Socialization and Civil Society

How Parents, Teachers and Others Could Foster a Democratic Way of Life

Micha de Winter

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By

Micha de Winter
University of Utrecht, The Netherlands

Translated by Murray Pearson

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FOREWORD

There is a clear relation between the way children are raised and the way the world is heading. It is a two-way relation: when children from an early age are given the idea that it is perfectly normal to let fly at the least provocation, it is hardly likely that as adults they will have much time for social ideals of cooperation and tolerance. A child growing up in a society or neighbourhood dominated by the law of the strongest is more likely to learn from parents that talking is of little help. Famous philosophers and educationists, Immanuel Kant, John Dewey, Maria Montessori and Paolo Freire, exposed clearly the direct link between the social and political abuses of their time and the way in which children were brought up. From their analysis they each conceived the ambition of making the world a better place through the reform of education. In this, admittedly, they did not always succeed – though of course there have been successes. For instance, education in the western world has clearly contributed to the emancipation of girls and women, and scientific insights regarding child development have played an important role in bringing about international agreements on the rights of children.

However, some would say that idealized educational aims are highly dangerous: dictators love them and all too readily exploit the upbringing and education of children as a blatant instrument of indoctrination. But whether we therefore have to forget any ulterior educative aim?

In any case, for various reasons it is not fashionable these days to make any kind of direct connection between child upbringing and 'the state of the world'. We no longer believe in the feasibility of 'making' the world and if someone takes it into his head to use upbringing as a means of achieving social ends the idea is immediately dismissed as naivety at best or, more ominously, as state usurpation of child-rearing. Moreover, everything now revolves around individual chances and individual development. In our present-day neoliberal culture child-raising has become a predominantly personal project, one whose success the parents feel themselves responsible for and which, at the same time, they are supposed to find enjoyable. They often experience it, on the other hand, as a lead weight. You mustn't appeal to anyone else in the vicinity, for that would shatter the illusion of your own success – furthermore, others always know better! And in turn, don't involve yourself in the upbringing of other people's children, or worse still, in the behaviour of other children or youths on the street. Before you know where you are you'll get a stone through the window. On the other hand, there has been an explosive growth in the appeal to educational experts these past decades – experts who increasingly portray themselves as specialists in behavioural regulation. They advise parents above all to be consistent, to reward good behaviour and ignore bad behaviour. As a result, child-raising seems to become a kind of behavioural

therapy. Many parents – and teachers, politicians and TV programme-makers too – appear to think that child-raising is successful if no serious problems have occurred. And from this idea, in recent years, we have seen a great deal invested in a youth policy that will provide early warnings of all possible risks in children's development, so that they can be guided back on track. Everyone will agree that growing up without major problems constitutes a victory – a victory for parents, for children, and for society as a whole. But can upbringing really be considered a success merely because the child has not fallen into criminality or prostitution?

There should be much more to child-raising, education and youth policy – for example, to learn to understand and internalize democratic citizenship, humanity and freedom. What does it mean to live in a democratic society where you have a right and your own identity, but where you also have to extend that same right to others? How do you resist the seductions of 'them-versus-us' thinking which both offers the feelings of security and of belonging to a group and at the same time invites the risk of dehumanizing and excluding the other? Or how do you actually realize freedom in your life? What does freedom actually mean: to be able to go your own way undisturbed by others, to try and give meaning to your existence together with others, for instance when it comes to sustainability or social justice, etcetera?

Where these kinds of global issue are concerned, child-raising and its scientific study do have a role to play. This idea conflicts with the often implicit assumptions of most psychologists and educationists, viz. that such questions are not amenable to objective scientific research. But that seems to me entirely the wrong way of looking at it: if the established methods do not lend themselves to the study of urgent issues, then you should not stifle the issues but rather look for new methods.
This book consists of six related essays, which can also be read separately. The first two deal mainly with youth policy and its history. Chapter 1, on the basis of Isaiah Berlin's concepts of positive and negative freedom, shows how one-sided our thinking about childhood and child-raising has become, as prevention of aberrances or misconduct seem to have become ever more dominant. But when we mainly concentrate on the restraint of the freedom of children and parents, we forget that child-raising must also have a positive direction. If that is missing, the problems will only be exacerbated.

