulates as pure light or pure being as you enter into it. So it's a purely participatory process, infinitely open and possible. That is really the end of evolution. Evolution's looking for a way to surpass itself, in effect. Evolution is looking for a way to move beyond it's own physical process and we are it. I think even the discovery lasers and those of other things never existing before are just little examples. Evolution breaks through with this and enlightens the mind of the discoverer and he writes it all down feverishly and it brings something totally new into the universe. That is part of this whole evolutionary scheme.

This is going to wind us up for this business of adolescence. I would summarize it by saying that what we need in this new lexicon of the spirit is emphasis on the fact that there's no giving up of anything because we have nothing to give up. It's ego on our part to think we have anything we can trade off with the evolutionary process. As a result, there's no denial, because when you start denying, you're saying there are parts of the evolutionary process that should not be evolved. But we carry it all with us. We are the totality of the evolutionary process; it's all within us. This is what McClean kept saying: we carry it all within us—or none of it. There is no denial or trade-off, but instead the incorporation of the lower into the higher. And that's something we can't do ourselves.

In my book I proposed that there is an incredible intelligence—power, force—which we can say expresses itself in an evolutionary fashion. It is always there to move us from the lower structures to that highest of all structures. And what do biologists now say is the reward system of the brain? It's in the limbic structure, in the emotional cognitive system and its direct connections with the heart. So what evolution must do is wean us from seeking our rewards in intellectual play with the physical system and show us that there are even greater awards in this totally unknown open-potential system. That is where evolution will achieve its greatest end. The problem with that is, of course, establishing access to this open-ended field and learning to operate as simply a field within a field. That plunges us into some heavy philosophical stuff. The access to the field is achieved through models. I know of no other way.

The idea has to be planted in your mind. I think the reason for the appearance of semantic abstract language at age eleven is not just that we might understand physical or chemical terms and so on; only through an abstract semantic language can we have presented to us the possibilities of an open-ended structure that has no content but creates content according to the nature of our entry into it. So it never repeats itself and it's never the same from instant to instant. Everything is always new. It's an exciting proposition.

This brings to mind a marvelous, heartfelt question someone asked, "All this is just great and exciting and we hear a lot about it and it's kind of the new age, but what are we going to do specifically? What can we do about the riots? What about kids killing themselves?"

To applying some of this first we must be able to distinguish between being responsible to the world and being responsible for the world. I'm responsible to the world. Every action I make I have to make in response to the needs of my situation, the situation of the world I'm in. But I'm not responsible for the world. The minute I think I'm responsible for the world I will project all the business you see; that's kind of playing God. It gets us into some pretty tricky areas. So we're not responsible for the world, we're responsible to the world.

As a parent I was not responsible for my children, I was responsible to them. There is a certain amount you can do for your children as a parent and then there comes a point after which there is no more you can do. If you're a parent you know this to be true; you just have to go along behind for awhile and pick up the pieces of those kids and put them back together as best you can. You've done all you can. My teacher George *Jaydar once said, "We've done all the damage to them we can do by the time they're eleven years old." That might be true, but nevertheless we are responsible to them, even when we are not responsible for them.

The second practical step involves this, which applies to me as well as nearly everyone: my attitude toward my neighbor is my attitude toward the world. We've got to watch this. We generally interpret changing the world as changing our neighbor's behavior. Think about it. All of your passion to change the world basically means changing somebody else's behavior. On the other hand, if we're only responsible to the world there can only be one behavioral change available to us—our own. It is important to never resort to moral, ethical levels.

I know that sounds strange. We have a whole group of young people who are damaged, and our government and people in authority revert continually to moral, ethical rhetoric concerning it rather than dealing with the biological damage that is actually at its root.

Where does the damage come from? How can we address the damage itself before it happens? That's the issue. If we say that these young people are simply unethical, they kill each other, they're immoral, they do this, that, and the other, we have lost the game right there. The answer isn't to pass judgment upon them, it's to trace the damage—where does it happen? There is a certain human norm that has sustained the species from the beginning and deviations have to be questioned. The great question is, why? Scientific inquiry should be addressed to where the damage is coming from. That's what we can do, and that's what I've tried to do here. I'm not just here to set up an awful scenario. The fact is that if we look closely at the problems we'll find at their roots very clear errors, which can generally be boiled down to the biological.

