

## How to Educate Children for Peace

Confronted with the question: "How can we educate children for peace?" the psychoanalyst finds herself in a difficult position. Psychoanalysts look at human beings and their behavior not moralistically but psychologically. We try to see things as they are, not as they should be. And so, before we can suggest anything about how to train children for peace, we first have to state the conditions and possibilities which this task presents. Perhaps we also shall have to destroy some delusions, which many people suffer from because they put their own wishes before facts.

I want to draw your attention in particular to the fact that the demand for peace is in strict opposition to one of the most vital instincts of every living being, namely aggression.

By "aggression" most people understand the wish to attack, to destroy and to kill. Therefore they condemn it wholeheartedly, and the general trend in our civilization for many centuries goes towards the more or less complete suppression of this apparently most dangerous instinct.

As we all ought to know, the small child is a little savage, an untamed animal, whose behavior is directed primarily by the pleasure principle and with little thought to the demands of reality. The steps by which the child is taught the demands of reality vary in different homes. Usually the average family reacts in the following way: Every overt sign of aggression in the child (crying, kicking, biting, breaking things, etc.) is met by the grown ups with disapproval. The same disapproval is directed at the child's impatience and bad moods. His outbreaks of temper often lead to severe punishment. The conscientious parent tries to realize his ideal of a good citizen which he usually can't fulfill himself — in his children. The child is told to be good natured, obedient, respectful. This aim is usually achieved either by appealing to the child's fear of trouble and punishment or to his desire to be loved.

One might expect that people who have been trained from the beginning of their lives to be considerate of their neighbors, to respect property, to obey authority, would have the best possible training for peace. But if we look today at the countries where for hundreds of generations people have been brought up in this way, we must admit that the results are rather disappointing. Wherever we look, we see people engaging in or preparing for war, young people enthusiastic about going to war and philosophers seeking to find justifications to prove the necessity of wars — all this in spite of religious and humanitarian ideals. How can we understand this?

First, in order to find out, we have to scrutinize the common conception of "aggression." This conception is mainly derived from the effects which aggression has on the people exposed to it. The small child's aggression causes grown ups a lot of inconvenience and annoyance. Therefore most people regard it as undesirable and try to break the child's will. But they are in danger of not only suppressing his so-called "naughtiness," his crying and shouting, biting, kicking and scratching, tearing and breaking things, but also of suppressing his curiosity and his inquisitiveness. Of course, the child's inquisitiveness and his physical aggressiveness are very trying for the grown ups. Their satisfaction demands so much time and patience, and they can be very embarrassing. They even call for the admission of one's own ignorance, which many parents regard as serious damage to their authority. But on the other hand curiosity and inquisitiveness are indispensable conditions for the child's intellectual development, his capacity to learn and to study, to understand people and circumstances. And complete suppression of aggressiveness causes — if not stupidity, then certainly serious intellectual inhibition — and leads to the impossibility of critical thinking. Within the family that may appear as an asset. The parents' demand for respect implies that the child should not question the grown ups, that one should do as one is told, that one should believe what one is taught, in general that one should be accepting and not critical. The psychologist concludes metaphorically that a lot is forced down

a child's throat, without permission to bite or to chew or to digest. In fact, that is not just a convenient metaphor but the possibility to bite, to chew, to digest and to assimilate physical food (and on the other side the power to think, to criticize, to understand which represents the means to assimilate intellectual food) are only differentiations of the same aggressive instinct. Our psychoanalytical experience shows that the suppression of the one side very seriously affects the other side and vice versa.

I prefer not to enter into a lengthy technical discussion of the problem. If you understand what an important part the aggressive instinct plays in a child's development, you can certainly recognize that the consequences of our traditional upbringing are usually disastrous.

People who have been brought up toward blind obedience, who can't think and act independently, using their own insight and will — such people can only do what they are told, and fall an easy prey to anybody who assumes leadership. These people will believe and accept anything that is impressed upon them with sufficient pressure, either with promises or by force. As they have not trained their capacity for criticism, they have little possibility to understand social and political circumstances or to act according to their insight and judgment. They are easily overwhelmed by a display of apparent strength and succumb to propaganda. In this way we can explain the fact that fascism could gain such a large number of followers in such a short time, not only in the countries where it originated, but over the whole world, in countries which differ very widely in their historical development, their political system, their national character, or their social and cultural background.