Social Darwinism and social hygienism have had a large influence on thinking about youth policy. On the basis of these two historical movements, chapter 2 shows how individual and contextual perspectives conflict in the social and political a debate over youth and child-raising. At one moment the issue is how to deal with 'bad' or 'depraved' children and their parents, the next it is a question of how to combat social evils that are supposed to be the cause of the problem.

Chapters 3 and 4 discuss the important, but nowadays largely ignored role of the wider social circumstances in child-raising and socialization. In chapter 3 I illustrate this role by concentrating on the issue of child abuse. While research and practice are mainly aimed at causal factors in the family, which are therefore sought *within* the home, there is strong evidence that various processes which operate *outside* the home have a major influence on this problem. One implication

of this is that prevention ought to be directed, far more than at present, at the potential force of social networks in the immediate environment. In chapter 4 I introduce the concept of an 'educative civil society'. Because parenting and child-raising have been so forced into a straitjacket of individualist thinking, and because experts have come to play such an important role, we have gradually found ourselves in a double-bind: as parents we are told that child-raising is our own creative responsibility, yet at the same time each individual act must be carefully chosen to conform to expert advice. In the end, this leads either to ever more individual requests for help or to the further imposition of sweeping measures from above. The thesis of this chapter is that we can only free ourselves from this double-bind of child-raising through cooperation. The widening of responsibility for child-raising and the strengthening of ties between young and old in the immediate locality are highly relevant means of reversing this double-bind process. In chapters 5 and 6 I set out the connections between child-raising and wider social developments. In chapter 5 the focus is on the role played by parenting and education in relation to the general good of society, in this context the importance of a democratic state and the democratic way of living together in a society. On the one hand we have to consider the facts: everyone who has a part to play in the socialization of young people not only exerts an influence on their individual possibilities and fortunes, but also on the quality of the society. On the other hand, precisely for this reason there are far-reaching normative choices to be made: what type of citizenship do we actually want to promote by means of upbringing, education and youth policy and what social ideals are we ultimately striving for? Chapter 6 finally tackles the charged question of whether, and if so how child-upbringing and education can contribute to the fight against phenomena that have to be considered reprehensible by any conceivable standard – specifically, violence against communities or populations, which sometimes leads to genocide. Moral exclusion and dehumanization always play a highly significant role in the process leading to such violence. If only from the viewpoint of prevention, it is therefore essential for children to learn how such mechanisms work and how they can sometimes be actively exploited to set one community against another.

Of course, this book does not pretend to offer a solution to all the world's problems. But in my own view, when it comes to the social, societal and general aims of child-raising, everyone involved in parenting, education and youth policy would do well to raise the level of their ambition. After all, the way children are brought up makes an enormous difference, not only for their own lives – both in the immediate present and for the rest of their lives – but also for the way people live together in various social associations, for the degree to which they are prepared to participate actively in the political community, and ultimately also for their concern for and involvement in the lives and problems of people elsewhere in the world.

Micha de Winter
Groenekan, February 2012

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CHAPTER 1

POLITICS AS SUPERNANNY

Bringing up children, youth policy and Isaiah Berlin's two kinds of freedom

> Scene: an aeroplane; I am sitting in a gangway seat, next to me a mother with a dear little four year-old daughter. The daughter discovers that there are several children from her infant class further up the gangway, so her mother asks me in a very friendly way if her daughter could climb over me to go and play with them. Naturally I agree, and equally naturally, three minutes later, the daughter climbs back over me to tell mama about it and to fetch one of her toys. And again, and again … After this has repeated itself about fifteen times, and the preparation of my lecture is beginning to suffer, I say to the little girl: the next time you want to climb over me, you'll have to pay me a cent. To which the mother replies: I'm really glad you've said something, sir, because I'm being driven crazy myself …

