

Child-rearing¹ is mean

K.R.Ä.T.Z.E.

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Translation of http://kraetzae.de/erziehung/erziehen_ist_gemein/

¹ In German it is „Erziehung“ which is a mixture or something inbetween of education and child-raising and parenting and child-rearing. Difficult to translate. We mostly use „education“ in this translation in the sense of „child-rearing“.

Dear reader,

you're about to read our policy text on anti-education. We are aware that this is a highly controversial issue. Some statements or assertions may sound rather harsh at first. But have the courage to read on! We try to explain everything. We do not consider the definition of education, from which we start in this text, to be malicious - as some might think - nor do we want to insult others. So let's go!

We reject any kind of education - including anti-authoritarian education. But obviously not everyone understands "education" in the same way. To avoid misunderstandings, we will first define this term.

Certainly, the individual variants of education are very different, many even contradict each other almost completely. But some characteristics are common to all types of education, and that is why this text does not make any further distinction between them.

Education is a planned (intentional) and purposeful activity to form mostly young people. Education does not take place "naturally" in every communication, in every influence, but only when one person rises above the other and thinks that he or she is allowed or obliged to pull him or her towards a goal. In education there is always a subject and an object of education, the pulling and the drawn, the educator and the pupil, an above and a below.

Education means that adults enforce their ideas about how a child should be - if "necessary" even against the will of the child. The educator tries to ensure that the child reaches the goals set by the child within the time set by the educator. He sets up rules and prohibitions and ensures that they are complied with using his means of power after appropriate threats. This is undoubtedly a form of violence. The talk of "non-violent education" is therefore confusing and wrong.

Education does not respect young people. It has the right to change people. Characteristics of the pupil which the educator considers negative, he tries to suppress, while he wants to strengthen "positive" characteristics. He wants to decide what the child comes into contact with. The educator believes he is acting in the interest of the child, just as the colonial masters once believed or pretended to act in the interest of the colonised.

Education is a manipulative matter. An educator starts from the idea that children are "doable". Such a notion of feasibility is contrary to the spirit of a liberal democracy. In his book "Antipädagogik - Studien zur Abschaffung der Erziehung" ("Anti Pedagogy - Studies on the Abolition of Education"), the children's rights activist Ekkehard von Braunmühl writes: "The claim to improve and change other people cannot be brought into line with the ideas of tolerance, respect and trust by any trick in the world. Not to mention democracy."

Education is always undemocratic. Simply setting a goal for the child to achieve is undemocratic. Even the so-called anti-authoritarian education sticks to the goal of forming

young people; they should become particularly critical of authority. Education is always thought from top to bottom - i.e. hierarchically.

There are essentially two means of education available to the educator: Seduction on the one hand (distraction, trickery, bribery, etc.) and extortion on the other, i.e. intimidation by threatening and inflicting disadvantages.

Education and its theoretical background "pedagogy" see children as objects, as human material to be formed. But children are not objects. Children are subjects, self-determined living beings like all human beings - right from the beginning. Accordingly, the relationship to them must be shaped. The fact that children initially lack certain abilities (the so-called execution competence) is not a fundamental problem. Also old people are not "educated" if they cannot do something, but one helps them. Education is characterised by heteronomy. In practice, education often means that children have to go to bed at a time chosen by the educator, may not be allowed to meet certain friends, have to say thank you and please, may only speak when asked to, have to go to grandma's for a visit; they have to eat together with their parents or are not allowed to do so for educational reasons, they have to have their room decorated according to their parents' ideas, comb their hair, dress according to their parents' taste and behave as their parents wish and in such a way that they can show off in front of relatives and acquaintances (status symbol: good child). This list could be continued at will. The decisive factor is not whether these actions are meaningful, but that the child is left no other choice. None of this is demanded of adults with equal rights, and it is hardly ever thought of demanding it.

