

**THE NATURE OF
THE CHILD**
by Jerome Kagan
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that Bluestone had installed in the late 1940s. Bringing medical care to city jails, offering programs for juvenile delinquents, drug abusers, and the elderly, Montefiore has actually expanded its social role in recent years.

William Wordsworth's declaration that "the Child is father of the Man" was no piece of poetic whimsy. It encapsulated the view of human development dominant in the West from the 17th century to the present, enjoying such persuasive exponents as John Locke, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, and Sigmund Freud. However, Kagan, a Harvard psychologist, argues that people, rather than being "fixed" by their early childhood experiences, have a lifelong capacity for intellectual and emotional change. Kagan's theory of psychological development is firmly rooted in the biological sciences, particularly neurology. He holds, for instance, that the acquisition of various "cognitive competences," including moral judgment, depends, to a far greater extent than has previously been thought, on the maturation of the central nervous system. Kagan turns to anthropology to examine a number of established notions. The critical importance of maternal nurturing and affection to a child's future happiness has considerable sentimental force but, says Kagan, little objective support. In Polynesian societies, parents become almost aloof when their offspring reach their third year, and many a weaned infant is farmed out to a relative for rearing. Yet these same youngsters become secure and happy adults. Kagan's view of human development as a series of discrete and qualitatively different stages rather than as an unbroken continuum will provoke debate. And so will his conviction that it is not "what parents do to children . . . that matters, but rather the intention the child imputes to those who act on and with him or her."