1.1 CHILD-UPBRINGING AS BEHAVIOURAL THERAPY

Bringing up children is a battle ground; or at least, it has to be that from time to time. Behind every front door, in every school class, in every football club or youth organization, norms, values and behaviour are fought over in daily skirmishes. This is logical, since children are first and foremost inclined to do whatever they like, whereas for parents that is not always the most desirable way to go. As the Spanish philosopher of child-upbringing, F. Savater, rightly observes, you cannot instil anything into a child without crossing them from time to time. And conversely, those responsible for bringing up children sometimes make demands on children that are excessive, as for example when they allow the pattern of their own expectations to override the child's real possibilities (Savater, 1997). The phenomenologist Langeveld (1979) referred to these kinds of 'ingrained tension' as the antinomies of child-rearing. One of these antinomies is the tension between freedom and restraint. Children need to experiment with things in freedom, while adults want to limit that room for experiment to ensure that their children don't land themselves in frightening or unsafe situations. Another tension is that between the ideal and actual reality: those who raise children have constantly to seek a balance between the possibilities and needs of the child and the demands of the future. An exaggerated focus on the future exerts an enormous pressure on the learning child, whereas too little attention to it challenges the child insufficiently to want to explore the world. And finally there is the tension between conveyance of the culture into which a child is growing and the renewal of that culture. Children

must be induced into the existing culture, the norms and customs of society, but on the other hand they must have the chance to develop themselves to become critical citizens capable of shaping their lives and futures. The inherent tension between freedom and coercion is an almost universal theme in the socialization of children. To be free is to free oneself from ignorance and from determination by our genetic and social environment, writes Savater, and for this reason raising children for freedom demands a degree of discipline.

There is thus a great deal at stake in child-upbringing, far more than the problems of behaviour that one usually sees in supernanny-like TV-programmes. In that kind of programme it is always a question of parents who, for one reason or another, cannot keep order, a child that won't be potty-trained or brothers and sisters who create havoc, tumbling all over the place. These programmes, almost without exception, offer a popularized form of behavioural therapy, i.e. a consistent system of rewards and discouragements based on the known principles of operant and classical conditioning. Successful child-rearing is thus more or less equated with the regulation of behaviour (Furedi, 2009). We also come across this in popular classes given by health and welfare organizations, for example, under the terms of child-rearing support. The support mainly consists of learning 'effective parenting', i.e. from instruction in how to replace undesirable by desirable behaviour. It is seldom – if ever – about fundamental and normative questions such as the dilemmas mentioned above that are simply inherent in bringing up children. It would seem that not only professionals and programme-makers, but also social scientists have defined away these fundamental dilemmas of parenting. This is undoubtedly related to the fact that experts are averse to entering into normative or ideological territory, for this would raise the question of their precious neutrality – a neutrality which is, in fact, by definition incompatible with issues of raising children. In the world of youth policy, this focus on the regulation of behaviour has much to do with the cult of efficacy which has predominated there over recent years. 'Effective parenting' is easily measured, and creates the illusion that child-rearing problems can be quickly manipulated by evidence-based methods. And to some extent this account holds true for the regulation of simple behavioural problems. But regulating behaviour has little to do with bringing up children, for the latter turns upon far more complex matters – the formation of personality, the discovery of identity and the meaning of existence, one's place in a culture and society. Faced with such recalcitrant questions, parents and educators in the end have more recourse to wisdom and authority than to simple principles of conditioning, and rely more on patience and experience than the obvious direction to be consistent. But admittedly, the model of child-raising as simply the regulation of behaviour has become very popular. It achieves quick and tangible results, so quick and tangible, in fact, that one can make spectacular television programmes about it. But nobody ever sees what may or may not have transpired a few years down the line.

