

**child youtubers and specific goods of childhood:
when exploration and play become work**

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abstract

This article explores the nature and consequences of being a successful child YouTuber as a new form of both child labor and play in the social media era. This new child activity can in principle act as an enhancer of child autonomy, creativity, and some specific goods of childhood, such as play, and exploration. However, the impact of becoming a micro-celebrity as a video blogger at a young age is to some extent underexplored. Thereby, I bring into the ethical discussion the specific conditions of this activity, such as overexposure, and adultization. By doing so, I show how it can turn out to be a threat to child's well-being and well-becoming, especially in relation to the identity construction and intrafamily dynamics. I highlight its double role as both an enhancer of childhood's specific goods and child vulnerability, especially when it becomes a silent form of subjugation. Thereby, I suggest that the strong version of the precautionary principle could be a normative guide to balance the children's need to explore and autonomy without jeopardizing other specific goods of childhood and their well-becoming.

keywords: parasocial relation; youtube; microbloggers; vulnerability; social media.

***youtubers infantiles y bienes específicos de la infancia:
cuando la exploración y el juego se convierten en trabajo***

resumen

Este artículo explora la naturaleza y las consecuencias de ser un niño YouTuber de éxito como una nueva forma de trabajo y juego infantil en la era de las redes sociales. Esta nueva actividad infantil puede en principio actuar como potenciadora de la autonomía infantil, la creatividad y algunos bienes específicos de la infancia, como el juego y la exploración. Sin embargo, el impacto de convertirse en una microcelebridad de blogueros de video a una edad temprana está poco explorado. Así, traigo a la discusión ética las condiciones específicas de esta actividad, como la sobreexposición y la adultización, mostrando así cómo puede convertirse en una amenaza para el bienestar del niño, especialmente en relación con la construcción de la identidad y la dinámica intrafamiliar. Destaco su doble papel como potenciador de los bienes específicos de la infancia y de la vulnerabilidad infantil, especialmente cuando se convierte en una forma sutil de subyugación. Así, defiendo que la versión fuerte del principio de precaución podría ser una guía normativa para equilibrar la necesidad de exploración y autonomía de los niños sin poner en riesgo otros bienes específicos de la infancia y su bienestar.

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palabras clave: relación parasocial; youtube; microblogger; bienestar; vulnerabilidad; redes sociales.

***youtubers* infantis e bens específicos da infância:
quando a exploração e a brincadeira tornam-se trabalho**

resumo

Este artigo explora a natureza e as consequências de ser uma criança YouTuber de sucesso como uma nova forma de trabalho e brincadeira infantil na era das redes sociais. Esta nova atividade infantil pode, em princípio, atuar como potencializadora da autonomia infantil, da criatividade e alguns bens específicos da infância, como a brincadeira e a exploração. No entanto, o impacto de tornar-se uma microcelebridade de blogueiros de vídeo com tão pouca idade está pouco explorada. Assim, trago à discussão ética as condições específicas desta atividade, como a superexposição e a adultização, mostrando assim como pode tornar-se uma ameaça para o bem-estar da criança, especialmente em relação a construção da identidade e a dinâmica intrafamiliar. Destaco seu duplo papel como potenciador dos bens específicos da infância e da vulnerabilidade infantil, especialmente quando se torna uma forma silenciosa de subjugação. Assim, defendo que o ponto forte do princípio de precaução poderia ser uma normativa para equilibrar a necessidade de exploração e autonomia das crianças sem colocar em risco outros bens específicos da infância e seu bem-estar.

palavras-chave: relação parassocial; youtube; microblogger; bem-estar; vulnerabilidade; redes sociais.

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introduction

Over the last decade, child YouTubers have become an increasing reality. However, when approaching the ethical² debates on child work, it is a common view in philosophy of childhood to focus on the relation between child work and poverty, sports or show business, assuming so that child YouTubers are to some extent an unproblematic reality in terms of child work and children's well-being.

This article aims to foreground an increasing reality for children in wealthy countries that may imply ethical challenges on how to balance some specific goods of childhood, such as exploration and protection.

The implicit paradox in those cases of child YouTubers who have become successful turns out to be especially challenging for children's rights protection: what can be a source of autonomy may become at the same time a source of subjugation, and a threat to child's individuality.

On the one hand, having the chance of creating their own content, sharing their views, and communicating with others may contribute to develop children's autonomy, as well as it may help them articulate their own voice, connect with peers, and explore their individuality.

On the other hand, when these YouTubers reach a certain level of success, it is not rare that this activity may end up being the source of income of the whole household. As a result, parents start managing their websites, their image, their publicity contracts derived from their channel, and so the like, directly contributing to the new family business. This changes the initial sense of the activity, evolving from a game to a job. This shift in the intentions, nature, and code may result in letting the

² I use "ethical" when I refer to the philosophical discipline, that is, the reflection on moral topics, and "moral" when I refer to the human ability of thinking in terms of good/bad.

child unprotected in an overdemanding situation where she has lost the control of it. As a result, the child may – conscious or unconsciously – end up carrying a burden that may not be adequate for her age in terms of family responsibilities. This surely entails an impact on parental dynamics, where the child may eventually suffer some sort of epistemic bias not knowing that she has the right to quit that activity, or assuming an adult's role in the relationship, as the parents may end up over-parenting, just to mention a few examples. Thus, what started as a source of autonomy may become a cause of invisible subjugation as well as a reason for subtle loyalty to what is now a source of family income, altering the intrafamilial dynamics.

At this point, the ethical question arises: how can children's autonomy be respected and guaranteed without adultizing them in the process, that is, without sacrificing specific goods of childhood? In other terms, how should their need to explore be materialized in order not to fall into a form of neglect?

In order to address this question, I will explore the advantages and disadvantages of this new form of child work and its complex reality where intimacy, and the boundary between the private and the public sphere seem to vanish. I will especially focus on how what in the first place could work as an enhancer of childhood's specific goods can become a silent form of subjugation and vulnerability, jeopardizing those same specific goods.

To do so, it is necessary to elaborate on the following elements from the chosen theoretical framework. As preliminary clarifications, first, I will focus on children and preadolescents. That is, I will concentrate on those who start as children and reach adolescence being successful YouTubers, as experiencing this phase of change under this circumstance may put the minors in an especially vulnerable yet underexplored situation in terms of mental well-being. Therefore, I will not address here issues concerning adolescence and young YouTubers. Those who start later, from 13-17, may already count with some set of certain skills, and maturity compared to those starting during their first childhood, when emotional and cognitive skills are in a more

vulnerable and crucial phase. Obviously, both phases of life imply vulnerability. However, having developed more cognitive, relational, and emotional competences may reduce to some extent their vulnerability. As Schweiger and Graf perfectly describe in relation to the paradoxical relation between autonomy and vulnerability during childhood, “children’s autonomy can be considered both a vulnerability enhancer and a vulnerability diminisher” (Schweiger and Graf, 2017, p. 245).

