

Myths of Childhood Sexuality

Abstract

From the anonymous publication of *Onania, or the Heinous Sin of Self-Pollution* in the 1700s, through Freud's posited "latency" and beyond, there have been various theories regarding the sexuality of children which had little – if any – basis in sound scholarship or proper research. In the middle third of the 20th century a measure of realism began to be introduced into this arena, and some investigators recognized that children, like the rest of humanity, were sexual beings. However, beginning in the 1970s, a new wave of problematic hypotheses about children's sexuality arose from feminist and victimological backgrounds. While children of both genders were affected, the sexual explorations of boys were particularly impacted. This paper examines these hypotheses and their effects through a review of both pre-victimological and more recent literature.

"The great enemy of the truth is very often not the lie – deliberate, contrived and dishonest – but the myth – persistent, persuasive and unrealistic. Belief in myths allows the comfort of opinion without the discomfort of thought." President John F. Kennedy, Yale University commencement address, June 6, 1962.

Valid science is a search for truth, and pronouncements and practices of the social sciences affecting the human condition should be based on carefully investigated and meticulously examined and reexamined fact-based phenomena. Unfortunately, there have been several questionable experiments in the history of these disciplines that left a trail of suffering in their wake. Examples, just to mention two of the more egregious, were the lobotomies of Freeman and Watts (Swayze, 1995), and Hawke's castration "solution" (Kinsey, Pomeroy, Martin, & Gebhard, 1953, p. 744). Children were particularly affected by one of the older maladies; the "masturbation insanity" hypothesis which persisted for over two centuries before reason and rationality brought it to an end in the middle of the 20th century (Hare, 1962; Laqueur, 2003). More recently, "repressed/recovered memory" (Loftus & Ketcham, 1994), and "Satanic ritual abuse" (Nathan & Snedecker, 1995) had their day, as well as "multiple personality disorder," which has been rechristened "dissociative identity disorder" (Piper & Merskey, 2004) in its senescence.

As will be discussed later in more detail, little of the current commonly received wisdom about the aspects of the sexuality of children discussed in this paper would seem to be based on legitimate scientific investigations. In the present academic and public climate, empirical data and fact-based studies (e.g. Bender & Blau, 1937; Ingram, 1981; Riegel, 2009; Rind, Bauserman & Tromovitch, 1998; Sandfort, 1987; Tindall, 1978; Wilson, 1981) tend to be ignored, dismissed, and/or disparaged on "moral" grounds (Dallam et al., 2001; Ondersma et al., 2001; Spiegel, 2000). Instead, ideological hypotheses based on ethnocentric morality (Finkelhor, 1984; for criticism see Rind, 2002) have been formulated which are at best marginally supported by highly questionable studies (e.g. Conte, 1985). Finkelhor's own research was described by Bauserman as having used a "loaded questionnaire seemingly designed to preclude the possibility of reporting consensual . . . relationships with adults" (1991, pp 305-306), and the

data from this research has been characterized as having a "near fatal skew" (Global, 1987, p. 9). Nevertheless, these hypotheses have been expounded upon and reiterated *ad infinitum*, and have become cloaked in a dubious aura of credibility. Neither children, truth, nor academic integrity are well served by such poorly designed and supported propositions (Malón, 2009a, 2009b, 2009c; Riegel, 2009, 2010).

Various authors (e.g. de Graaf & Rademakers, 2006; Riegel, 2011; Sandfort & Rademakers, 2000), have addressed the many and varied aspects of childhood sexuality, but this current paper is directed only at certain misinformation, or "myths," which have developed mostly from the sources noted in the previous paragraph. "Myth" is defined in one dictionary as: (1) "A traditional story of unknown authorship, . . . serving usually to explain some phenomenon of nature. . . , " (2) "Such stories, collectively: mythology," and (3) "Any fictitious story, or unscientific account, theory, belief, etc." Myths (1) and (2) can serve useful purposes so long as they do not conflict with known truth and reality. Examples of this are the pre-science creation myths that are found all over the world. In the absence of factual knowledge, people require explanations of the inexplicable, and these needs are often fulfilled by inventing a myth which is based on what little is known in the area, and which is not in obvious conflict with reality. Campbell's masterpiece, *The Power of Myth* (1988) describes the benign use of such myths. Problems arise, however, when previous or current knowledge and research are disregarded, and contra-scientific myths are fabricated to serve an ideology. Several of the claims which have been originated and embraced by victimology, a pseudo-discipline which Money described as "science only in the etymology of its name" (1988, p. 9), will be examined in this paper under definition (3). Since "[a]t each stage of preadolescence, prepubertal boys report more sexual activity of every kind than do girls" (Janus and Bess, 1981, p. 86), the primary focus will be on boys, and, considering the ongoing panic in the area (P. Jenkins, 1998), on boys' interactions with older males.

