How to Raise Children to Be Good People?

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ABSTRACT: *More and more expressions of violence and malaise take place in schools and youth camps which gives a reason to discuss topical issues related to child rearing. In this article, the purpose is to view love as the core means of raising children. The article is based on the authors' various studies of love and from the specific point of view of how to raise children to appreciate and practice goodness. The theme is discussed from parents' and teachers' points of view. There is not just one answer for how love for a child might represent the road to goodness.*

Introduction

Childhood may be the optimal time to promote healthy attitudes, behavior, adjustment, and prevention of problems by, for example, recognizing the children's strengths and building on those strengths (Brown Kirschman, Johnson, Bender, & Roberts, 2009). It has been shown that children's development is greatly affected by the phenomena that take place in their growing surroundings: juvenile culture, media, as well as societal values and ideals. Therefore, it is important what kind of surroundings—day care or school or other institutions—provide for children's development and growth (e.g. Hagegull & Bohlin, 1995; Boshcee & Jacobs, 1997) in addition to home (Kyrönlampi-Kylmänen & Määttä, 2011a, 2011b).

Baumeister et al. (2001, p. 323) have pointed out that:

> at the individual level, temptation and destructive instincts battle against strivings for virtue, altruism, and fulfillment. 'Good' and 'bad' are among the first words and concepts learned by children ~, and most people can readily characterize almost any experience, emotion, or outcome as good or bad. (Baumeister et al. 2001, p. 323)

Furthermore, Baumaister et al. (2001) claim that bad emotions, parents, and feedback have more impact than good ones as bad information is processed more thoroughly than good. Given this starting point, it is disconcerting that violence and malaise are increasingly expressed in schools and youth camps (see also Horsthemke, 2009)—even taking on such extreme forms as that of violent massacres, as happened, for example, in Norway (July 2011) and Finland (November 2007); something which is, indeed, quite rare in these so-called lands of milk and honey. Likewise, suicidal behavior among the youth can be considered one contemporary manifestation of negative occurrences today (Kilpimaa, 2008).

Following the radical societal change which took place, for example, in Finland after the Second World War as the country started to industrialize rapidly (Statistics Finland, 2007), the traditional social network started to change too, from the family, relatives, and neighbors forming a supporting network into families and individuals

coping by themselves (Anttonen, 1998). The survival of human beings on this planet is grounded on mutual concern, care, and goodness. Anger and fear have their place as these feelings are also needed but without love, goodness, and care, humankind would not be the dominate species in the world (Berscheid, 2006; de Vaal, 2010). Given the imporatce of this kind of social support we can ask whether more can be done to cultivate it. Foe example, would it be possible to start a new kind of inculcation of enlightened attitudes through education that would enhance interaction skills among children and youngsters? (See Kilpimaa, 2008).

Uusitalo (2008, p. 116) has illustrated well the role of significant adults in the lives of children. Significant adults are mirrors that children use to reflect themselves as they construct their own concept of selfhood. If the mirrors are dusty or cracked—in other words, the child does not become seen, heard, or accepted as his or her own personality—the child's self-concept becomes distorted and he or she will have frail self-esteem (Uusitalo, 2008).

However, there are children who have success in life and are happy, content, and well-balanced, as well. Everyone can be seen as potentially good. Why is it, then, that some people succeed while others do not even when they have similar backgrounds? In this article, our purpose is to consider love as the core means of raising children to be good people. The article is based on our various examinations of love, which we want to then use in order to approach the issue of how to raise children into good people or toward goodness. We will discuss the theme from parents' and teachers' points-of-view and highlight some ethical issues as well.

The Core Concepts

Goodness as the Goal

Good is a word that is so common that people do not stop to think about its definition very often. A good way of checking its rather mundane definition is to look at a dictionary. According to an online dictionary at *Dictionary.com*, the term 'good' as a noun means profit or advantage, worth, or benefit; excellence or merit; kindness; and moral righteousness and virtue. The last two sets of definitions are relevant here; namely, they refer to such actions that aim at doing or being good or having he power for good. But what this is remains unknown—or at least undefined.