Thus, the decision to place the focus on children instead of adolescents is guided by two reasons: on the one hand, children’s especial vulnerability, and, on the other one, the need to continue building a theoretical reflection on children and childhood, as a group deserving philosophical attention *per se*. By doing so, this article could contribute to surpass the traditional overlook on the dilemmas of children *as* children, a path already started over the last decades on philosophy of childhood³. Moreover, many YouTubers are popular by the age of 8 and enter their adolescent years in the spotlight: Clodett, now 13 years old and with almost 3 million subscribers after years being a YouTuber, is an example in Spain, as Juliana Baltar in Brasil or Sophia Grace in the United Kingdom, just to mention some well-known cases.

Second, I will not address here the questions regarding those children who try to be successful as YouTubers and do not make it. Failing and not being able to achieve a certain goal or recognition is in fact challenging and a potential source of trauma and vulnerability for child’s mental well-being. Likewise, those situations require parental support, for the child to be provided with the necessary tools for self-regulation, and a healthy set of coping mechanisms. This points to the caregivers’ responsibility and ability to provide realistic visions, prevent disappointments, and manage frustration. However, this situation does not differ from the experience of those failing at being child actors, singers, or models, or even as outstanding students in overdemanding households.

³ On philosophy of childhood, see Bagattini and MacLeod (2015), Schweiger & Graf (2015), Archard (2004) or Gheaus (2015b).

While the negative consequences of being unsuccessful or not achieving a goal are similar, being successful as a child YouTuber generates some unique conditions that are not replicated in other traditional child activities, and that may jeopardize their well-being. Thus, without dismissing other unjust situations that may derive from both social networks and child work, I aim to delve into the particular factors of this specific case. To do so, I will defend, as I will develop in the following sections, how being successful in this new field puts children in a qualitatively different situation, when compared to traditional show-business or sport child work. At this point, it is enough to highlight the fact that succeeding as a YouTuber has some implications that may jeopardize the child's well-being, in addition to those related to the monetization of the activity: the child is working from home, her room is her filming set; and family life and the private sphere merge with the public one, given the nature of the activity they are sharing online.

It should be bear in mind that child Youtubers share parts of their everyday life. Their activity consists in sharing videos unboxing games and toys, talking about their favorite activities, explaining tips on some hobbies, i.e., singing, dancing, make-up, etc. This differs from actively taking your child to a filming set, a casting or a training field. Here, the public activity is interwoven with the child's intimate and private ambience.

Again, this election does not mean a lack of awareness of the potentially dangerous sides of other child activities, which would deserve attention on its own. Rather, this election is due to the idea that this case also deserves an ethical exploration *per se*.

Also, in relation to the new forms of experiencing childhood, I will not focus on the impact of the internet on childhood, that is, I will not address questions related to screen-addictions, fandoms, etc., which are related to how child YouTubers' subscribers deal with this new virtual way of social interaction. Thus, although the

problem of covert advertising and the impact on child consumers' behavior is pertinent, those topics would surpass the perspective and scope of this article⁴.

Finally, regarding the theoretical framework, I will address the ethical questions concerning child YouTubers, when this activity becomes successful to the point of becoming an important source of income, with an especial interest in the psychosocial aspects for the child's development. Thus, I will connect the discussion to the well-being and well-becoming of children. These concepts provide an integral perspective to address aspects of the present and the future of the child (Schweiger, 2015). Likewise, I will combine these concepts with the idea of specific or intrinsic goods of childhood (Gheaus, 2015a), and vulnerability, since a truncated specific good translates into a child vulnerability. Also, I understand these tools in relation to the Capability Approach (Nussbaum, 2011). Indeed, well-being and the specific goods of childhood are linked to capabilities, and well-becoming can easily be associated with functionings. In this sense, the three conceptual tools, i.e., well-being and well-becoming, the specific goods of childhood, and child vulnerability, are interwoven and may offer a fruitful way to delve into the discussion and formulate normative suggestions.

The article will proceed as follows. To begin with, I will address the idea of specific goods of childhood compared to adults from the Capability Approach perspective. Second, I will explore the reasons in favor and against this activity. In order to do so, I will delve into how the new context may enhance children's abilities, such as agency and autonomy, and, as a result, may reduce some kinds of child vulnerability according to those defending work as a way of empowerment. Finally, I will delve into the seen and unseen risks of the exposure and monetization of this activity in terms of child personal integrity and well-becoming. In order to do so, I will apply the theoretical perspective previously mentioned. To conclude, I will suggest some pathways to protect the child without sacrificing the specific goods involved in

⁴ On this regard, see Lira *et al.* (2017).

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this new activity.

the capability approach: functionings as specific goods of childhood

In this section, I aim to address the elements of the theoretical framework I will use to analyze the specific case of child YouTubers. By doing so, I expect to show how the different tools previously mentioned are theoretically connected and can provide a fruitful approach to untangle dilemmas regarding children's well-being.

As a general framework, I mentioned that I start from the Capability Approach (Nusbaum, 2011). This approach requires human beings to be provided with the means and skills necessary to freely live the life they consider to be worth living. Therefore, it defends human beings should be able to choose what they want to achieve in their lives. In this sense, it can be defined as a theory of justice based on freedom, but also on objectivism, since it indicates what capacities are basic for all human beings. This implies an idea of what is good. At the same time, it is a theory based on the principle of freedom, concretely, a theory of justice based on positive freedoms. Thus, this approach is based on the idea that a person must possess the necessary capabilities (skills and opportunities) to develop the life project that she envisions and live a minimally dignified life.

The Capability Approach arises as an attempt to better capture inequalities. It also provides a basis for measuring well-being in people's lives, understanding well-being as the set of capabilities essential to human nature. Capabilities are, as already mentioned, the freedoms (skills and opportunities) of a person to do or be something that she considers valuable. Functionings, on their part, are the realized or materialized capabilities. M. Nussbaum offers a list of ten basic capabilities that are constitutive for the well-being of human beings, namely: 1) life, 2) bodily integrity, 3) physical health, 4) the senses, imagination and thought, 5) emotions, 6) practical reason, 7) affiliation, 8) concern or interest in animals and plants and your natural environment, 9) play, and 10) control over the environment (Nussbaum, 2011, p. 41- 42).

With regard to functionings, especially relevant for children's rights, it is noteworthy that functionings describe actual states instead of potentiality or possibility: instead of referring to the right to health, functionings refer to being *de facto* healthy and nourished, to provide an example.