Now let's get into some really tricky areas. I've had a lot response to both *Magical Child* *Matures* and *Evolution's End*, letters from irate readers who have complained that I keep talking about the mother—what about the father? I ignore the father. Well, I'm not purposely ignoring the father. I'm concentrating on the mother because she is the most critical issue. At the risk of offending every woman here, I think the mother is primary. This is the primal matrix. (The word matrix and mother are of the same root, as you know.) Matrix means the source of the material from which life springs: that's the mother. Fathers are by and large secondary. At best they are poor substitutes for the primary. They can function as such in emergency, but it's a poor substitute. It's compensation. Our problem today is the loss of the mother. The species is losing the mother. And this is no joke. What do we mean by this?

Plato said—this again can be a great insult to women; I've been almost lynched for it at times—"Give me a new set of mothers and I will give you a new world." The power of the mother is that great. The power of the father is not that great. Why? Because it's secondary, not primary.

The role the father plays in evolution is different. It's important, but without the mother the male really can't play that role. That's the big thing about it. Lose the mother and the whole male aspect is lost along with her.

On the other hand, saving the male does not necessarily work the other way. So we're dealing with the loss of nurturing and the loss of the capacity to nurture. America's children by and large suffer enormously from the lack of nurturing—not from you enlightened parents who already know about this. We're talking about 70 percent of them out there in American society. There is a serious breakdown in the emotional nurturing of children and that's what this so-called bonding is about. Myth or not, the emotional nurturing of the child is the critical issue.

To my way of thinking, women have bought into the male folly. They've bought into the male cul-de-sac in a certain sense and nurturing is what is being lost. These are dangerous and politically incorrect statements, but what I find happening is that women are aping the graces of the very male intellect that is robbing them of their power. It may be a defensive process, but it is as though after being threatened, backed into a corner, and stripped of their power, they decide to adopt the tactics of the force that is doing so. But they've regained the power of the male intellect—which they have anyway—at the cost of the female nurturing intelligence, and that is serious for our whole species. They are rejecting their own strengths in order to adopt the strengths of male intellect.

The strength of the woman lies in her being the mother of the species, in accepting and not rejecting that role and being the source of nurturing. Lack of nurturing is the reason for the enormous male rage which faces America—male on female violence is at an all-time high. We've never had anything quite like this in history, particularly in the black society of America: males assaulting females and battering them beyond all levels of reason. Why? Because the male is radically un-nurtured.

The female role has changed dramatically since World War II. A marvelous book about the role of women and the whole history of early America has just come out. We had women in the kitchen of the American farm; 100 years ago 96 percent of the population of America lived on farms. The farm was the lifeblood of the nation. What was the heart of the farm? The kitchen. A farmer without a wife was absolutely crippled. What did she do? She ran the kitchen, the heart of the whole enterprise. She ran the kitchen gardens, the putting up of the food, the taking care of the cows and chickens: she was the direct source of food. She was the bookkeeper of the organization. She fed the hired hands. She brought the children into the world, nurtured, fed, and educated them—and they ended up remarkably well educated by and large, certainly literate. All of this she did. She was the kingpin, literally the hub around which this huge enterprise called the farm spun.

Read the personal accounts of women's lives in those days. They were not necessarily grim. I've read magnificent, glorious accounts of the woman's role in that time and how she met it and the joys therein. This also was the extended family. She was the hub of an extended family, not just a nuclear family of mother, father, and child. There were many people there to help, to take over, to give her rest from those children and so on and so forth. It was a big give-and-take and a community in itself.

Little by little this changed. By the end of World War II it had changed dramatically: 4 percent of the American population lived on farms, 95 percent lived in the cities. Now what do you have happening? You have a woman whose place is in the home and whose place in that home is in a kitchen that isn't the hub of anything. All of a sudden the kitchen doesn't mean anything. You have all sorts of prepared foods; the kitchen's an instantaneous place, it doesn't require much. There is a huge industry to fill that kitchen with what it needs; she doesn't really need to even be there, so to speak.