As educators, we are interested in psychological-philosophical definitions of (moral) goodness. Often, human goodness is compared to humanity or altruism (e.g. Haidt, 2010; Batson, Ahmad, & Lishner, 2009). Seligman et al. (2005, p. 412) have created a classification of universal virtues and strengths. Their definitions for the virtue of humanity and its character strengths (kindness, love, and social intelligence) might be considered as one side of goodness. According to the authors, "humanity" refers to "interpersonal strengths that involve 'tending and befriending' others" (Seligman et al., 2005, p. 412). Altruistic people act to benefit another whereas gratitude as a part of goodness enables people to receive, and that motivates people to return the goodness they have been given (see Emmons, 2010).

The existence of a good human being can be considered problematic or even impossible, especially when 'good' is so easily confused with 'perfect.' Being a good human being does not mean that one should be totally irreproachable, moral, and faultless; such a goal is actually non-human and likely impossible (see Ojanen, 1998) given that the circumstances and chances of being good vary so much (Nagel, 1979). According to Ojanen (1998), people can be good although they are not perfectly good, do other things than are not routinely good, and have flaws. The fundamental goal is, however, to pursue goodness by accepting the imperfect nature of human beings.

Love as the Means

Next, we discuss love as the fundamental factor in raising children to be good human beings. Goodness and humanity are connected with love and, on the other hand, the ability to love is often linked to human virtues (Goldstein & Lake, 2000; Swanton, 2010; Määttä & Uusiautti, 2011a). This viewpoint is in line with Seligman and Peterson's categorization of human virtues, six of which they take to be universal. These virtues were Wisdom and Knowledge, Courage, Justice, Temperance, Spirituality and Transcendence, and Love and Humanity (see Seligman, 2002; Seligman, Steen, Park, & Peterson, 2005). Based on Wärnå, Lindholm, and Eriksson's (2007) research, love is a central virtue, and it enriches health by increasing physical well-beng and enhancing love of life.

According to our studies (Määttä, 2011a, 2011b; Uusiautti & Määttä, 2011), love consists of three interconnected areas: emotions, knowledge and skills, and acts. Through these three components of love, we conclude that the ability to love necessitates virtues. From this point of view, love can be learned and practiced. Our viewpoint is that emotions that are connected to love are positive and produce "goodness" as such, for example, feelings of joy and pleasure and the sense of togetherness. Moreover, love can be seen as a decision that is manifested by acts. This idea is similar to that discussed by Fromm (1977) and Solomon (2002) as well. Solomon regards constancy as a virtue in love and Fromm (1977) has pointed out that love is not just about an affect or a passive inner emotion but active aspiration to help the beloved to grow and be happy. With this kind of love enacted in child rearing, children can both feel loved and worth loving and thus learn to love others as well.

Storh (2009) has combined love with the idea of "minding others' business." She explains that we might be morally required to intervene in someone's life in order to promote that person's own happiness. Storh (2009, p. 136) concludes, "My flourishing depends on the flourishing of others. That makes it all the more important to permit wise intervention in others' affairs, for in minding others' business, we are also often minding our own." Transmitting this kind of an attitude to our children could well serve as the main ideal when it comes to upbringing. This is what love fundamentally is and children will learn to use it if we—as educators, parents, and other significant people in children's lives—set an example by directing our mindful and loving action toward children and other people as well.

Some Viewpoints to Fostering the Child's Self-Esteem and Relationships

According to the post-modern idea of childhood, childhood is a social construction and a child is the constructor of his or her own life, knowledge, identity, and culture (Kronqvist & Kumpulainen, 2011). Therefore, development does not happen distinctively in phases nor is it universal as there are cultural variations (see e.g. Rothbaum et al., 2008). At its best, raising children both at home and at day care offers a positive environment that enhances the development of children's strengths, most of which are important to survival in the modern world: healthy self-confidence and self-esteem, balanced emotional life, judgment and responsibility, the ability to control one's own behavior, empathy as well as the ability to respect and appreciate other people (see Määttä, 2007). Of course, rearing principles vary by culture as there are great differences between, for example, Western and Eastern child rearing in emphasizing such concerns as expectations of children's individuality, compliance, and proximity, stability, and the trust of close relationships (Rothbaum et al., 2008).