Child psychologists such as Garbarino, Damon and Lerner have recently demonstrated that we sell children, young people and parents seriously short with this short-term behavioural approach that currently seems to have taken over

children's upbringing. Among other things, their work deals with the question of why so many young people feel alienated from society and scarcely any sense of connection with others, why so many have no inkling of how to give meaning to their lives, and of course, what can be done about it. Many of the problems that we currently refer to as individual behavioural dysfunctions (attention deficit, substance abuse, depression, criminality, truancy, etc., in fact have a significant cultural and collective component. In other words, they also have to do with the way in which the lives of children growing up in modern society are organized, the way families and social networks function within it, how youth and educational policy is shaped; and more generally, the nature of the educational culture in politics and society. Tackling such problems is also an enormously complex task. But in society it is the simple and quick solutions – where available – that are given preference. We would rather fight the epidemic of ADHD-like disturbances with Ritaline than ask ourselves to what extent our tolerance limits for children whose brains function differently have perhaps shrunk; we would rather deal with youth criminality by correcting moral thinking errors of individuals than by studying the social conditions under which such patterns of thinking actually arise (Gibbs et al., 1997). These are examples of interventions that rely on a simplified, fragmented analysis of the particular problem concerned. Only one limited part of the whole spectrum of possible causes is dealt with, mostly at the level of individual behaviour. 'Larger' or 'wider' causes remain virtually untouched. When their efficacy is measured, this too is increasingly a matter of measuring changes in individual behaviour. But whether, for the sake of argument, the level of child-abuse can be substantially reduced by offering all parents parenting classes, as is being claimed by some proponents, is very much open to question (see chapter 3).[1]

1.2 SIMPLIFICATION AND POLARIZATION

Not only in the realm of TV programmes, parenting classes and scientific studies of parenting do we see a preference for simplified and fragmented solutions. The positions adopted in politics and the media on bringing up children and tackling youth problems are also increasingly characterized by the same approach. Many politicians in fact behave like failed supernannies: failed, because the real supernannies know that rewarding good behaviour is much better than punishing bad behaviour. Politicians, on the contrary, seem to want, as it were, to impose stricter limits, maintain consistency, introduce 'boot' camps, punish inadequate parents by withholding their child allowance, for example, or fining them for their children's delinquency. Politicians often in history were meddling in the way children are brought up. Nor could it be otherwise, since raising children is not merely a matter of private concern, but also a question for society as a whole. However one looks at it, the way children are brought up affects not only the individual but also the way they function socially. And conversely, the way society and politics function has a great impact on parenting, education and youth policy. In the past, educationalists have also often meddled in political questions. To give just a few well-known examples: John Dewey (and the democratizing of society),

Maria Montessori (educating children for freedom), and Paolo Freire (and liberation pedagogy).

In our own time, when it comes to questions of socialization, politicians are particularly preoccupied with two interwoven notions, viz. *incompetent parents* and *disobedient children*. Over the whole political spectrum, the alleged incompetence of parents (or sometimes also of others who have responsibility for raising children, such as teachers or child healthcare workers) is almost automatically assumed to be the cause of various problems occurring in society, ranging from poor language skills and the early dropout from schooling to the culture of hanging around, binge drinking and unsafe sex. When it comes to the problems of young children the case is often argued for using pressure or compulsion on parents. One regularly hears official arguments, in the interests of children, for giving less weight to the privacy of the family and, if necessary against the will of the parents, to investigate and intervene in the home. It certainly seems that juvenile care organizations and juvenile judges have become more inclined in recent years towards supervision and removal orders as a result of child abuse that end in the death of the child, as have happened in Britain and the Netherlands in recent years, and the waves of public outrage that ensued.[ii] When it comes to adolescents, parental incompetence is perhaps still seen as the main cause, but we especially see measures that have to curb their behaviour in the social domain in an unmistakable fashion. The main idea is that the regime at home and at school has become too 'soft', that supervision on the street is too friendly, so that youths are a law unto themselves in the public domain. Even political groups who see themselves as the standard-bearers for the autonomy of the family or the individual are demanding measures that would allow the freedom of child-rearing to be restricted. Until a few years ago, in fact, this was only possible by means of a criminal or civil action. But freedom-restrictive interventions, such as street coaches who pick up under-age children out on the streets in the evening, forcing parents to sign a child-rearing contract with the school, or enforcing an antisocial behaviour order, can now be executed without the mediation of a judge, for instance at the instigation of the local authorities.