The kitchen was not that in the 19th century. It was the center of everything. But we put the mother to work during World War II because we had to have her in industry and she discovered something interesting. Because of this great shift that's taken place there's no longer a place in the kitchen for her to flourish—but she can flourish in the marketplace. She discovers that she can run the industries. She can do anything out there that anybody else can do and that's what she wants to do. She discovers she has loads of talents and capacities that can now be expressed in totally new ways. They can't be expressed in the kitchen any longer, it no longer counts for much.

So there was a dramatic shift for women, but immediately everything polarized. When I was teaching college in the fifties and sixties I constantly heard this coming out of the high schools: "What's the matter with you, don't you want to make something of yourself? Do you want to just stay home and have babies?" As though that were the lowest thing they could do—the failures, the drop-outs, the quitters would stay home and have babies. What did that do to the mothering instinct of the species? It denigrated it, put it as the lowest function in society. What's the answer?

When we get into the issue of daycare you see. If the modern woman began to have children daycare was necessary—so she could go out and take her rightful place in society. I've heard many young pregnant women sitting in their offices talking about their pregnancies and telling me, "Oh, yes I'm only going to have to be gone for two weeks and I'll be right back on the job, I'm not going to lose much time."

She's apologetic for the time she's going to take off to have her baby. "Oh, I'll be right back," as though she's abandoning her post. And so we have daycare, and it's a bad solution. The mother is no longer the hub of that whole universe. The answer is what is happening in so many other countries. Simply let her take her infant with her. That's what's happened throughout human history. Never did the woman abandon whatever she was doing—she put the infant in a little sling and went right on with her work. I was the last of eight children, all born at home.

My father was a newspaper man, he owned newspapers, and my mother didn't like to stay at home at all. We couldn't have hired help. My mother would come home and have her baby, then simply lug us off to the newspaper office. She liked to run my father's newspaper. He was the editor but she kept him going, and I cut my teeth on linotype. My world was the world of that newspaper and I loved every minute of it. It was a fantastic place. I had lots of other worlds—woods and streams and rivers and all that kind of thing too—but I could be with my parents in their workday world and I wanted to be.

I was right there at the scene of action and my brothers and sisters were too. That's one solution. What we have to do is have industry simply provide for the care of the children and mothers so the mothers have continual access. It would save the nation trillions of dollars. We find that the child under age four can take about two hours of separation from the mother and love it, but after that, anxiety starts coming in. So you've got about a two-hour period at a time before the mother needs to check in. How easy it would be to have daycare right there in any industrial or office situation. You have to incorporate that into society rather than have this terrible polarization and separation. This striation of society—locking kids up in a special place completely isolated from the rest of society—isn't working.

It isn't working now and it won't ever.

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The answer is not for women to have to choose either/or if they don't want to. If they elect to stay home and have children then we should give them every conceivable opportunity to. If they elect to work and have children we should make that possible as well, because we pay a dreadful price when we don't. These are some of the approaches that we can take to this, but at base is the critical issue of the revival of the nurturing one, the mother, the matrix, the source from which everything in our species derives its energy and strength. Without that we're in trouble. That's what my book is about. That's what most of my books have been about. That's why I concentrate on the mother rather than on the father. I know it's a thorny issue and I've received extremely excited letters of condemnation over my position, but I think it's a strong one and I believe I'm right that the nurturing of our young is the critical issue—as well as the nurturing of the male species. They're a fragile species. That intellect is here for a very special purpose, don't think it isn't, but you have to nurture it. You have to take care of it or it will destroy itself.

Do you remember what Richard Wagner, that enormous genius of the 19th Century said when he saw the woman who was—unfortunately, but it didn't stop him for a minute—the wife of Hans Von Bulow? He said, "In that woman I saw that which would save me from myself." This was one of the great motifs running throughout his dramas: that the man sees in the woman that which will save him from himself. By this the whole species is lifted up.