There are various theories focued on the meaning of positive encouragement that help us understand the significance of creating a loving atmosphere in early childhood. For example, according to broaden-and-build theory (Fredrickson, 2004), positive emotions, such as joy, interest, contentment, and love, broaden an individual's thought-action repertoire; joy sparks the urge to play, interest sparks the urge to explore, contentment sparks the urge to savor and integrate, and love sparks a recurring cycle of each of these urges within safe, close relationships. Consequently, the importance of loving and safe relationships should not be underestimated. For

example, Berscheid (2006) claims that understanding human behavior has suffered because we have forgotten the fact that people live in a net of human relationships for their entire lives, and that most of human behavior takes place in the context of human relationships.

Alice Miller (1984) says, "Do not hope that a child would turn into something specific, just that he/she would develop. Enjoy the child and his/her developmental phases as he/she is. Enjoy your life together instead of being constantly worried about what your children will become or not in the future." This is how a healthy self-image is created as well as the self-confidence to confront difficulties and problems in life. Successful rearing does not aim at removing hardships and obstacles but helping children to learn to confront, tolerate, and conquer the inevitable difficulties of life (Mcree & Halpern, 2010). According to Lawrence (2001), the earliest sense of a "true self" is for the infant a self "worthy of love"—an idea that is in accordance with the notion of authentic selfhood (see Joensuu, 2011).

Consequently, raising children provides people with the readiness to nourish relationships and, similarly, the experiences gained from these relationships function as sources for self-development (Määttä, 2010). Feeney and Van Vleet (2010) point out how secure base concepts provide an important theoretical basis for understanding how people can grow as a result of being attached to someone. With well-developed self-appreciation, one can respect others' dissimilarity and individuality and does not expect oneself or others to be perfect. Self-appreciation is enhanced by learning to enjoy one's own success, fields of expertise, and competencies and achievements, instead of clinging to others.

Through the above-mentioned practices, a child finds the world interesting and enjoyable, and feels that he or she has a positive place in it and thus, the purpose of becoming a good person can be more readily achieved.

Love at the Core of Upbringing and Education

Parental Love

Children have to find out that they are loved and valuable even when their actions are harmful or cause disappointments and shame for their parents. Children's inappropriate behavior cannot be accepted and the right direction has to be shown (e.g. Hoffman & Saltzen, 1967). However, since children are still maturing human beings, they have to be able to trust that parents will not abandon them. Children are allowed to express their bad feelings and still parents' love holds on; children need love especially when they do not seem to deserve it (E.g. Katz & Tello, 2003). Even the disappointments are an important part of developing self-esteem and mental health (e.g. Desjardins, Zelenti, & Coplan, 2008). At home, children can learn in a safe environment those means which help to handle disappointments and failures. When necessary, parents can protect their children from the feelings of anxiety and guilt.

Family boundaries mean that the family provides consistent supervision for the child and maintains reasonable guidelines for behavior that the child can understand and achieve. Beneficial development is secured by establishing boundaries that are preserved with love instead of discipline, ignorance, underestimation, mocking, or malignancy. What the rules are is entirely up to parents and other adults in the household; furthermore, parents also have to make rules relating to how they themselves will behave—consistency is needed in the maintenance of boundaries (Greenberg, 2003).

In addition, parents give an example for children how to nurture human relationships and the ability to love. A devoted relationship between the parents and a child (Bolwby, 1988) is the basic component of human behavioral repertoire and creates the ability to love (Feenye & Van Vleet, 2010). By the parents' caring, children

learn not only to seek to conform and trust but also to explore the world—to work, play, discover, create (Feeney & Trush, 2010). Ultimately, the only right the parent has to the child is the right to love; the only task is to secure the provisions for free humanity, and the only glory is the children's love (see e.g. Aunola & Nurmi, 2005).