Also, regarding the Capability Approach, it is easily comprehensible how this approach entails an adaptation of the Aristotelian ethics of virtues, connecting capabilities and functionings to potentiality and actuality. Although these two ethical frameworks are not directly interchangeable, it is noteworthy to mention at this point that assuming the Capability Approach implies a return to the ethics of goodness as opposed to the ethics of correctness, namely, formal and procedural ethics.

This can be beneficial for children, since formal ethical approaches are designed for autonomous, rational, fully developed agents and are harder to adapt to the special nature of children, given their special moral status and evolving nature.

This approach, insofar as it is a material ethics, presents a concrete idea of well-being, of what is good for human beings. In this sense, it represents a complement to Human Rights⁵ theory and other formal and procedural approaches, such as the Rawlsian.

The Capability Approach, as it defends an idea of good, introduces the concept of well-being without falling into subjective well-being, which is especially relevant for children. Without dismissing personal agency, relying too much on subjective perceptions of well-being could lead to the perpetuation of injustice when the person who suffers from an inhuman situation has adapted to it, does not know that another reality is possible or simply does not think that she deserves something different, being

⁵ Without dismissing the debate on whether Human Rights are moral rights or political rights, I assume here that both definitions can be compatible as both senses overlap in the Human Rights discourse. Thus, Human Rights can be considered moral rights, as they entail an idea of justice and human dignity, and political rights as long as they are recognized or assumed as fundamental rights in the states' constitutions. Hence, I will use the Human Rights discourse and the Capability Approach as complementary tools to identify potential instances of injustice: the Human Rights discourse can be interpreted as a formal theory of justice, while the Capability Approach can be seen as a material one.

all these examples of epistemic biases. This occurs when an unfair situation lasts for a long time or, as in the case of children, when the person has not known another reality and, therefore, does not know that she *does not know*. Thus, this approach differs from both the procedural and the Utilitarian⁶ proposals.

Considering all this, it is easy to see how to a great extent the specific goods⁷ of childhood can be understood as functionings children should be provided with, and not just capabilities. Specific or intrinsic goods of childhood can be defined as those values related to childhood as a phase of life, that is, as the ingredients needed to have a good childhood. From an individual perspective, they can be interpreted as what rights children need and can only be materialized during childhood, for they are not accessible in the same way and with the same function once this period of life is over. In any case, both interpretations are interwoven. Play, imagination or sexual innocence are clear examples of specific goods of childhood. As A. Gheaus perfectly points out, this term refers, first, to “those goods that make an important and direct contribution to a good childhood, and that are, therefore, intrinsically important for a well-lived human life; and, second, have some developmental value for children” (2015a, p. 36). Some specific goods of childhood are valuable only for children and counterproductive for adults, such as sexual innocence, while other goods may also be relevant for adults, but gradually vanish, such as imagination or the ability to feel curiosity and play. These goods are good for children, even if they do not reach adulthood. That is, the perspective is not adult-centered. They might still be positive during adulthood, as the ability to learn, or they might become a handicap for the person’s development, such as sexual innocence.

⁶ There is a wide debate on whether the ideas of well-being and happiness from Utilitarian perspectives can be understood as a form of objectivism or subjectivism. Although the criterion is based on an objective link between wrongness and pain, it also opens a door to subjective positions on suffering and happiness. On this topic, see García-Norro (1991) and Velayos (1996, p. 230-232).

⁷ This term could be discussed and criticized from constructivist and subjectivist accounts, since it assumes an objective idea of what is good. However, a metaethical discussion on these positions would surpass the scope of this article, so I simply start from a material ethics perspective by assuming a material approach, such as the Capability Approach, for the reasons already explained.

In any case, a key feature is that these goods are not recoverable as an adult, for they will not have the same role for the person. In the same way that you cannot postpone the hours of sleep and decide first to live and then sleep all your hours in a row, the realization of specific goods of childhood cannot be postponed in life. They are not recoverable later in another stage of life, and their loss or disruption creates problems in the normal development of the person. As Gheaus synthesizes, “individuals who had been deprived of them in childhood cannot simply be compensated for the loss by being allowed to enjoy these goods later in life” (2015a, p. 36-37).

One might think that what one considers goods of childhood is socially constructed. However, child psychology studies on trauma and attachment (Miller, 1987; Weinhold and Weinhold, 2008; Canton and Cortés, 2009; Simon 2018; Pitillas, 2021) have well reported the impact of some events on child’s well-being, irrespective of the social imaginary in which that child is living in. In fact, when something traumatic for the child happens in a social context where that is not recognized as unfair, a second victimization occurs: that is the case of hermeneutical injustice (Fricker, 2007). Likewise, child psychology studies (Walker, 2013; Van der Kolk, 2014) show how the use of coping mechanisms during adulthood, in order to compensate the lost learning at the proper time, can in fact perpetuate handicaps that prevent the adult individual from flourishing as expected. Thus, what is good during childhood in terms of survival becomes a sign of dysfunctional behavior or lack of emotional maturity during adulthood (Gibson, 2015). An example of this could be how not respecting sexual innocence during childhood can lead to whether oversexualized behaviors or to sexual relationships avoidance during adulthood.

The specific goods of childhood are captured in the previously mentioned capabilities as well as the protection of those capabilities is intended to avoid the materialization of vulnerabilities. In other words, those goods and vulnerabilities are in fact two sides of the same coin. The development of these capacities up to a

minimum threshold of sufficiency would be what allows a minimally dignified human life. That is, truncating any of them, given that many are interconnected, would imply that an instance of injustice is committed towards that person. It involves preventing them from the possibility of accessing a basic good for human well-being.

That being said, it is key to highlight how children are radically vulnerable in several areas (Mullin, 2014) and how this vulnerability may modulate the child's development and well-being. Vulnerability is an increasingly popular term in current philosophical debates and it refers to being damageable. That is, being vulnerable means being able to suffer an instance of damage. Although every human being is vulnerable, children are vulnerable in at least five important areas, and in a qualitatively different way, when compared to adults, given their evolving nature and their lack of social and political voice: they are physically, mentally, economically, politically and socially vulnerable (Schweiger and Cabezas, 2016, p. 115-116). They do not decide where to live, what to eat, what adults they interact with, and they do not associate in pressure groups to make their voice be heard. Each type of vulnerability can generate a type of moral damage⁸.

Moral damage does not only refer to traumatic events or direct actions. Omissions, the lack of recognition, the accumulation of microaggressions, or subtle neglect of personal integrity can also be the cause of an instance of moral damage. In this sense, silencing children's experience can also be a source of this type of damage.

