

A question of ownership

Our need to fit into the society or human group we happen to be in, and quickly adapt to their behavioural rules, is so great that we end up forgetting there might exist such a thing as ethical truth. An article in The New York Times section on parenting, titled '[In Switzerland, Parents Observe. In the U.S., Hovering Is Required.](#)' shows how the idea that government is family (that all these politics have to do with the way we are raised) is slowly finding its way into the *adult* collective conscious. The idea that ethics is already understood by babies will no doubt take longer to be accepted (though we already [see research](#) pointing in this direction), but at least referring to "observing" as a better way to deal with children in social situations is a healthier euphemism.

Nobody really believes that "observing" is really the best policy to deal with toddler conflicts. There are all kinds of parents out there, and their violent influence on their children is beyond what any small child can defend herself against. Should the conflict described in the article had been between her 18 month-old controlling the sugar, and a 3 year-old trying to snatch it, would the writer have sat there "observing" too? It is easy to talk about property rights when you are the government.

In that moment, I knew that no matter what country we mother in, somehow as mothers we're all the same: At some point, we act based on what our culture believes instead of what we as individuals do.

The question is not about what one believes to be true individually, socially or anything like that; it is about [what is true](#), regarding ethics. It is not true that you have to share (socialism) and it is not true either that you have to keep (fascism). It is true that your body and the effects of it (controlling a bit of sugar) belong to yourself, and so the "Swiss way" the writer refers to is justified as far as that goes.



It is first necessary to respect boundaries before negotiating on property, but for that we should use a more reliable measure than that the random social interactions of babies who all have in common that their parents disrespect their own boundaries in their interactions with them.

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These babies come from all sorts of family backgrounds, but their parents share the common value that "[they own their children](#)", just as they believe they are owned by their respective nations. But of course nobody really believes that either; because they cannot believe it; because it is false.