Teachers' Pedagogical Love and Tact

Love appears in teaching as guidance toward disciplined work, but also as patience, trust, and forgiveness. The purpose is not to make learning fun, easy, or pleasing but to create a setting for learning where pupils can use and develop their own resources eventually proceeding at the maximum of their own abilities (Määttä & Uusiautti, 2011a, 2011b). Furthermore, it has been argued that it is not appropriate for the teacher to express his or her negative emotions at school. However, even the teacher's negative emotions have their own meaning because the teacher who shows his or her humanity can trust that the pupil will not be broken if the teacher sometimes gets angry. The pupil is also allowed to show his or her malaise without fear of losing the teacher's caring (Uusitalo, 2008.).

In addition, a loving teacher takes care that the learner does not lose his or her trust in his or her own learning when facing trouble. Therefore, love appears as goal-oriented action; a teacher plans and implements learning situations that enhance learning. Furthermore, a loving teacher takes a pupil's personal situation into consideration (e.g., van Manen, 1991; Hatt, 2005).

From this point of view, pedagogical love is not irrational sentimentalizing or weak-willed coddling; rather, it is a working method that involves persistent interest and perseverance to support pupils' development for the sake of themselves and the whole society. In addition, teachers should find a balance between pedagogical love and pedagogical authority and combine them both in a student-specific manner; pedagogical tact comes out strongest in this ability. Confronting various students requires flexibility and sensitivity in the teacher's pedagogical approach; some students need more intimacy, while some others consider expertise especially important. Moreover, the teaching content and learning objectives may necessitate different kinds of procedures from the teacher—in other words, a certain kind of tact (Määttä & Uusiautti, 2011a, 2011b).

Haavio defines pedagogical tact as follows: "Pedagogical tact is the ability to find quickly and confidently an appropriate course in every education and teaching situation" and to achieve it, the teacher needs "an open eye" in order to be able to understand human life (Haavio, 1948, p. 54). While Haavio writes about understanding, Siljander defines pedagogical tact as an educator's ability and desire to become aware of the pupil's situation; this includes the educator's thoughtfulness but it is also the skill to mold the tension between the maturing individual and the demands of the society (Siljander, 2002, p. 87). Taking this viewpoint further, van Manen pointed out that pedagogical tact is "the language of surprising and unpredicted pedagogical action" that emerges from the genuine attachment toward the pupil (van Manen, 1991, pp. 122-156). At the core, it is the children's vulnerability and defenselessness that make the educator protect them. Tactful behavior is present at every moment in a pedagogical situation and at the same time, this encompasses the ability to listen to and put oneself into the children's position. Tact is intuitive intervention into situations where one has to be able to make quick decisions.

According to Hare (1993), pedagogical love, caring in the classroom, humility, commitment, and hope are traits that constitute a "good" teacher although they are not always easy to adhere to in modern schools. Therefore, pedagogical tact is the key, and this is the case because it, along with pedagogical goodness, illustrates the pedagogical relationship and the fundamental idea that the adult is primarily working for the benefit of the child in this context (Saevi & Eilifsen, 2008). In our opinion, this kind of action can be one of the best ways to raise children to be good people.

Conclusion: Good People Are Raised With Love—but Also With Authority

An essential element in goodness is respect. Children will learn to respect people who show respect to them. Respect for children's dignity is defined in the United Nations charter of children's rights (Melton, 1991) but when it comes to goodness, respect includes the idea of caring and showing interest. The people who are most likely to be respected by children, use a unique combination of being loving but still setting limits in firm but caring ways. Children need constructive feedback but it must come within a relationship of love, support, and sensitivity if it is to motivate good behavior. Grusec and Goodnow (1994) studied the internalization of values and concluded that the optimal impact on internalization may arise from some particular sequence of a particular form of reasoning and a particular form of power assertion. Children also need limits, but these can be established with kindness and respect. Flexible authority means being capable of bending according to children's needs and qualifications. (See Määttä & Uusiautti, 2011a.) This demands a degree of empathy of sorts, the ability to look at things from children's point-of-view (Hättich, Hättich, & Hoffman, 1970; van Manen, 1991).