These types of specific vulnerabilities are morally relevant, since they may

⁸ Moral damage, as it occurs with other thick concepts (Goldie 2009) that involve some descriptive and normative traits, is a contested concept. However, it could be defined, following some standard definitions, as a wrong coming from human actions, that is, as "the wrong that we do to each other without having to do it" (Arteta, 2010, p. 24), as a violation of someone's rights (Feinberg 1984), as the consequence of treating someone wrong, or as the consequence of "intentionally inflicting pain and suffering on another human being, against her will" (Vetlesen, 2005, p. 2). In this sense, the aggressor must be a moral agent, and the victim should be a subject with moral standing or moral consideration. A deeper debate on the moral community and the relationship between moral wrongness and moral damage could be found in Goodpaster (1993), Tugendhat (1997) or Velayos (1996). However, this metaethical debate surpasses the scope of this article. Thus, I will only highlight that, given that moral damage is the consequence of human actions (or omissions), it is by nature contingent, avoidable and unnecessary (Cabezas & Pitillas, 2019, p. 93-94), so that one can demand responsibilities.

generate moral damage. Hence, focusing on vulnerability can serve to identify the responsibilities towards childhood from the different agents of justice.

Likewise, the relationship between vulnerability and children's rights is clear. Rights are prerogatives that we recognize, given the particular human vulnerability, to protect – in this case– children from suffering the type of moral damage that would truncate their development and flourishing as human beings. As a result, these types of vulnerabilities are relevant to the Human Rights discourse, as they may imply a disadvantage or an interruption in the mentioned possibility to live a dignified life as a human being.

At this point, the distinction between well-being and well-becoming becomes crucial as a way of formulating what children deserve from an ethical perspective. This distinction is in line with the Capability Approach and helps understand the value of the transition from capabilities to functionings (Graf and Schweiger, 2015). While well-being is related to the actual state of a child and expresses what the child understands as important for the current situation, well-becoming focuses on the possibility of transition from one state to a future one. As G. Schweiger points out, “a social context should be just, because this protects the well-being and well-becoming of children” (2015, 84-85). Well-being and well-becoming of children allow us to assess what is important for the different phases of children's lives and the various forms of vulnerability. Paying attention to well-being contributes to identifying invisible instances of damage and help include the child's experience. Placing an especial focus on well-becoming may help guarantee that the child possesses the necessary means or conversion factors, in the Capability Approach terms, to transform her capabilities into functionings or, in other terms, to transit from a good childhood to at least a minimally dignified adulthood. Thus, demanding that these basic capabilities are developed and guaranteed during childhood brings to light those contexts that are harmful to childhood when what is considered a good for a certain context or in the short-term may imply truncating any of these ten capacities and, with them, the possibility of

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becoming an autonomous adult able to develop the life the individual projects.

In short, functionings reflect goods, including the specific goods of childhood, while capabilities reflect vulnerabilities and, therefore, areas of the child's life that should be protected to avoid instances of injustice. Likewise, the specific types of child vulnerability are linked to the specific goods of childhood: child's psychological vulnerability makes the protection of the child sexual innocence crucial, to provide an example. Thus, the tools here explored are interwoven and shed some light on different areas of the same reality in order to answer the same ethical question, namely, what does a child deserve and what do we owe children.

the potential positive face of child youtubers

In this section, I analyze the theoretical potential reasons in favor of this activity. Therefore, I explore the potentiality of the case of child YouTubers for children's flourishing, taking into consideration the theoretical tools explored in the previous section. Hence, I will delve into the advantages and positive sides of this child activity for some capabilities, such as imagination, affiliation, and play, and I will relate them to some specific goods of childhood.

With regard to the previously mentioned specific goods of childhood, one might say that this activity can in fact be a way of materializing three main goods, i.e., exploration, play, and, as a consequence, imagination. In fact, this activity entails a creative part, where the child has to elaborate her own discourse in order to eventually connect to her audience. The child, more or less consciously, has therefore to decide how she wants to present herself to the others. Thus, it might be a way to develop a theory of mind and intersubjectivity (*How do the others see me? How can I interpret their feedback?*).

Regarding the main capabilities described by Nussbaum, play, and senses, imagination and thought, are the two ones more easily translatable into specific goods of childhood. Considering the capability of 'play' as "being able to laugh, to play, to

enjoy recreational activities” (Nussbaum, 2011, p. 42), it is out of question that being a child YouTuber may in principle fulfill this capability as well as it may prepare this generation in getting acquainted to the tools that conform our current world and probably their near future. Needless to say, play is always connected to exploration and eventually to a form of learning, even though learning may not be the main intrinsic goal of playing from the child’s perspective. In other words, it would not be as fruitful nowadays, also in the long-term perspective, if the child were playing with a 1980’s cassette recorder, as if the child is playing and exploring with the tools that conform their current world. In this sense, one might defend that an updated form of recreation and play may contribute to materialize this capability and the capabilities related to imagination, agency, and knowledge of her environment.

Regarding the so-called capability of ‘senses, imagination, and thought’, the potential benefits of this activity as an enhancer to materialize this capability is clear. It is noteworthy how this capability is related to “being able to use imagination and thought in connection with experiencing and producing works and events of one’s own choice, religious, literary, musical, and so forth [, and b]eing able to use one’s mind in ways protected by guarantees of freedom of expression with respect to both political and artistic speech, and freedom of religious exercise” (Nussbaum, 2011, p. 41), which are all skills involved in child Youtuber’s activities. This new form of play and interaction could even be considered a conversion factor, a means, from the capability of sense, imagination and thought to its functioning (León, 2018).

Finally, in terms of capabilities, Nussbaum describes the capability of ‘affiliation’, among other features, as being able to “engage in various forms of social interaction; to be able to imagine the situation of another” and “having the social bases of self-respect and non-humiliation; being able to be treated as a dignified being whose worth is equal to that of others” (2011, p. 141-42). From this perspective, one might think that being a child YouTuber may *prima facie* be a form of enhancing that set of positive self-relationships that are key to the child’s development, which, in turn, are

crucial to self-respect. Also, being able to create a form of social interaction with peers, in your own terms, may surely entail a potential impact on the child's self-esteem, epistemic trust in others, and feelings of belonging. In this sense, it could turn out to be a way of reciprocity with peers that is not entirely over the adult's control, such as school activities, where children can express themselves in their own terms. In other words, self-respect is at the core of the capability of affiliation, and, in order to develop this, positive self-relationships are necessary. Thus, this new child activity may theoretically work as an enhancer of the construction of a healthy self-identity, given the fact that being able to explore and practice your agency is a source of self-respect. Parallel to the impact that activities such as theater usually have on introvert children, this new activity may become a source of self-awareness and it may help build a positive self-image, especially for those children who may find it harder to build relationships in groups face-to-face⁹. In this sense, some children may find on the internet a more comfortable, controlled and safe environment. In fact, "the Internet has the capacity to connect likeminded young people in a manner unprecedented in human history, essentially defining modern youth culture (...) [and] fills social needs previously unmet in developed postindustrial societies" (Kaliebe and Weigle, 2018, p. xiv-xvi).