The Childhood Innocence Myth

There are two separate – albeit closely related – issues here. The first is the social construct of childhood as constituted in the past and present, and the second is the presumed unawareness of children of proto-sexual sensations.

Childhood. Many books (e.g. Aries, 1962; Bruckner, 2000) and articles (e.g. Hendrick, 1992) have been written on what constitutes childhood, and how childhood is perceived in dissimilar cultures and at various times. These questions are much too complex to be reexamined in detail in this paper, and only a brief overview is presented here.

In less developed societies, children were and are expected to begin contributing very young; for example, in pastoral groups boys may be set to herding goats or other animals midway through their first decade, and girls of similar ages may be given the responsibility of tending to a younger sibling. The onset of puberty signals the beginning of adult responsibilities even in some more developed societies, and any formal education for other than the elite used to end at that time. The current extension of pseudo-childhood past puberty to age 18 and beyond in some places is a relatively recent development, and has come under criticism by authors such as Epstein (2007) in *The Case Against Adolescence*. The continuance of education does not require the continuance of an artificial state of childhood.

Childhood psychosexual development is generally accepted to be a highly variable process that starts with non-gender identity awareness (I am a person) very early on, followed by gender awareness (I am a boy/girl), awareness and exploration of genital sensations (this feels good), curiosity about others of the same and opposite gender (do others have these feelings?), and desire to explore and experiment with others, in most cases eventually leading to sexually expressed relationships with peers and/or other people, sometimes even well prior to puberty (e.g. Kinsey, Pomeroy, and Martin, 1948; Riegel, 2005).

In this paper, childhood will be considered to extend from the end of infancy, signaled by proficient mobility and the acquisition of useful language, until puberty is under way. The operative issues here are not the specifications of childhood, but rather the claims by some that children are unaware of their intrinsic sexuality until such time as society gives them permission to be so.

Innocence. Many claims are made that asexual "innocence" is a natural and desirable quality of childhood, which, as has been noted in the preceding section, is subjectively defined throughout a range of cultures and at different times. However, Aries observed that historically ". . . nobody thought that this innocence really existed." (1962, p. 106), and the roots of the current model of "childhood innocence" in Western society appear to have been in feminism, victimology, and the "moral correctness" of those like Dallam et al. (2001) and Ondersma et al. (2001 p. 711). Klooger commented on the supposed ill effects of the loss of such postulated innocence: "Sex robs children of their innocence, we are told, as though the introduction to the world of sexual gratification is an initiation into a world of guilt and burdensome knowledge which somehow spoils the perfection of childhood" (2009, p. 87). Henry Jenkins further observed:

The myth of childhood innocence, as James Kincaid (1992) notes, "empties" the child of its own political agency, so that it may more perfectly fulfill the symbolic demands we make upon it. The innocent child wants nothing, desires nothing, and demands nothing – except, perhaps, its own innocence. Kincaid critiques the idea that childhood innocence is something preexisting – an "eternal" condition – which must be "protected." Rather, childhood innocence is a cultural myth that must be "inculcated and enforced" upon children. (H. Jenkins, 1998, pp. 1-2).

Additionally, Calderone (1979) and Levine (2002), among others, have pointedly made the case that most children have no such innocence to lose; very few are unaware of their own sociobiologically inherited sexuality. Kinsey et al. also have given detailed and extensive physiological examples of arousal and even orgasm in infants and prepubertal children (1948, pp. 175-181). This ascribed innocence – or more properly, imposed ignorance – varies widely between nations, societies, and times; in what Ford and Beach (1951) describe as "Permissive Societies," (p. 188) children are allowed to observe and experiment with sexuality from infancy, whereas in "American Society," which Ford and Beach consider to be one of the most "Restrictive Societies" (p.180), ". . . constant pressure is exerted [in the] . . . social code pertaining to sexual behavior of children . . . to prevent any form of sexual behavior . . ." (p. 185). This is seen as a function of the child having not yet reached an arbitrary "Age of Consent" – which also varies widely between nations, societies, and times – to be properly admitted into

the synthetic sexual mysteries that pervade Western culture: "Priests, doctors, psychiatrists, and others have invested sex with magical powers . . . (Wilson, 1981, p. 129). Guilt is also assigned to sex by current culture: "[L]earning about sex in our society is in large part learning about guilt, and learning how to manage sexuality . . . involves learning how to manage guilt" (Simon & Gagnon, 1970, p.34).