But why do parents do all this? Isn't living together on an equal footing, that is, without parental authority, much more pleasant for both sides? The downright parental delusion of many parents has its origin in the assumption that children are in need of education. As widespread as this assumption is, it is not true. Many people confuse education and learning. Upbringing is an event of the educator. Learning, however, is an activity of the child. It explores its environment, absorbs information. The child is the subject of its learning. Children learn - without being forced to do so. One cannot even prevent learning, at most hinder it, for example through education. Children are not in need of education, but in need of learning; and they learn even without education. That this is not only the case in theory is shown by the practice of many families in which children have grown up without being educated from the beginning.

Of course, children also learn with education. But above all they learn the rules of education: that children must do what they are told. That in case of conflict it does not depend on what one wants or thinks about as a child, but that the educators decide. In the end, children "learn" the belief that education is indispensable. And what one believes to have understood once, one does not give up easily. This is how generation after generation educates their children - even if living together under conditions of equality is a possibility for relationships that renounces paternalism and violence.

To clear up one more possible misunderstanding: to renounce education does not mean to neglect the child, to not care for it at all. Especially small children are not yet able to do many

things and are dependent on support. But must helplessness and dependence be used as an occasion to rise above the other, to prescribe a goal for him or her and, if necessary, to enforce the achievement of this goal by force? Is this done with the elderly, or with people with disabilities? And if so, is it fair?

And another important aspect: do children need boundaries? Supporters of traditional education answer this question clearly with "yes", supporters of the "anti-authoritarian" variant answer it with "no". The mistake they both make is to lump all boundaries together. Because there are two qualitatively completely different types of boundaries. There are aggressive boundaries and there are defensive boundaries. Defensive boundaries are set for your own defence, i.e. to protect yourself from foreign attacks (e.g.: "It bothers me when you listen to loud music at three in the morning because I can't sleep then".) They correspond to the principle "freedom as long as the freedom of the other person is not restricted". These self-defence boundaries are useful for peaceful coexistence. And they also do not contradict the equal rights of parents and children.

Aggressive limits, on the other hand, are set for other people, for example, to "protect them from themselves" and to force them to their (supposed) happiness (e.g.: "You must not listen to loud music because it is not good for you!"). Educational boundaries are aggressive boundaries. They cannot be justified with the right of self-defence. On a social level, this type of border is remarkably common in countries where human, basic and civil rights do not apply to adults either. Aggressive borders have to do with power, not with right (justice) like defensive borders.

So the mistake of the so-called anti-authoritarian education was to abolish not only the aggressive borders but also the defensive ones. Children who grew up anti-authoritarian were thus used to not having to respect defensive boundaries, which leads to conflicts with other people. Representatives of traditional education now claim that the attempt to let children grow up more freely has failed. However, anti-authoritarian education has failed not because of anti-authoritarian behaviour towards children, but because of the idea that children must be brought up. And to all those who think that children need boundaries just for that reason alone, in order to be able to rub against anything, it should be said that there is enough real resistance, far removed from pedagogical illusory worlds.

But shouldn't children be protected? It cannot be denied that there are many dangers in life. This applies to both children and adults. On the one hand, one can try to minimize the dangers (e.g. one does not have to let uninsulated power cables look out of the wall longer than absolutely necessary). On the other hand, you can offer support to children in situations that are difficult for them to understand, rescue them in an emergency and explain to them in a quiet atmosphere, when the child is "receptive", that moving cars and open windows can be dangerous and how to protect yourself from the dangers. All this is not contrary to equality.

Prohibitions are not compatible with the above principle about borders and they are not effective protection either, because children can always try out the forbidden things when they are alone. Children also do not want to put themselves in danger. However, prohibitions can cause

counter-reactions in which the children overlook the safety of themselves, so that only then do they come into real danger. Furthermore, prohibitions do not contribute to the understanding of dangerous situations.

As a general principle, protection should not lead to a restriction of rights, but should offer additional assistance to those in need.

