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Fire Eater! Editor

The Haunted Boy Club

1 December 2005

Today marks the fifteenth month since my wife and I rescued our grandson, Kana, from a birth-mother and a birth-father who chose to abandon him at birth. Today also marks the day when we will be forced, by the State, to turn him back over to those same birth-parents. We said our goodbyes last night. We took movies of each of us playing with him, tickling him, and doing all the things that have made his life so far one of happiness and safety. Later, as he lay in my arms for the last time before going to sleep, I thought of all the boys, including myself, who were abandoned as children, and how, in the case of each of them, the State has, without exception, sided with evil.

I am sure that girls are being hurt out there as well, but there is something particularly disturbing about what is happening to boys. I first became aware of the "war against boys" when I wrote, several years ago, a song called *Haunted Boy* for the album of the same name.

The Haunted Boy Club

> *I am looking*
> *But I can't see*
> *I pray to God but*
> *He never answers me*

Of course, God does answer, but to a tiny boy it seems that the answer will never come. Those abandoned boys grow up haunted; haunted by the missing part of themselves that can never be found. Haunted by wondering whether or not it was their fault that they were abandoned. Haunted by a world of adults who could abandon a child because he did not fit their "lifestyle." And the Haunted Boy grows into the man haunted by all that abandonment means and teaches.

In her book, *The War Against Boys*, Christina Hoff Sommers makes the argument that the moral depravity with which children, both male and female, are inundated nowadays, goes back to a battle between Aristotle and Rousseau. Like Augustine after him, Aristotle, about 2400 years ago, insisted that children need clear guidance on how to become moral human beings. Left to themselves, children would become little better than barbarians (and the ancient Greeks knew a lot about barbarians). In short, Aristotle thought that children needed moral direction and discipline. As Sommers notes, even nowadays Aristotle's views "represent commonsense wisdom about child rearing."

Of course, commonsense doesn't necessarily rule the day, does it? The neo-pagan, Rousseau, the philosopher of the so-called "Enlightenment" (which the author, Peter Gay, called the new paganism), decided that children are, to use a phrase from a popular song by Sarah McLachlan, "born innocent." Rousseau saw children as essentially noble creatures, full of innate virtue, corrupted only by "an intrusive socialization." This view was, of course, completely in line with the paganism of the Enlightenment, which rejected the Christian idea of original sin. To Rousseau, children were born free of sin, and inherently good. "Let us," he said, "lay it down as an incontestable principle that the first impulses of nature are always right. There is no original perversity in the human heart."

Notice the phrase "the first impulses of nature." Rousseau is anticipating the thoroughly modern world of crass materialism in this phrase. Another phrase for which he is famous is "the noble savage," the idea that human beings are essentially good as long as they are in the state of nature. Interestingly, Rousseau himself was an irresponsible parent, placing his own children in an orphanage as soon as they were weaned. He explained his immorality by saying that he would have made a poor father. While not denying the *argumentum ad hominem* here, it is even more interesting that Rousseau died in 1788, paranoid and poverty-stricken.

Who was right, Sommers asks, Aristotle or Rousseau?

> Aristotle wins the argument in the court of common sense and historical experience. he certainly wins with most parents....But it is Rousseau who powerfully dominates the thinking of the theorists whose influence pervades modern schools of education.

Rousseau also won against the Judeo-Christian world, with his brand of paganism assuming the ascendancy in our times, when moral education is considered politically incorrect. As Sommers said, we "are just emerging from a thirty-year experiment with moral deregulation. The ascendancy of Rousseau as the philosopher of education and the eclipse of Aristotle have been bad for all children, but they have been especially bad for boys."

Rousseau has also reached into our courts, as Sommers also elaborates, with schools no longer able to regulate the very values and traditions with which they are charged to teach. In the court that awarded our grandson back to his birth-parents, it is telling, and factual, that the judge ignored a) the abandonment of the child, b) the testimony to the hard drug use of the birth-mother, and c) the best interests of the child (the latter simply ignored).

So today we release our grandson, currently an almost unbelievably happy child, into the waiting darkness of a world gone mad. All that is moral counts for naught. Ironically, it is I who am responsible for talking his birth-mother out of aborting him in the first place. Did I err in doing so? Of course not. But it is a question that will haunt me nonetheless as he develops into what most children develop into given the hippy-dippy, relativistic child-rearing "philosophy" of today. It is a question that will haunt me because I will naturally wonder whether or not I have succeeded only in inducting him into the Haunted Boy Club for the rest of his life.

> *I am waiting*
> *For you to say*
> *"I'll take you with me,*
> *I'll take you away."*
> *What a Haunted Boy.*
> *Such a Haunted Boy.*

Today, when little Kana goes forth into the world that Rousseau helped to make, I will know enough both to pray for him and to weep for him, for the Haunted Boy Club is no place for a child. May the Lord watch over you, sweet boy, for one day He will indeed take you away from the pain and the sorrow into the Light. Where you belong.