As Calderone noted, these misguided, inculcated, and enforced myths of innocence and guilt are themselves sources of confusion and harm:

Imagine, if you can, something you experience often and intensely as real and present being accorded no recognition of its existence whatsoever by the world around you. Or imagine this real and intense experiencing of yourself being subjected over and over to severe, totally bewildering disapproval and punishment. *What kind of silently tormenting existential hell is this to which we consign our children from their earliest memories?* Do any ever manage to live through it with their . . . sexuality undistorted? (1979, p. 6, italics in original).

An empirical study of sexual interactions between children and older persons was conducted by Bender and Blau, who concluded that "The child was either a passive or active partner ... and in some instances seemed to be the initiator or seducer." (1937, p.517). That children were not "innocent," but were sexual beings capable of expressing and acting upon their sexual desires was generally accepted in the mid 20th century; Angelides noted that "[V]arious . . . discourses began explicitly to acknowledge child sexuality as a normal and natural reality. In fact, prior to the 1980s [textual] representations of child sexuality were common, particularly in the context of sexual encounters with adults . . . as flirtatious, precocious, and seductive. . ." (2004, p. 143). Wilson observed that "Young boys are sexually active from a very early age and will pursue their sexuality whenever they can find an opportunity to do so; young males wish to give and receive affection in ways that we as a community have not clearly understood before" (1981, p. 134).

The inverse of this present-day assigned sexual innocence/ignorance might be described as "awareness," which the authors in the preceding paragraphs see as a given, and this awareness inevitably leads to the question of willingness or "consent." It is not the purpose of this paper to reconsider all of the shop worn arguments over consent, simple consent, informed consent, legal consent, etc. These shades of meaning may have their place when it comes to situations such as driving an automobile, entering into a binding legal contract, agreeing to a potentially hazardous medical procedure, etc., which involve developed motor skills and advanced understanding, and which may have very specific consequences. But a child's ability to enjoy his or her sexuality is potentially present at birth, requires only basic motor skills and little or no instruction, appears to have no empirically demonstrable short or long term consequences, and incurs no responsibilities other than doing no real (as opposed to culturally imagined or imposed) harm to others or to oneself. Some might argue that even the violation of social taboos is harmful in and of itself, but would it not be better in the long run to address and cure the disease, rather than continuing to subject children to its ravages?

"Innocence," as promoted by victimologists today, has little basis in reality, and serves primarily as an invented and artificial foundation for the other myths discussed below.

The Child Sexual Abuse Myth

Children sometimes are subjected to emotional and physical mistreatment by older persons, and this abuse may include a sexual component. Some of these experiences have the potential to be harmful in both the short and long term, so real "child sexual abuse" does, in fact, exist, and this paper does not in any way justify or excuse such maltreatment of children.

However, there is considerable evidence that not all sexually expressed child/older person encounters constitute mistreatment or are traumatic (e.g. Bender & Blau, 1937; Ingram, 1981; Riegel, 2009; Sandfort, 1987; Tindall, 1978; Wilson, 1981). In a meta-analysis of retrospective investigations (Rind et al., 1998), two thirds of male respondents characterized their boyhood sexual encounters with older persons as non-negative, even though they most likely had been taught as very young children to expect such experiences to be harmful. In some studies, about half described them as positive (Rind, Bauserman & Tromovitch, 2000). Reports about girlhood experiences tended, however, to be somewhat less positive (Rind et al, 1998), and could well be the subject of another study.