Hence, one might state that YouTube and social networks, as a new form of potential mass media communication, have opened childhood and adolescence to a territory of creativity and communication. Exploring their interests, creating their materials, making them attractive, reaching out to others, and communicating help develop cognitive and emotional dimensions that can lead to a development of creativity, which relates – and may contribute– to the child's agency and autonomy.

Related to this, the materialization of capabilities or, in other terms, the materialization of the specific goods of childhood, leads to the development of the child's agency and autonomy. While autonomy refers to the capability of abstract

⁹ I will explore the negative side of parasocial relationships in the next section.

thought in order to be able to make decisions, understanding and assuming the potential consequences of it, agency refers to the set of abilities that the individual should possess in order to implement her autonomy. Thus, child YouTubers might find in this new activity a way to put into practice their agency by practicing their ability to influence their environment. It could also be a way to improve their current well-being, and practice their autonomy. This argument emerges from the fact that this activity leads the child to put in practice the ability of abstract thinking and decision making concerning what kind of contents she wants to share, what tone she applies, etc.

Needless to say, many children ask their parents to let them become youtubers as a dream project. However, as I will explore in the next section, the second part of autonomy, that is, the ability to understand in the long-term the potential consequences of our current decisions, may be compromised, especially depending on the child's age, affecting their well-becoming.

It is true that children are generally described as more vulnerable, given their evolving capabilities, which also affect their autonomy. However, this activity may in fact be a way to enhance their self-realization and autonomy, as it involves a project of their own about the topics that they feel some kind of interest about.

As a result, one of the main positive traits associated with this activity may rest on its role to give children a voice, in principle without intermediaries, even though parents may help editing videos at first. As M. Gordon points out, "the voice is bound up in their confidence and feelings of self-worth and is key to their future as citizens who will take their place in a democratic society" (2009, p. xix). Therefore, helping and allowing them to find their voice is crucial, so that, perhaps, this type of activity is a way of cultivating this, helping realize the mentioned capabilities. Also, as a result, this may imply a significant reduction of child's symbolic vulnerabilities, such as the social and political one, for both the famous child YouTuber and her peers. On the one hand, it gives adult the chance to listen to the child's views, and, on the other hand, in ideal contexts, online broadcasting from home may give children the chance, not only to

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articulate their own visions, but to be seen and heard in the public sphere, in principle, from a safe environment.

Hence, those defending child work would argue that, once the conditions of non-exploitation are granted, the fact that a play becomes work and a source of income could in fact serve to reduce their economic and social vulnerability, for this new role would force adults to treat children as equally relevant interlocutors, reducing so the age bias and the asymmetric relationship. As successful YouTubers, children become socially relevant. Likewise, those defending this position would criticize a socially accepted conceptualization of the child as innocent and fragile, so that, according to their view, child work does not necessarily become child exploitation.¹⁰ As a result, one might think that, even when it becomes work, this activity does not only maintain its potentialities related to specific goods of childhood, but also enhances autonomy and agency, reducing the child's economic vulnerability.

However, the fact that granting children's autonomy can be both "a vulnerability enhancer and a vulnerability diminisher" (Schweiger and Graf, 2017, p. 245) cannot be overlooked. In this sense, what can enhance social and economic vulnerability may worsen their psychological and physical vulnerability, as well as what increases children's well-being may jeopardize children's well-becoming, especially in cases where the child YouTuber has reached a massive audience, as I will develop in the next section.

the paradox: when a source of specific goods of childhood becomes a source of vulnerability

The potential benefits of being a successful Child YouTuber previously presented will surely only apply under ideal circumstances, which are very often far from the child's reality and context. Therefore, in order not to be blind to some potential instances of moral damage and injustice, a normative approach should bear in mind an undesirable scenario in order to prevent negative outcomes that may become

¹⁰ To delve into the arguments of the defenders of child work, see Brando (2020).

irreversible for the child's development. As previously mentioned, childhood is a crucial phase of life, whose learnings cannot be recovered later in life.

In this section, I aim to explore how a potential enhancer of child's agency can in fact become a threat to the well-being and proper development of the child. In other words, I aim to delve into how a source of specific goods of childhood becomes a threat to child's well-being and well-becoming and may put the child at the risk of adultization.

In order to do so, as the threats are twofold, first, I will analyze the potential risks related to the traits of this new activity, and, second, I will analyze those threats specifically connected to the moment when this activity becomes work and a source of income for both the child and the family.

To begin with, YouTubers are part of a celebrity culture and can be described as "publicly overexposed active users who share their personal information and personal interests through video content with the rest of the users, the viewers, who remain mostly anonymous. YouTubers engage in self-presentation and, to a certain extent, in self-disclosure in order to build and maintain relationships with their viewers" (de Bèrail *et al.*, 2019, p. 1991), which is already problematic during childhood.

In relation to the intrinsic traits of this activity, being a (successful) Child YouTuber can impose some important threats to the well-being and well-becoming of the child regarding the control of her current and future image, her digital footprint, and her psychological development, especially taking into consideration the narcissistic traits of current societies (Bauman, 2000) and the search of external validation. All this would truncate what Nussbaum calls the capability of emotions, especially when it comes to "not having one's emotional development blighted by fear and anxiety" (Nussbaum 2001, p. 41). Even if parents are helping their children disclose their privacy and share the videos with their *consent*, parents still have a responsibility in protecting their children's digital footprint (Steinberg 2016), for the child may be

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unaware of the consequences, given her evolving capabilities, lack of experience, and immaturity.

The self-esteem or pride generated by the autonomy that the child practices through her role as YouTuber, the adulation and social validation, in the best cases where the child is not receiving insults, can in fact generate problems of dependency on external validation, and insecurity, perverting so its potentiality as a way of enhancing agency and children's well-becoming. Becoming a micro-celebrity as a child could generate a feeling of well-being and a sense of worth from external resources at a young age, which may be devastating in the long-term perspective, worsening the child's mental vulnerability. The fact that the source of the child's self-esteem is the success, approval, and validation of others in the network, and the money earned through it, at a stage of life in which we build our personal identity, only shows the failure of the protection of children in that given society. In other words, "the number of videos and likes on the channels strengthens the logic that 'being' means 'being perceived'" (Lira *et al.*, 2019, p. 1966).

