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SPEAKER *PRO TEMPORE*

What if the dark side of human nature were the result of standard child-rearing violence?

What if human nature were originally good but was corrupted by totally inappropriate child-rearing techniques?

That is what I will attempt to demonstrate, honourable senators.

[*English*]

According to Olivier Maurel, author of the book entitled *Oui, la nature humaine est bonne!*, published at the beginning of this year, standard child-rearing violence is a set of violent actions that have been and continue to be used, tolerated and often recommended for raising children and making them obey.

Why do we use child-rearing violence? Parents use violence, although often well-meaning, because they think that little taps, spankings and other blows or punishments will have an impact on children's reasoning, attitude and memory. They believe that children will not misbehave in the same way again because they were punished for their incorrect behaviour.

That is what today's society thinks of our modern Galileos.

Slightly more than 50 years ago, in 1957, many child development experts working in the fields of psychology, paediatrics and neurobiology developed scientific theories that shed new light on old beliefs. These contemporary Galileos believed that standard child-rearing violence causes varying degrees of disruption to a child's personality that has a ripple effect throughout our society.

[*Translation*]

And how did they reach that conclusion? For some 16 centuries — yes, honourable senators, 16 centuries — it was thought that human nature was inherently evil, that it had to be beaten and tamed, that children had to have evil driven out of them and replaced by good by dint of blows, spankings, whippings and strappings.

That has been our civilization's prevailing paradigm for centuries: the inherent wickedness of human beings, and therefore of children.

To keep things simple, I will focus only on how children are seen in Christianity because that is the faith community to which I belong, but most religions are similar in that regard.

It all starts with a Biblical proverb, "Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child; but the rod of correction shall drive it far from him", and our interpretation of the word "foolishness."

According to scripture, it is said that "Blessed are the poor in spirit" — they were not talking about senators — "for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." That is from Matthew 5:3

The poor in spirit were therefore respected in Scripture, and in the proverb, "foolishness" did not mean dementia or mental illness, but lack of wisdom.

CRIMINAL CODE

BILL TO AMEND—SECOND READING— DEBATE CONTINUED

On the Order:

Resuming debate on the motion of the Honourable Senator Hervieux-Payette, P.C., seconded by the Honourable Senator Carstairs, P.C., for the second reading of Bill S-209, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (protection of children).

Hon. Céline Hervieux-Payette: Honourable senators, I must now turn your attention to a rather less exciting matter, but one that, in my opinion, will have a much greater impact on our future as a society, a country, and a world leader.

There are some things that people refuse to see, but later regret having ignored.

As honourable senators know, in 1633, Galileo was condemned by the Catholic Church and forced to recant his scientific belief that the Earth was not the centre of the universe. The scientific community recognized its error a century later. The Catholic Church took somewhat longer and did not acknowledge its error until 1992.

Honourable senators, we have our own Galileos today, those with a scientific conviction that child-rearing violence is the cause of many more ills than we are prepared to believe.

But if it takes violence to instil wisdom, then you will see, honourable senators, that that is contradictory. That would amount to saying that wisdom means submitting to the father's or mother's will, the parent's will.

Originally, child-rearing violence was intended not only to correct the child's misbehaviour, but to remove the child's original sin so that he or she could find wisdom.

In the first three centuries, there was still some uncertainty about the state of human nature before baptism, and this was the case again following Vatican II.

But in the 5th century, based on the interpretation of Holy Scripture, Catholicism invented the doctrine of original sin, according to which:

God, the creator of natures, not vices, created man pure, but man, corrupted by his own will and rightly condemned, begat corrupt children condemned like him.

Saint Augustine later theorized that the proof of original sin lay in a baby's cries when it wanted to be breast-fed. Thus, the most natural possible behaviour became a sign of original sin.

Olivier Maurel writes that all over the world, even in Christian countries, where the cult of Baby Jesus was developed, children have been — and in many countries still are — treated with contempt.

In fact, in contrast to the parable of the prodigal son, where compassion and the son's freedom triumph over punishment, Christian churches have always called for child-rearing violence, which was probably the only method that existed at the time and was passed down from generation to generation. And as a Quebecker, I could talk about how the Duplessis orphans were mistreated.

[*English*]

This belief in original sin has been resurrected many times over the centuries, either by Christianity, as I have just discussed, Darwinism or psychoanalysis.

The theory of the child-animal grew out of our understanding of Darwinism. This assimilation of the child and the animal gave rise to the idea that human violence is rooted in our animal nature and that children's instincts must therefore be tamed or mastered. Morals must be instilled in them through a form of child rearing that is itself violent.

This, too, is an incorrect interpretation. Darwin says that our moral sense emerges as a consequence of evolution and does not run counter to it. Furthermore, no animal has ever equalled the barbarity of humans. Need we remember that the worst crimes committed in 20th century Europe emerged from the most civilized society on the continent?

[Senator Hervieux-Payette]

We do not humiliate and beat children or raise them using violence because of our innate nature or brutishness. No, honourable senators, this is a learned behaviour that is specific to our culture.

[*Translation*]

I said earlier that psychoanalysis played a significant role in this belief in original sin. I would like to refer to Freud's correspondence, which clearly attests to the fact that his own theory on the Oedipus complex was biased. Unable to incriminate a father who commits incest — as many fathers did at the time — Freud completely distorted Sophocles' tragic play from which he drew his theory.