Of course, intellectual immaturity is caused not only by the suppression of early infantile aggression. Of equal importance for development of fascism is the fact that the repression of individual aggression usually brings about an increase of universal aggression. In all highly civilized countries we can see where the average individual has not developed his aggressive capacities to any considerable extent, but is on the contrary rather restrained, well-behaved, even afraid of complications, that the community has developed its means of aggression into absolutely terrifying extremes. The improvement of the war machinery (guns, tanks, aircraft, bombs, poison gas, military training and strategic efficiency) seems to be in direct proportion to the suppression of individual aggressiveness, as if the repressed aggression of all the individuals had been accumulated into something beyond the individual and simply had to force its way out.

Here we are quite near the truth. Actually an instinct cannot be repressed, only its expressions. The aggressive energies remain the same and have to find an outlet. In some cases they may become invested in the resistance against aggression, and build a strong conscience, as a means of directing these energies.

Frequently the repressed aggressive energies come out in two most undesirable phenomena: neurosis and delinquency. And in a certain sense these are both foundation pillars for militarism and fascism. That a government, a general, or a "Fuehrer" takes responsibility from the individual's shoulders has an effect like the lid being taken from a kettle of boiling water. Like compressed steam the long repressed and accumulated aggression simply shoots out. But because it was so fully repressed, it could not be transformed in any way, it is still the original aggressiveness of the small child: unintelligent, cruel, bestial — only performed now with the physical strength and the technical means of the grownup. The permission in war or in similar circumstances to commit actions which, under normal circumstances would bring about the social and legal condemnation of the individual, actually means an undoing, an annihilation of the early infantile inhibitions of aggression. And the person or the system which gives this permission, takes the place of the early infantile authorities: father, mother, teachers, etc. But if these authorities imposed inhibitions and therefore perhaps met with a certain resentment and fear, the authority which undoes these inhibitions is accepted without reserve: he is welcomed as a liberator and a saviour: he is the good father, and the fixation which is created may be equally strong or even stronger than the early infantile fixations.

I have painted a rather gloomy picture. I am afraid that it was not quite what you expected, and that I may even have created the impression that I have "gone off the rail" and digressed. To return to our theme: How can we train our children for peace?, in spite or perhaps with the facts which I have presented.

Our first step must be that we revise our conception of "aggression." Aggression is not only a

destructive energy, but the force which is behind all our activities, without which we could not do anything. Aggression not only makes us attack, it also makes us tackle things: it does not only destroy, it also builds up: it not only makes us steal and rob, it also lies behind our endeavors to take hold and to master what we have a right to.

It is a false question whether to repress or not to repress aggression. Since aggression is an indispensable ingredient of human makeup, we have to use it, to develop it into a valuable instrument for the management of our lives. That implies that in particular one should not hamper the very first signs of aggression in the small child, but that one rather should encourage it and provide adequate support for it. In the beginning that means mainly sufficient food, as a lack usually creates greediness. As soon as the child's teeth begin to grow, he wants to bite. Now he needs solid food and toys. Otherwise he will bite just what he can get hold of, even mother's finger or breast: but if he does it, it should not be regarded as a crime. Later on, toys should be something that the child can work with: blocks, sand, clay, paper, crayons, etc. They should stimulate the child's creative and constructive abilities. Toys which only can be spoiled or destroyed, without providing material for new activities, are of limited use. Where the parents have a pacifistic attitude, they probably won't give their children any militaristic toys: guns, soldiers, etc. But even if they do, I don't think that the child will suffer for his whole life through their rather superficial influences, if in general he has learned to think and act independently.

And so I come again to the point, which I want to emphasize most strongly: Mothers — and fathers — should encourage the child's mental activities from the very beginning. Children should be allowed to find things out, even if that occasionally would mean breaking a doll and finding out what is inside. Children's questions should be answered as honestly as possible. Although the child knows little, his curiosity and his inquisitiveness are his major means by which he can gain knowledge and experience. If he is told: "Don't be silly!", if he is made to feel that he is too small and too young to understand things and that he only stands in the way of the big people when they work or amuse themselves, he will not be able to get rid of this feeling of inferiority when he is himself grown up. The child is concerned with the present and keeps his earliest reactions to his environment as a pattern for his future life. He will then regard his own opinions and his own achievements as small and unimportant in comparison with other people's, he will perhaps not even try to do anything of his own accord or to think his own thoughts, but he will just do and believe as he is told. And that means that as a social and political being he will be a very doubtful quality, he will be unintelligent and unreliable. But a child who has not repressed his aggression, who has learned to make use of it, to manage it, will later be able to take an intelligent part in social and political life.

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