Over the last decade, the public and political debate over child-upbringing has internationally become starkly polarized (Furedi, 2001; De Winter, 2003). The tone is more strident, the standpoints have tended to become more radical and entrenched. Not that polarization is in itself a bad thing, for example, since having a sharp debate over pressing social questions often contributes more to their solution than glossing over the problems. And indeed, in the case of the questions over upbringing this effect can be observed. For example, when it comes to the problem of social 'nuisance' caused by youths, many municipalities have gradually discovered that their policy was, on the one hand, too tolerant, but on the other hand also too one-sided. Attempts have long been made to resolve the problem by establishing ready-made hanging-out places, sometimes with participant involvement over the question of whether or not these should be covered. When this was found to be ineffective in reducing the level of nuisance, there was a switch to more repressive measures, but these turned out to be equally ineffective

in solving the problem; they merely displaced it. Slowly, by degrees, local councils discovered the interactive nature of the phenomenon: by definition, there is no nuisance caused by youths without local residents who are disturbed by their behaviour and complain about it (Martineau, 2006). It is precisely in the interaction – or better said, in the lack of it – that the problem lies (RMO, 2008). Perhaps the sharp social debates that have been conducted on this issue will give the necessary impulse for a new type of solution that we can by now see on the horizon, such as, for example, neighbourhood mediation, investigative groups of adult and young residents, and the Peaceful Neighbourhood Initiative (Vreedzame Wijk) in the Netherlands. This is an initiative based on the principle of the Peaceful School, in which children learn to resolve conflicts in their own environment via peer-mediation.

Polarization, although it can sometimes be fruitful, also brings with it serious risks. The greatest danger is that polarization sets groups against each other. Although the argument is that the problems, if identified, should be named, stigmatization of entire communities is a predictable side effect. For example, polarization of the public debate on youth can easily stigmatize large groups of youngsters – immigrant youth, for example.

Another important effect of polarization is that the quality of arguments is often subordinate to the desired goal, specifically the domination and, as far as possible, the detriment of the opposing party (de Dreu, 2009). To the extent that the tone becomes more strident and the attacks more personal the debate is impoverished. Positions are so firmly drawn that there is no further room for negotiation (RMO, 2009). Because many such debates are carried out through the media, standpoints and arguments are often reduced to the level of one-liners. This is precisely what has happened over recent years in the field of child-upbringing in many western societies. The restriction of freedom, both the freedom of incompetent parents and disobedient youth, seems to have become the main pedagogical theme of our time. Freedom is apparently no longer a positive value that one should promote by means of education and upbringing, but rather a right that holds more for some than for others. The debate on upbringing has thus been reduced to a single dimension. The normative clash is not only over the question of when and by what criteria can one resort to coercive measures. The question is whether we are still capable of resolving the complex dilemmas surrounding child-upbringing within such a uni-dimensional school of thought. In any case, the polarization between a hard and soft line in socialization and youth policy is demonstrably fruitless: it is clear that neither model brings any closer the desired, acceptable goals of child-upbringing within a democracy.