In Sophocles' tragedy, Oedipus is convinced that his adoptive parents are his real parents and learns of an oracle's curse that he will kill his father and marry his mother. That is what happens.

It is worth noting, however, that in that tragedy, Oedipus does not know that the person he killed is his father or that the person he married is his mother. He is a victim. Remember that Oedipus was abandoned because his father wanted to escape the oracle's curse, after having fallen in love with the son of the king who had welcomed him in his home, abducting the king's son and raping him.

On the other hand, in the Oedipus complex theory, Freud transformed Oedipus into a killer. For Freud, Oedipus is driven to kill his father in order to commit incest. According to Freud, it was a subconscious desire, of which there is no trace in Sophocles' tragedy or in the original myth.

• (1530)

How did such a deformation come about? Freud retold Sophocles' tragedy when he reversed his own position. In January 1886, Freud wrote to a friend about his discovery: the neuroses of his patients could be traced back to the sexual abuse they experienced. But he also talked about the "hostility" engendered by this "truth." In February 1897, in another letter, he stated that the neuroses observed in his brothers and sisters must have resulted from the actions of their father, which he euphemistically termed "seductions." It should be noted that Freud was particularly fond of his father. However, in September 1897, Freud called into question his theory because, in every case examined, the father had to be accused. Freud believed that this recurrent accusation was not intolerable, just simply impossible. It was impossible to generalize to that extent the culpability of fathers, including his own.

Thus the Oedipus complex theory was born and, oddly enough, it became quite possible to generalize the culpability of children. I must add that Freud did not analyse children, even though he is known as the father of psychoanalysis and played an extremely important role in the 20th century.

Hence, as Olivier Maurel wrote:

The more one believes that sin is inherent in a child, the more one believes that it is necessary to expunge it and the less one believes in his innocence, the less one acknowledges and respect him, and the deeper the child is plunged into violence.

[English]

Honourable senators, I have spoken at length about Christianity, Darwin and Freud to demonstrate that the conscious and unconscious way in which we view our children and our child-rearing methods is based on mistaken interpretations and misinformation that has been circulating for centuries. It is only since 1957, with the discovery of the traumatic origins of duresmatoma among infants, that our own awareness has grown.

I would remind honourable senators that the world "maltreatment" was coined at the end of the 20th century, not so very long ago.

[Translation]

How can such an error in judgment about human nature have persisted throughout the ages? How can some of us support it even now? Because these practices, honourable senators, which have been passed down both orally and in writing, are considered sacred. Because child-rearing violence has been an accepted part of all societies for as long as humankind has walked the earth. Once we began to believe that children were innately violent, child-rearing methods became secondary. Because, for generations, children have denied what they have been subjected to in order to protect their parents, and sometimes have behaved just as their elders did. Both society and scientists have either denied the facts they observed or interpreted them to their advantage. Parents have always claimed that they are simply exercising their parental rights and that children deserve corporal punishment.

As Olivier Maurel wrote, the custom of beating children led to, then spread and cultivated a negative notion of the child, who then reinforced the belief in the need for violent discipline and even preventive punishment.

Studies have shown that, in addition to manifesting all of the psychological, sexual and learning disorders that can result from standard child-rearing violence, adults may also lack a sense of empathy and compassion and exhibit a certain inclination to submit to authority.

It is worth noting that some of the worst atrocities have taken place in societies with brutal child-rearing methods, such as Germany and Rwanda.

As Maurel pointed out,

The groups of people who have allowed themselves to be seduced by warped and demagogic discourse that led them to catastrophes have almost always been those accustomed to authoritarian, violent child-rearing practices

Obviously, violent child-rearing does not necessarily produce future humanitarians.

If this method worked, given that far more parents have employed child-rearing violence over the past 16 centuries than have not, our societies should be much more peaceful by now. But they are not. On the contrary, the fact that individuals exposed to

repeated violence as children are far more likely to engage in delinquent behaviour, vandalism and sexual abuse proves that child-rearing violence does not create more peaceful societies.

What is more, standard child-rearing violence has negative economic impacts: increased spending on health, school dropouts, and increased spending on prosecutions and arrests.

No, honourable senators, child-rearing violence is not innate. No, it is not programmed into our genes. It is said to have appeared when prehuman communities became more sedentary. But child-rearing violence has been the most commonly used child-rearing practice for thousands of years.

Olivier Maurel asks this question, which I would ask you in turn, "Throughout history and still today, do we know men as they are or as they became after being traumatized in childhood by the upbringing they endured?"

[English]

Honourable senators, it is time for us to listen to our Galileos. It is time to assess the little-known yet devastating effects of the child-rearing practices we have wrongly maintained for centuries.

In Bill S-209, I propose that section 43 of the Criminal Code, which authorizes parents to use force to correct their children, be repealed and replaced with a new section. This new section was passed by the Senate in the previous Parliament, based on events in New Zealand — a Commonwealth country that abolished section 59 of its criminal code in 2007 — and unanimously adopted by our Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee.

Under this new section of Canada's Criminal Code, parents would be authorized to use force in only three cases: to prevent harm, to prevent criminal conduct, and to prevent excessively offensive behaviour.

[Translation]

As 25 countries have already done, it is time Canada entered the modern age and carried on its tradition as a peace-loving country that honours human rights.

Honourable senators, it is time we abolished standard child-rearing violence, and above all it is time we enabled Canada to fulfil its responsibilities under the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which Canada ratified a number of years ago but has not implemented.

For the love of our children and future generations, I encourage you to support Bill S-209.