Likewise, success and public exposure entails a sometimes-invisible burden of isolation and frustration when the child may end up feeling a dissonance between the manufactured or idealized version of herself (what she should be and show) and how she really feels, leading to feelings of shame. In fact, it should not be underestimated that this platform generates a parasocial relationship, given the intrinsic asymmetry and lack of reciprocity, being so an enabler of social anxiety, YouTube addiction, and social isolation, which can lead to depression and self-harm (Bèrail *et al.*, 2019; Deslandes and Coutinho, 2020).

In relation to the control over their environment and their image, this new way of communicating places the child at a potentially risky scenario, where adults may not even be aware of. It should not be overlooked that successful Child YouTubers' accounts are an appealing place for child's offenders, pederasts, and predators, who find those chats and the anonymity that an internet profile can provide a perfect

breeding ground for reaching new victims. Hence, if caregivers are not well-informed and do not take the measures needed to protect those chats, both the YouTubers and the child subscribers would be taking part in an activity that leaves them unprotected and easily reachable, enhancing child physical and mental vulnerability. Here again, autonomy and protection should be balanced in a different way compared to other activities where the adult has a great control over who the peers and the adults interacting with your child are, for instance, participating in a theater class or playing with your neighbors.

As a result, what seemed to be a beneficial activity for some specific goods of childhood, i.e., play and exploration, may become a threat for other goods, i.e., sexual innocence, when the child is exposed to sexualizing comments on her body and appearance at a time when the child is neither mature enough nor equipped with the necessary tools to manage and deal with some aspects of adult life. That risk is also present in other activities; however, the scale, the anonymity, and lack of control is qualitatively different in this case where the abuse can reach you through your personal devices and is public.

Something similar occurs in terms of awareness and responsibilities concerning the messages and behaviors the child YouTuber consciously or unconsciously promotes, not just in terms of consumption, but also in relation to the popular challenges, risking both herself and her subscribers bodily and personal integrity. Again, what seems to be a game becomes a threat. As Deslandes and Coutinho state:

“Several “challenges” are launched, often by young YouTubers or teenagers who invite their audience to drink boiling water, inhale deodorant and hold their breath, go into apnea indefinitely, hang themselves, take self-portraits (selfie) in risky situations, swallowing substances, self-harm and even killing yourself. Such “challenges” are seen as a joke and an event to be filmed and posted, gaining popularity in several countries” (2020, p. 2483).

In relation to the monetization of what started as a game, a case like successful Child YouTubers raises questions on the real level of autonomy and agency that those children may have in making decisions free from manipulation or implicit pressure, despite the regulation of child work.

Indeed, the ethical issues surpass the legal framework. It should not be overlooked that being a successful YouTuber implies working hours, forced streaming even if you do not want to, responsibilities and obligations, even if a narrative of ease, even magical instant results, is widely installed and the effort is eliminated from the visible side of being a successful professional YouTuber. In addition to this, another question emerges regarding the level of awareness that a child has reached with respect to all the aspects of her activity. As Lira and her colleagues point out, “the possibility of making a set of videos public daily puts these children in a privileged and disputed place by the industry, which expands its advertising channels. We can say that child youtubers are currently the newest characters to publicize the brands, since they present the products, guide the logos, disseminate news, being used effectively in the service of companies” (Lira *et al.*, 2019, p.1972). To what extent these children are aware of their role as covert advertisers and their impact on their subscribers is an open question to take into consideration.

Hence, although adults are also vulnerable and share some vulnerabilities with children, the vulnerability here described entails a deeper impact on children, as childhood is a key phase of life that shapes the construction of our personality, the development of our cognitive, and emotional skills, our trust in others, and our comprehension of the world. On top of that, the asymmetric relationship with adults – online, offline, and once the activity is monetized – is hard, if not impossible, to balance, creating a second type of relational vulnerability.

One might think, from constructivist accounts against the capability account here assumed, that Nussbaum’s theory distorts the emancipatory intentions of children’s rights, both when applying the term functioning, as well as in its

consideration of the factors of conversion (Liebel, 2014). For critics of the capabilities approach, this theory involves indeed an unjustified paternalism and a limited view of vulnerability (Butler, 2016).

Nevertheless, in my view, postmodern conceptions of childhood that defend that “the delineation between children and adults is blurred” (Moore, 2015, p.52), where children are considered to be competent without paying attention to their evolving nature, their lack of experience, and their asymmetric position in social relationships in fact put children at risk of being neglected. In this sense, that view is hardly compatible with defending the child’s best interest, as the child’s type of agency and autonomy is not distinguished from adult’s.

Dismissing the evolutive psychological differences between adults and children may explain the perception of the Capability Approach as paternalist. However, paternalism is only a vicious interference in someone’s autonomy when applied to competent subjects, with the intention to harm the patient, and when the paternalist agent is not more qualified than the receiver of the benefit (Ferrer and Álvarez, 2003, p.140). To put it in a nutshell, not being paternalist to children is in fact a form of neglect as it implies not treating them according to their needs and their stage of development. In the context of child work, the child is less competent than the adults involved in her business’ decisions, for the child’s brain and skills are still developing, and because children are easy to manipulate, especially if the adult involved is an attachment figure for the child. Therefore, some measures should be required, especially in the case of child youtubers where those that should defend children’s best interest are those obtaining some benefit of an activity that is not so clearly regulated as other types of child work where the boundary between working hours and work places are clearer. In this sense, the Capability Approach notion of autonomy seems to perfectly serve children’s best interest in the same spirit of the 1989 Convention where children are recognized not only as objects of protection, but as subjects of rights. Likewise, taking into consideration children’s best interests and denying some human rights when

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applied to children, such as the right to marry, are not unjustified paternalist or overprotective measures. In fact, in order to defend and protect children's agency, and personal integrity, some human rights have to be "frozen" until they are not an enhancer of child abuse.

Moreover, it has also been argued that this account does not consider children as social subjects with personal needs to autonomy, but only as future citizens who will have to develop capabilities related to this citizenship (Melo and Schilling, 2021). As Brighthouse and his colleagues state, "childhood is part of life, not mere preparation for it, and how well it goes is an important aspect of one's well-being: the daily lived experience of childhood matters for people's lives independently of, as well as instrumentally for, the capacities that they develop for adulthood" (2020, p. 1390). In other words, their need for autonomy and exploration cannot be perverted in a way that it becomes a source of neglect and abuse, ignoring their asymmetric position in an adult world. Thus, the Capability Approach can indeed be problematic when applied to adults, especially the idea of granting functionings, as previously mentioned in section 2. However, when applied to children, it is a fruitful tool to grant that children's rights are not overshadowed in the name of cultural differences or due to an adult vision of children. To put it in a nutshell, assimilating childhood to adulthood is a way of ignoring children.