The myth, then, is not about the existence of very real cases of child sexual abuse, but rather the academic and media driven assumption that all sexually expressed child/older person interactions are intrinsically and invariably harmful to the child. This myth no doubt is informed by, and informs, the "child sexual abuse" doctrine which is advocated and disseminated by such people as Finkelhor (1984), Spiegel (2000), Dallam et al. (2001), Seto (2004), and others. This dogma is promoted by a wide range of factions, which Philip Jenkins, in his 1998 book *Moral Panic*, lists as "therapists and psychiatrists, criminal-justice administrators, women's groups, sexual reformers and libertarians, and moral traditionalists and conservatives." Jenkins further implicates "the news media and popular fiction or academic or professional sources" as the means by which "child sexual abuse" doctrine is projected (p. 5). Attempts to counter this moral panic have so far met with little success; Bernard observed:

Human beings have the tendency not to make judgments based on facts, especially in sexual matters, but rather on simplified abstractions of reality. New facts, including scientific research, are generally not accepted or respected (1997, p. 35).

The principal assumption of the child sexual abuse myth is that all sexually expressed child/older person encounters are "likely to cause harm, . . . [that] most children . . . will be affected, . . . [and] this harm will typically be severe or intense, . . . " (Rind et al., 1998, p. 46), i.e., that such experiences are "traumatic," an issue which is discussed in the next section.

The Trauma Myth

Susan Clancy, whose 2009 book was the impetus for this present paper and provided the title for this section, rediscovered a gem of wisdom that has been hidden in plain sight for decades: that the vast majority of children, especially boys, are not adversely affected at the time by consensual sexual experiences with older persons. Nearly 70 years ago Menninger noted "The assumption is, of course, that children are irreparably ruined by such experiences. . . . [I] point out that in the cold light of scientific investigation no such devastating effects usually follow" (1942, p. 283; cf. Bender & Blau, 1937; Ingram, 1981; Riegel, 2009; Sandfort, 1987). Clancy is

to be applauded for having called attention to this old truth, but, unfortunately, she failed to pursue her insight to its logical conclusions. Nevertheless, even though she attempted to soften the impact of her rediscovery, she offended "a whole academic and therapeutic structure [which] rides on the old model of sexual abuse" by publishing data and findings which "flew in the face of several decades of politically correct trauma theory, feminist theory and sexual politics," and which "had the potential to undermine a host of expensive treatment and prevention projects." (Zuger, 2010). Members of what Dineen describes as the "psychology industry" (2001) take a dim view of those who might interfere with their cash flow.

However, for all of the heresies of which she is accused, Clancy is still a product of the entrenched pseudo-discipline of victimology. When she designed her investigation back in the 1990s, she failed to foresee the need for her sample to be drawn from all of those who had a "childhood sexual experience with an older person," as was done in a similar investigation conducted on the Internet by Riegel (2009). Instead, she repeated the errors of many of her predecessors (e.g. Kersher and McShane 1984), and placed newspaper advertisements asking "Were you sexually abused as a child?" (Clancy, 2009, p. xi). She thus insured that her responses would be almost exclusively from those participants in such childhood sexual activities who had to some degree accepted and internalized the "abuse" hypothesis that is a fundamental tenet of victimological dogma, and that those who remained free from this negative influence would be disinclined. However, even with this faulted approach, much to her surprise she found that few of her respondents reported their childhood experiences as having been traumatic at the time they happened.

Clancy recognized that something was drastically amiss in the dichotomy between what she found and what she had been taught, another insight for which she is to be commended. But even though she repeatedly mentioned her doubts in her book, she was unable or unwilling to sort them out and come to terms with them. It is difficult to argue that children do not derive physical pleasure from nonviolent genital stimulation, or that they are not likely to intuitively perceive such experiences as benign, if not positive, absent negative cultural influences. She finally rationalized away the fact that most of her respondents found their childhood experiences non-traumatic at the time by claiming that "Sexual abuse becomes traumatic later on" (p. 116) after the child achieves and employs a more mature understanding. Clancy labels this proposed phenomenon "reconceptualization," a process she claims, based on her biased and unrepresentative sample, is characteristic of "most cases of sexual abuse ..." (p. 121), but Green (2010) sees it in a different light: "Thus, it is this aura of evil in the adult world that energizes the social construction of trauma that attaches to experience that was not traumatic. Contact morphs to abuse."