It is understandable that parents worry when their twelve-year-old daughter is not home by two o'clock at night. Conversely, many children are also afraid for their parents if they are away late at night. Informing the other person in advance or calling them from the road would perhaps alleviate some of this anxiety. You can also offer to pick up the child yourself or through other people from an agreed place or pay a taxi. Overall, however, it will hardly ever be possible to eliminate all dangers. Giving advice, support or assistance has proven to be not only more relationship-friendly, but also more effective than punishment, prohibitions and education.

In equal parent-child relationships the question does not even arise whether the parents allow one or forbid the other. Everyone is taken seriously with their interest and their decision. Self-determination does not mean that every decision makes sense or that no mistakes are made. What is meant is that every person can decide for himself what he feels as happiness or desirable and how he acts. Parents do not have to like the lifestyle of the child. If the parents believe that this or that would be better for the child, they can talk to him or her about it, offer him or her factual information, inform him or her about the consequences of their actions, make suggestions. Expressions of sympathy as well as antipathy for the child's behaviour in certain situations can and will of course also exist, just as they do among adults. However, parents are not allowed to tell their children what to do and what not to do - just as it is not customary among adults.

Many people claim that education is necessary to impart values. But it is contradictory to try to instil values such as non-violence or tolerance. If a child does not behave in the sense of these values, the "educators" would have to be intolerant according to this logic and if necessary react with (educational) violence in order to enforce the transmission of values. In families with equal rights children experience such values by being lived by others and not because they are conveyed through education. Education does not make people accept democratic values and find them important. If an educator nevertheless acts democratically, this will be due to experiences he or she has had outside of education.

Some people believe that human beings are evil by nature and that for this reason alone they must be "put on the right track" through education. Anyone who treats children as if they were monsters must naturally expect them to resist. This resistance is often seen as aggressiveness by monster theorists and serves them as a pretext for even more education and as confirmation of their theory. The "evil nature" of man is no more than an unproven assertion.

And now some more bad news for all those who, despite all this, still want to continue with education: In most cases, education achieves the opposite of what was intended. To do the

opposite of what is commanded is often the only way for the child to show that it decides autonomously what it does. This so-called pedagogical opposite effect is particularly serious in dangerous situations, because many accidents happen precisely because of the prohibitions. Purely humane and objective information - in contrast to orders - is no reason for the child to resist. Under educational conditions, the opposite effect can at best be avoided or reduced by the fact that the child does not know when it is to be educated, or by the fact that the most severe punishments are threatened in the event of disobedience.

In fact, education today is usually administered in a very subtle way, whereas in the past there was more beatings and imprisonment. Both variants are not compatible with human dignity and the basic rights of the child to self-determination and free development of the personality. Education is a dangerous mixture of distrust, intolerance, fear and hypocrisy. Parents who place the relationship with their child on such a basis endanger a trusting relationship with each other.

Although neither educators nor educators are really satisfied with their upbringing and its consequences, they cheerfully continue education and even demand more "courage to educate". Often out of ignorance, many repeat the mistakes of their parents and raise children themselves. Many people are of the opinion that some health problems, especially psychological ones, can be connected with educational experiences. And this vicious circle, which turns educators back into educators, will probably not change as long as nothing gets caught up in the hustle and bustle of pedagogy - like anti-pedagogical enlightenment, for example.

Children who live together with their parents on an equal footing experience non-violence, openness and tolerance; they are taken seriously and take responsibility on their own initiative. People who have grown up with equal rights agree that they want to live together with their children because they are satisfied with this form of relationship.

If, when dealing with children, you are not sure whether you are acting on the basis of equality, just think about whether you would treat a friend in the same way in the same situation and whether you would find it okay to be treated like that yourself.

A general abandonment of education would certainly have an impact on society. We assume that the propensity to violence will decrease, because people who experience equality will presumably also appreciate the rights and freedoms of others. The energy previously tied up in power struggles would be freed up for more pleasant things and for solving previously neglected problems.

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