Creating a warm and supportive environment at school and at home is crucial. Mutual respect supports empathy; students respect the teacher and children respect parents or other caregivers and regard them as a sort of safe haven that they can rely on. Safe and respectable adults trust and believe in children's abilities, respect their individuality, and help them to enhance their balanced development and find their own strengths. Authority is then understood as positive, related to expertise and love-based pegagogy, and is not associated with authoritative domination. The relationship between the adult and the child is two-way and target-oriented, as the purpose is to help children learn, grow, and develop their knowledge and skills.

Discussion

Together with parents, educators work with one of society's most vulnerable groups—young children. The quality of the interactions between young children and the adults who care for them has a significant and enduring impact on children's lives. The intimacy of the relationship and the potential to do harm call for a commitment on the part of child care practitioners to the highest standards of ethical practice (Holmgren, 2006; see also Horsthemke, 2009).

Outstanding facilities or even the most advanced technology does not guarantee positive development, nor can one raise a child like one might a company --according to the indexes or expectations of market economy. Every child develops with the support and encouragement that he or she receives in everyday life from the people he or she lives with. Nothing can replace human interaction. Lawrence (2001, p. 61) notes that love is a social experience and organizes the social experience.

Humanity is manifested in child rearing by respecting each and every child. Children should be appreciated so that they will be understood and approved of even when weak, maladjusted, or difficult, even when they do not meet those idealistic hopes and expectations that parents, daycare, and school systems have set up to help them. This is a fundamental issue because so much of modern society's "I'll manage alone" ideology ends up admiring those people who do not need others and who can cope by themselves. As a consequence of such narcissistic ideologies, the helthy developmen of both larger society and specific individuals are put at great risk. For much of contemporary culture, we do not seem to tolerate or handle failures and difficulties; admitting weaknesses and vulnerability are considered as giving up (Gauvain & Huard, 1999).

Therefore, children have to perceive that they are loved, cared, and accepted as they are—not just when they meet our expectations. Successful child rearing does not aim at clearing the hardships and obstacles but helping children to learn to confront, tolerate, and conquer the inevitable difficulties that life will throw at them (Mcree & Halpern, 2010). Parents, caregivers, and teachers should encourage and support the child to behave appropri-

ately, undertake challenging tasks, and perform activities to the best of her or his abilities.

Caregivers and educators have to have faith in children's talents, but just belief and trust will not be enough. Successful child rearing also has to be focused on action: being present, giving time, and making the effort to create positive togetherness. Significant adults care, ask, discuss, listen, tell, explain, argue, fuss and busy themselves with children. Adults are role models for children even in the most difficult life situations; we have to recognize and maintain this belief and activley pursue the challenge of building a better environment and more human world for children. Child rearing exists to help children experience what life can offer. Children have to be allowed to see how the world could be 'better' and to be assured that this 'better' world is also achievable.

The world is changing at an unprecedented pace, with internationalization and multiculturalism all of one piece, which demands a new kind of approach to human relationships; the emphasis is on societal responsibilities and the roles of active future makers (von Wright, 2009; Seidl & Friend, 2002). Interpersonal and interactive relationship skills are becoming increasingly more important; this is especially true given the growing dissimilarity among people we now encounter just within our daily environment. Likewise, teachers also need to be flexible with students, especially when it comes to those who have learning difficulties and suffer from social exclusion, and so being better prepared to get along with different kinds of learners is something good teachers would be wise not to neglect.

In this article, we wanted to discuss the idea of love as the pathway toward goodness. We also wanted to highlight various forms and dimensions of love. Still, it is reasonable to ask whether love is enough to transform our children into good people. And if love is not enough, what is? It is likely that any definite answer to this question either cannot be given or at least not in a direct or unambiguous manner. Nevertheless, given the increasing stakes that are involved, as well as what we now know about childhood behavior, it seems these kind of issues are in more need of deliberation and discussion than ever before.

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