1.3 ISAIAH BERLIN AND THE TWO CONCEPTS OF FREEDOM

Isaiah Berlin, one of the most influential political philosophers of the twentieth century, developed a theory of freedom that has, in my view, enormous relevance to the problem of the socialization of children in our time. In his famous Oxford inaugural lecture on ‘Two Concepts of Liberty’ he raised the question of obedience

and coercion: “Why should I (or anyone) obey anyone else? Why should I not live as I like? Must I obey? If I do not obey, may I be coerced? By whom, and to what degree, and in the name of what, and for the sake of what?” (Berlin, 1958). His starting point is the value of plurality. From a conviction that the is no such thing as a single all-inclusive truth, he finds it of the utmost importance that there should be sufficient room in society for different legitimate values to be weighed against each other. That may sound rather tamely obvious, but in reality the opposite turns out to be the case. The concept of freedom has been misused throughout the course of history in every possible way, says Berlin. Every dictator, every totalitarian regime tries to establish its power by an appeal to the liberation of its citizens form one or other evil: the communists promised to liberate the workers from exploitation by capital; the Nazis claimed that they would cleanse the German race of perverse Jewish and other non-Aryan influence, and so on. The end result of virtually every dictatorship, however, is the total subjection – or worse – of their own ‘liberated’ citizens. Freedom thus serves as the bait, with blind oppression the end result. The concept of freedom can thus be manipulated incredibly, and for this reason, says Berlin, it needs further specification. He therefore distinguishes between *negative* and *positive* freedom. *Negative freedom* concerns the question of what room there is for individuals or groups to do what they want, unhindered by others. For example, the more strongly the individual is protected against state influence, the greater his negative freedom. *Positive freedom*, on the other hand, has to do with people’s need to give a particular content and direction to their own lives, either independently or together with others in a community or society. Negative freedom, in short, is freedom from restriction by others, whereas positive freedom concerns the giving of content to life and society, free of coercion. Supporters of negative freedom want to restrict authority, whereas supporters of positive freedom want precisely to *achieve* that authority. The problem is that these two kinds of freedom can seriously conflict with each other. If, for example, an excessive emphasis is laid on a social ideal that citizens should strive for, varying from total autonomy to a strongly communal life, then the individual’s negative freedom suffers. That is what happens under the influence of totalitarian ideologies; but even in a democracy the government will sometimes involve itself in what takes place behind people’s front doors, for example appealing to a shared value such as the safety of children. Conversely, one can also imagine societies in which the freedom of each individual was so absolutely conceived that he or she was constantly in collision with the right to self-determination, and thus with the positive freedom, of others. According to the political philosopher Blokland this kind of conflict constantly presents us with a “dilemma of emancipation”:

> when one places too much emphasis on negative freedom, one robs people of the possibility of developing, in interaction with their environment, their own autonomy. When, on the contrary, one places too much emphasis on the development of their autonomy, in school, education, socialization, then negative freedom suffers. And that negative freedom is precisely what one

> needs if one wants to make use of his capacity for self-determination. (Blokland, 1997, p. 169)

Does this conceptual clarification of the term 'freedom' offer a constructive way out of the dilemma between a hard and a soft approach to the problems of child-upbringing and youth? As said earlier, the concept of freedom in relation to socialization is troublesome. A child is not free in all senses, precisely because the way to freedom for oneself and from others is complicated and thus requires a degree of guidance from others. It is this field of tension which opens the door to all kinds of ideologies, which either advocate maximizing authority over children (in an authoritarian upbringing), or on the contrary argue for the complete self-determination of children (in an anti-authoritarian upbringing).

What strikes one immediately if one looks at this from Berlin's perspective, is that present-day political and social debates over child-upbringing turn exclusively within the conceptual space of *negative* freedom. To what extent should the privacy of the family be infringed when those around fear that the child's interests are threatened by the parents? Should a local authority be able to determine how late children are allowed to be out on the streets at night, should a restriction order be placed on youths when residents complain of the level of disturbance they cause? The prevailing idea over almost the entire political spectrum seems to be that the space of negative freedom has become too generous, and that this space must be curtailed. In itself, it may be thought curious that this political conception is so widely shared. The maximization of negative freedom (as little interference as possible by the state in the affairs of the individual) was, after all, one of the basic principles of classical liberalism, but in the field of pedagogy it is not only liberals who have deserted this principle, but in their wake also some socialists and Christian-democrats.