So, then, is reconceptualization a legitimate internal and natural development, or just another name for iatrogenic brainwashing? Bender and Blau observed "At first the children showed no guilt, but this tended to develop ... as they were exposed to the opinion of parents and court officials ... and [this developed guilt] seemed ... not to carry any real conviction..." (1937, pp. 510-511). Constantine and Martinson noted: "Negative reactions of parents [and other adults] . . . to a child's sexual encounters, aside from their function of inducing guilt, can be . . . the most psychonoxious aspect of the entire experience." (1981, p. 241, cf. Malón, 2009a), while Farson observed that "The most ruinous situations are usually . . . the community's response to the act when it is discovered" (1974, pp. 147-148).. A child whose willing relationship with an older

person is discovered will be subjected to a bewildering array of demands for private details, cooperation in investigations, and even physical examinations. Ingram cited a psychiatrist's description of this traumagenic ordeal: "If [the boy] had not been buggered by the man, he certainly was by the police and doctor" (1981, p. 181). And even those whose childhood relationships remain private nevertheless will be hounded by the incessant child sexual abuse media drumbeat for the rest of their lives. It is no wonder that some succumb.

At one point Clancy attempted to invoke Occam to bolster her reconceptualization theory, but a more parsimonious explanation of her data might be that some indeterminate portion of people reconceptualize their non-negative childhood sexual experiences because society tells them they should and must, and follows up by warning them that if they refuse to believe they were harmed they may be seen as delusional. It is reasonable to hypothesize that whether individuals yield to these demands may be related to their level of emotional maturity and confidence in their ability to make their own decisions based on a rational evaluation of the information and evidence available to them. Unfortunately, those who choose to reject reconceptualization generally do not otherwise talk about their childhood sexual experiences, either because such incidents are of no particular importance to them, or to avoid unpleasant discussions, ridicule, and/or reprimand. These people thus become invisible to society and unavailable to research, causing such retrospective data in this area to be difficult to obtain and to be skewed by their absence.

Another very ugly and controversial question is the degree to which those who claim harm years, or even decades, after the supposed incident are motivated by the availability of widely reported financial rewards. Even a cursory reading of the numerous media reports of these delayed compensation-demanding accusations find that many of these claimants have led long and productive lives, married, and successfully raised children while supposedly harboring this festering and purportedly incapacitating memory all those years. Webster tells of former residents of a government care facility for boys in Wales, UK, who, during an investigation of alleged improprieties, were made aware of potentially available "compensation" when they were "trawled" by police for accusations of sexual abuse against staff members of that facility (2009, pp. 224-225). It is no wonder that some of the "bribed" accusations thus obtained were later shown to be total fabrications (pp. 309-325). What is unfortunate is that others of these accusations, although generally unsupported by evidence, were instrumental in sending what may have been an innocent man to prison. In another case in New Zealand, one young man joined his ex-classmates in collecting damages from a Catholic boys' school for claimed molestations, but later admitted that his accusations were fabrications (Martin, 2003). It is very possible that these two instances are only the tips of icebergs of fraud in the sea of belated accusations, claims, and lawsuits that are ongoing in the Western world.

Clancy's sample is hopelessly biased and unrepresentative because she excluded the vast majority of potential respondents whose childhood experiences were not only not traumatic at the time, but which may have had primarily non-negative – and frequently positive – effects in both the short and long term (Bernard, 1981; Ingram, 1981; Riegel, 2009; Rind et al., 1998; Sandfort, 1987; Tindall, 1978; Wilson, 1981). Nevertheless, she doggedly persisted in trying to build her version of what Dawes (1994) described as a psychological House of Cards to support the reconceptualized trauma myth, even though she admitted that she "cannot offer a clear theoretical model as to exactly how and why sexual abuse damages victims" (Clancy, 2009, p.

142). As Clancy has found in her data, few sexually expressed child/older person interactions can be shown to be initially traumatic, thus most of the so-called reconceptualized harm may well originate in pernicious brainwashing from a panicky society (P. Jenkins, 1998) and a profit motivated psychology industry (Dineen, 2002; Zuger, 2010), if not in personal greed (Martin, 2003; Webster 2005).