It is also stated that children live under a regime of work obligations being forced to attend schools, so that schools would represent the new workplace for children labor (Qvortrup, 2005). Nevertheless, first, two wrongs do not make one right. Second, the comparison is highly questionable, as teachers have to be trained to treat children according to their needs and phase of development, schools count with child psychologists, pedagogists and well-trained professionals in order to protect the child. Also, even if the system may fail, those professionals working for children in the educational system have to prove that they do not have a criminal record, so that children are assured to be in a secure place. This is far from happening in the

workplace. Likewise, not being provided with an education jeopardizes the person's right to develop and live the life she considers worthy. Another question would be whether the educational system should be updated or if homeschool is a better alternative.

One might also think that once the conditions of non-exploitation are guaranteed, being a successful child YouTuber could serve to reduce their economic and social vulnerability, as we, adults, would be forced to treat them as equal agents or interlocutors. However, treating a child as an adult is a way of child neglect. Moreover, it is doubtful that the decisions that they make as children and later pre-adolescents to continue with their channel, authorize merchandizing, publish books on their persona, etc., are free from family and fans' expectations, especially when the Child YouTuber becomes the source of income in that household. The key point here is not only that your family depends on you, but the fact that specifically they depend on your work *as* a YouTuber because that has become the only way of keeping that income level¹¹.

It is common that, once the child YouTuber has become successful, the parents end up running their careers too, from the website to the videos and contracts they sign. What in principle could be a way of protecting the child, can in fact become an obstacle for the child to freely decide if that is the way she wants to earn money or if she wants to quit at a certain point. Thus, children's well-being and well-becoming end up depending again on a question of luck, namely, on how well-prepared her parents are to protect the child's interests even when that means going against your personal interests.

In other words, depending on the family dynamics, which may be subtle and escape any child work regulation, the child may still feel the pressure and the tacit obligation of continuing with what constitutes the main income of the adults involved

¹¹ Child YouTubers may in fact make millions, which drastically changes the family life and family dynamics. On this concern, see Schmidt (2017) or Shain (2018).

in her life, especially if some years ago that was the child's dream, and especially if those adults involved in your "business relationships" are in fact your main attachment figures. In this sense, this is nothing but the perfect breeding ground for epistemic biases and paradoxical cases of victimless damage (Cabezas, 2020, p.45-47; Carel and Györ, 2014), for the child may not know that she has the right to something different or that in fact she could say no to a given situation. The affective and emotional component cannot be forgotten, as children desire to be loved by their caregivers and they adapt to guarantee this bond as a survival mechanism (Bowlby, 1969; Schore, 2010).

The Child YouTubers' case entails one extra handicap, compared to the other mentioned cases, as YouTubers work at home, so their bedroom becomes their workplace. When the spaces are not even separated, it is more difficult to be aware of the decisions that have been made, the mixture of private and public, family and professional life. The blurry boundary between the public and private sphere of this activity also generates a fuzzy boundary between what would count as working hours and free time, which leaves the child in a more vulnerable situation.

In addition, even in those cases where the child wants to go on with the activity, knowing that she has the control over their parental figures' economy may have a profound effect in the child and pre-adolescent's emotional development, for parents may find hard to justify the limits they may want to impose in their child's education. As a result, this implies an alteration of the roles in the intrafamily relationships. Thus, what may reduce child economic vulnerability may increase child psychological vulnerability. From the child's view, caregivers may not be any authority figure anymore. Not being able to set boundaries is in fact a threat to children's well-being and well-becoming. As Kaliebe and Weigle state, on the one hand, "young children need tight controls and supervision. On the other hand, today's children and adolescents need enough gradual autonomy to develop self-regulation skills sufficient to balance their offline and virtual lives" (2018, p. xvi). Likewise, simply ensuring that

these children are protected from work exploitation does not guarantee the proper development of the ten proposed capabilities. There are more subtle problems that modulate the well-being and well-becoming of children, especially concerning their mental health, that go beyond the legal guarantees of child work, as previously shown, such as subtle family imperatives, just to mention an example.

The fact that the child can work and improve the family economic situation would neither necessarily affect positively the child's well-being nor their well-becoming. First, well-being is multifactorial, and what can diminish your physical vulnerability may increase your mental vulnerability. Second, the theoretical improvement depends on what the caregivers do with those material goods. For example, the fact that the parents of a YouTuber decide that they will buy a bigger house with a swimming-pool with that money does not necessarily translate into an improvement in the well-being and well-becoming of the child. Given the asymmetry, the child would be the owner of both goods and money, but the parents would be the ones who ultimately decide what to do with it, where and how to invest that money, what may not be in line with what contributes to the child's well-becoming or the child's visions of her own future. To follow with the example, if the child had had the chance to decide, maybe she would have decided not to buy a new house with a private swimming-pool and would have saved that money instead in order to pay for her fees to study in a private university, if her dream were to become a veterinary surgeon.

It is true that we, as children, never get to be equals in these kinds of parental decisions that affect our future. When your parents make decisions on your future, like the type of education, your adult self is never involved, so that everything depends on the caregivers' preparation, sensibility and moral imagination to shape their decisions in line with your values. However, the case of child Youtubers, as other cases of child work in show business or sports, obliges us to reflect on the consequences of our economic and parental decisions in a deeper way, for in these cases the child is the one who is actually earning that money sacrificing so parts of her childhood.

Moreover, the fact that children are capable of working and can, even under adverse conditions, assume family responsibilities of caring for younger siblings or even their own parents, does not imply that they should do it. Likewise, it does not imply that this is good for their well-being and their development. It is not the case that children cannot take these responsibilities, but that assuming these responsibilities will surely affect their emotional development, since it implies a change of roles with parents and an adultization of children, as if childhood were not a relevant phase of life *per se*.

In fact, reversing roles, accelerating the maturation process, and assuming responsibilities of an adult for the care and maintenance of her family puts responsibilities on the child's shoulders before the adequate emotional development is achieved. This truncates the possibility of enjoying specific goods of childhood as well as jeopardizes a good psychological development, which can lead to a child emotional neglect case.