But how does this affect positive freedom, pre-eminently a principle bearing on the direction of development of the individual, and therefore inherently implicated in child-upbringing and youth policy? As already said, positive freedom is concerned with the content, with ideals and ways of living for which individuals and groups strive. The political version of this, according to Blokland, is democracy: "the possibility for individual, together with those with whom they form a community, to give direction to their own society" (Blokland, ibid., p. 170; Taylor, 1989). Whereas today, when it comes to child-upbringing and youth, the curtailment of negative freedom has assumed the central position in the discussion, positive freedom has been virtually ignored. This is remarkable, since one would expect that in a society where questions of identity, religion, plurality and democracy were so emphatically placed at the top of the agenda, these might also figure more prominently in the field of socialization. The fact that so little attention has been paid to positive freedom in the public and political debate does not mean, of course, that nothing has been done in this area. In many western countries civic education is part of the curriculum. The programme 'democratic citizenship in the primary school' that we have developed in conjunction with primary schools, is a concrete example of this (Verhoeven, in press). Children (see also chapter 5, this

book) learn there, both in theory and practice, the basic principles of democracy. Thus, for example, they practise how you resolve conflicts with each other by means of peer mediation, how you reach decisions together in group meetings, how you manage diversity, and further gain concrete social experience via 'service learning'. Such a programme can be seen as a contribution to the development of positive freedom. And so, for that matter, could regular school subjects such as social studies, history and religious education serve the same purpose.

1.4 LIBERATING THE DEBATE ON SOCIALIZATION

The question was whether the conceptual distinction between negative and positive freedom could help give a constructive turn to the debate over 'hard versus soft' approaches to problems of socialization. It is now very clear that the polarity between 'hard' and 'soft' is not so much concerned with freedom itself, but almost entirely with the curtailing of negative freedom, i.e. restrictions. It therefore becomes intelligible why the debate leads to ever more trenchant positions, while at the same time is conspicuous for its predictability and lack of any new insight. After all, the balance between setting boundaries and giving space plays an important role in almost any modern theory of child-upbringing and development. Briefly, an upbringing that is dominated by restrictions, in which children are given few support or room for development, may well produce obedience but usually very little autonomy or critical social engagement. And conversely, if too much room is provided in upbringing and few boundaries set, children learn to see themselves as the centre of the world and to take little account of others (De Winter, 2007). We could say that a youth policy which exclusively focuses on limits and restrictions is, at the very least, from the perspective of socialization, one-sided. Against this it may be countered that the aspect of positive freedom would have to be given shape by means of education and various other training processes in society. What then is the problem?

There certainly is a problem. In Berlin's conceptualization, negative and positive freedoms behave as communicating vessels. If there is a tendency in society to set more limits on the negative freedom of certain groups than for others, the result is understandably to provoke resistance. Moreover, as history shows, the door then stands wide open for ideologies which are only too ready to convince citizens that they will bring deliverance. This is abundantly clear from our own research on the processes of radicalization among young people. Young people feel themselves to be discriminated against along ethnic or cultural lines and – mostly through the internet – come in contact with gurus who know how to channel their dissatisfaction into one or other radical ideology. Almost always, there is a total lack of any pedagogical counterweight. Parents, teachers, and even social workers feel themselves virtually incapable to affect the process, and instead mostly choose to look the other way (Van San et al., 2010).