Summary and Observations

The victimology faction (Money, 1988) of the psychology industry (Dineen, 2001) is not pleased to be reminded of the extrascientific and traumagenic "fads" which have come and gone over the long history of the social sciences, nor of the resemblance of the current child sexual abuse hysteria to those past episodes (Malón, 2009b) – especially to the masturbation insanity myth (Hare, 1962; Laqueur, 2003). The current popular perception of what children know and do regarding their own sexuality is based, as were those fads, on unsupported and insupportable myths, many of which can be traced to victimology and its founders, such as Finkelhor (1981, 1984) and Conte (1985). As others sensed the academic and pecuniary benefits (Zuger, 2010) of climbing aboard what was then an embryonic juggernaut, an onslaught of derivative academic, media, and popular press publications began to appear, treating these myths as if they were legitimate scientific findings, and imparting to them an unjustified aura of credibility and even authority. Media driven public opinion (P. Jenkins, 1998), as well as the academic and judicial systems, have subscribed to this mythology, and opposing hypotheses of childhood sexuality, many by qualified authors and well supported by legitimate research (e.g. Bender & Blau, 1937; Ingram, 1981; Kinsey et al., 1948; Sandfort, 1987; Tindall, 1978; Wilson, 1981), have been ignored or dismissed.

While it must be noted that emotional and/or physical assaults of children, with or without a sexual component, can be genuinely traumatic both at the time and later in life, there is little reason to believe that gentle stimulation of a non-objecting child's genitals is inherently or intrinsically unpleasant or disturbing, that it somehow misinforms the child's psychosexual development, misdirects that development toward homosexuality, or that it constitutes the "child sexual abuse" for which Clancy admits that she "cannot offer a clear theoretical model as to . . . [how it] . . . damages victims" (2009, p. 142). Kinsey et al. gave examples of such stimulation (1948, pp. 175-181), as did Aries (1962, pp. 100-102), and in some cultures such genital fondling of infants and children by caregivers is or has been considered normal (e.g. Carrier, 1985; Fernandez-Marina, 1961; Ford & Beach, 1951). As they become old enough to express themselves, "[C]hildren who are seeking a close relationship with an adult do not necessarily feel that there is such a big chasm between close mental and physical contact in the general sense and the kind of contact which we . . . label as sexual" (Hertoft, 1993, p. 9). Bender and Blau (1937), in their study of both boys and girls, noted that "The child was either a passive or active partner . . . and in some instances seemed to be the initiator or seducer." (p. 517), and Mangus (1953), as well as Weiss, Rogers, Darwin, and Dutton (1955), commented on the participatory role of girls in sexual interactions with older persons. Wilson noted that boys reject the "magical powers" assigned to sex by some, and instead see it as a pleasurable "game" (1981, pp. 129-130); Sandfort (1987) provided extensive details about 25 boys who had ongoing willing relationships involving genital stimulation by older males; and Strozier (2000) wrote of the mutually consensual sexually expressed relationship between a prepubertal Heinz Kohut (a noted psychoanalyst, 1913-1981) and his tutor (p. 24).

On a peer level, it is generally understood that the investigation of their own and other's genitals is all but ubiquitous among boys, and that older boys instruct younger ones. Here again, these practices are not thought to be as common among girls; the simple fact that boys' genitalia are external facilitates curiosity and exploration. Janus and Bess note that "At each stage of preadolescence, prepubertal boys report more sexual activity of every kind than do girls" (1981, p. 86; cf. Langfeldt, 1981). Boys also seem to be intrinsically more forward and proactive with peers as well as with other persons, "and will pursue their sexuality whenever they can find an opportunity to do so. . . For the reality is that boys have come to men and will continue, for time immemorial, to come to them in order to have their sexual and emotional needs met." (Wilson, 1981, pp.133-134).

The purpose and intent of this paper has not been to propound new ideas, but to resurrect and attempt to reinvigorate long known concepts and studies which in recent times have been ignored, if not deliberately suppressed. When Bender and Blau (1937) investigated child sexual interactions with older persons nearly three quarters of a century ago, they were already able to cite previous research. The 1980s saw a flowering of empirical and other research in the works of Wilson (1981), Constantine and Martinson (1981), Sandfort, (1987), Feierman (1990) and others; but, with the notable exception of Rind et al. (1998), academic and social harassment have largely silenced these and similar academics and professionals. For decades, victimologists have proclaimed what they have unilaterally decided is supposed to be concerning children's capacity and right to engage in sexual activities with peers and other persons, but both children and science would be far better served by renewed legitimate investigations and thorough discussions of what really is.

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