In this sense, giving children a voice does neither necessarily translate into an adultization of children, nor should it lead to wanting to accelerate the maturation process, since that would pervert the sense of including their voice in the public sphere. This, in fact, would only show an age bias and a preference for the adult world, as well as a certain lack of appreciation of childhood as a stage of life with its own value. In other words: understanding that the child is an interlocutor with preferences, cognitive abilities, capable of articulating a speech that must be taken into consideration does not mean treating the child as a miniature version of an adult and ignoring other vulnerabilities. It should not be overlooked, first, that the asymmetry with the adults is going to enhance more social and economic vulnerabilities, even if the child is earning money, and, second, that personal identity, a vision of the world, and trust in others are being built during those formative years.

Hence, I would like to conclude remembering MacLeod's thesis, as he perfectly synthesizes my concerns throughout this section:

“We care about the special vulnerability of children and we seek, consequently, to protect them from the various threats to their well-being that they cannot negotiate themselves. One way to diminish their vulnerability is to equip them as quickly as possible with the capacities of mature agency. But the very features of juvenile agency that render children vulnerable also give them access to important human goods” (2015, p. 63).

conclusion: some normative suggestions

In section 3 and 4, I have explored the potential benefits of being a successful child YouTuber and its threats, trying to show both sides and how what starts as a potential enhancer of the specific goods of childhood may end up jeopardizing those same goods, given the child’s vulnerability, the inevitable asymmetric relationship with the adults, and the process of adultization that may entail the monetization of a child YouTube channel.

My main aim in this article was to draw attention to the different facets of children’s interests and to balance the positive and negative aspects and its consequences involved. Therefore, as a conclusion, I would like to offer some final normative suggestions to integrate the positive sides of child YouTubing without having to sacrifice or endanger some specific goods of childhood or capabilities, such as play, affiliation, emotions, and bodily integrity.

Two suggestions are the core of my conclusion. To being with, I would like to conclude by defending that, if we assume that “children are entitled to practice and develop their autonomy in line with their level of development and maturity” (Schweiger and Graf, 2017, p. 245) in order to live a good childhood, then it should be warranted that the main caregivers count with the proper training, parenting skills, emotional maturity, and sufficient sensitivity to ponder what the child’s best interest is according to the child’s development. Without these skills and parental training, projecting their own aims onto the child and other forms of instrumentalization seem

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harder to avoid.

This neither means licensing parents nor criminalizing them. Rather, this is only intended to show the need to provide parents with the proper education, information, and training on children's needs and psychological evolution, as they have a key role in materializing their children's rights. From a preventive conception of healthcare, we assume without further discussion that part of the GP and pediatric doctor's work is to guide and inform parents about the type of food their toddler needs, just to provide an example. Suggesting something similar in terms of mental well-being and psychological education should not be perceived as more problematic. Given that the work as YouTuber is not as regulated as other forms of child work, this case falls in a fuzzy dangerous situation that can benefit from providing the main caregivers with the proper tools for their responsibility position. Being aware of their own relational wounds and lacks would reduce the chances of child emotional and financial neglect and abuse, which, in turn, may also positively affect those children succeeding as YouTubers.

In addition to this, without the proper parental skills, the child is at risk of suffering from some difficulties in terms of mental well-being, such as emotional emptiness, isolation, compulsive or aggressive behaviors (Crittenden, 2013), just to mention some examples, even if she ends up being a functional and integrated adult in a society. It should be bear in mind, as previously mentioned, that this platform, i.e., YouTube, generates a parasocial type of interaction. In a narcissistic social context like the current one, where competitiveness, external validation, and lack of empathy may in fact be key to socially succeed, the lack of a proper emotional development may even turn out to be functional, even if it is detrimental for the person's flourishing. This makes it even harder to detect any form of psychological neglect, so that preventing harmful situations and preparing caregivers with the proper training in terms of parental competences seems to be key to avoid the intergenerational transmission of psycho and social pathologies that may jeopardize the child's best interest.

The question is, however, whether exploitation and manipulation in the form of beneficence can be avoided in a relationship where asymmetry is inevitable and where the interlocutor is developing her identity, personality, and affective relationships. In other words, it is important for the well-being and well-becoming of children to be subjectively happy at the present moment, but that subjective happiness should also be supported by other objective traits that contribute to their well-becoming in the long-term perspective. This is far from saying that a child is relevant just because she will become an adult. On the contrary, the point here is that ensuring good development is also an important part of a good childhood. Otherwise, we may easily fall into a form of child neglect, whether by excess, being overdemanding, or by default, ignoring their needs.

In this sense, as the second suggestion of my conclusion, it is noteworthy to highlight that YouTube is not a social/family network. Rather, it works like a mass media where you can reach a potential global audience. Hence, platforms like *YouTube kids* or measures like keeping your child's account private, so that the caregivers still control who gets access to their children's videos, may be a potential proper way of balancing the situation, if used with a good intention and not as a way of somehow monetizing and charging those who want to see a child's private video. Making their channel private would be a form of applying the strong version¹² of the precautionary principle: exposure to known and unknown online dangers should be avoided until the agents of justice for children¹³ count with the knowledge and means to properly protect the child's well-being and well-becoming in that situation. Not applying this principle in a case where the threats may modulate and truncate children's well-being

¹² A strong version of the precautionary principle seems sensible in this case as the internet is a new scenario where we lack experience. Therefore, we are deciding in the context of uncertainty, not only in a scenario of probabilities. Moreover, children's right to privacy is involved, and privacy, when lost, is especially hard to turn back (Véliz, 2020).

¹³ By agents of justice for children, I understand not only direct caregivers, but also the state, education system, and health-care system, to mention the main ones. That is, those agents who have a role in enabling and materializing children's rights, following Onora O'Neill's definition of agents of justice (2001).

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and well-becoming would probably be negligent: “digital media is a Pandora’s Box for so many modern families: easy to incorporate but subsequently difficult to control” (Kaliebe and Weigle, 2018, p. xiv). As a result, this measure seems proportional to the threats that the child faces in this activity, as shown in section 4, concerning child sexual offenders, child digital footprint, and parasocial relationships based on external validation.

One might consider this measure too invasive and even as a perversion of the nature of YouTube: it would be as only allowing your child to play in the park with the children and families that you already know, losing so part of the richness of those uncontrolled and spontaneous social interactions. However, first, a YouTube channel offers the child parasocial interactions, not reciprocal ones, second, that bias already operates in our real lives when the caregivers decide not to visit some dangerous neighborhoods with their children or when they do not allow their children to speak with certain strange adults. Therefore, it should not be irrational to apply this measure, following the analogy, to the virtual life and interactions of the child. This way, the good aspects of the activity as a game that allow the child to express herself would be kept, but the risks associated to predators, narcissism, child labor, and child’s adultization would be avoided, protecting so the child’s best interest to become—later in life—a communicator if she wants to, after having acquired the skill during childhood. By doing so, the child would not be obliged to sacrifice other specific goods of what a good childhood should be.

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