But alternatively, a constructive relation is also possible. In a social and political climate where many possibilities exist for individuals and groups of citizens to shape their identity themselves and to a large extent to practise their own form of

'common life', the need to restrict the room for negative freedom will be so much less pressing. For whoever has the feeling that he is himself the source of empowerment over his own life – rather than some dictatorial proclaimer of truth – has less need to fear that that others will want to interfere uninvited in his affairs.
In conclusion, following the analogy of Isaiah Berlin's theory of the two mutually dependant forms of freedom, we can now settle several matters arising from the debate over the child-upbringing and youth disaffection. In that debate, rightly or wrongly, the emphasis over the past few years has come to lie on the restriction of negative freedom. Governments want to intrude into the home – and for many that does not go far enough – despite the fact that this desire conflicts with the basic principles of the liberal democratic state (Furedi, 2009). That there appears to be a willingness to tolerate this strain has to be attributed to two motives: concern and fear – concern, for example for the safety and the rights of children that are at stake, fear that those who threaten to go off the rails could eventually put the social security of large groups of citizens in danger – and possibly also endanger the state itself.

With this focus on negative freedom, however, the question of how to give form to positive freedom has receded into the background. But it is precisely when the issue is that of child-upbringing and youth disaffection that this question is crucial: how do we support young people to enable then to develop as well as possible into the autonomous citizens of a plural, democratic society? According to Sieckelinck in current culture we increasingly lose any sense of what to do with the ideals of young people, even in education (Sieckelinck, 2010). Young people simply entertain different ideals from those adults expect. Moreover, these same adults apparently find it increasingly difficult to discuss the issue with them openly. This neglect of the ideals of children and adolescents themselves in their upbringing and education can lead not only to a deadening of awareness, but also to radicalization (ibid.). The deeper the neglect of positive freedom, the more young people will tend to want to maximize their negative freedom. But it then becomes highly likely that this will be a rather empty freedom: you are young and you want something – but what that 'something' looks like scarcely matters (Blokland, 1997). Such an expanded but empty negative freedom could then provoke the growth of social forces demanding that it be curtailed. Thus the circle is complete.

The argument, I hope, is clear. We must speak more with children and with young people, about their identity, the way in which they experience society and want to change it – in short, about positive freedom. This is no task that can be simply delegated to formal education. Citizenship and identity formation are not issues that arise in the context of education alone, but more especially in their everyday social experience (Biesta & Lawy, 2006). A social debate that is primarily about the restriction of negative freedom is in fact part of that experience. We see it happen all around us: there are many children and young people who, from a very early age, have been given the message that they are not much valued, that they don't belong. Worse, they learn – especially from the media and politicians – that they are mainly seen as a danger to be combated. It's a self-fulfilling prophecy, for such experience eventually leads to behaviour that evokes a

social reaction demanding tough limits. Raising children for positive freedom is therefore enormously important. It is a condition for being able to guarantee space of the negative freedom for all citizens in a democratically constituted state.

To return to that small girl in the aeroplane, whose mother allowed her so much negative freedom: That she finally ran into difficulties from me was something she would get over, and in any case it made a nice story. But in the end the multiplicity of such stories will inevitably lead to complaints about the behaviour of the children (and parents) of today, and then to new rules for passengers with children. The alternative is there for the taking.

CHAPTER 2

THE SURVIVAL OF THE FITTEST CHILD

> Traditionally, there have been two ways in which attempts have been made to improve humanity: (I) directly, through external forms of influence on people themselves – by moralising, by admonishing and exhorting, in the hope that they will as a result become better and happier; (II) indirectly, by improving the conditions in which people live. In the last twenty years, a third approach has increasingly has been consciously To these must be added a third way that has increasingly been used, though only consciously realized as such over the last twenty years: (III) improving humanity through the direct action of humanity on itself, the way of eugenics. M.P. Vrij (1917)

2.1 INTRODUCTION

It will not have escaped many that youth policy has developed over the past decades into a political and social issue of major importance. It is also a social field in which ideological bias has played at least as great a role as scientific evidence. No matter that the results of scientific research convincingly demonstrate that the influence of parents on their children's behaviour is often overestimated, and that the problems of children's upbringing can only be successfully tackled by also taking into consideration their social, economic and cultural context; that kind of knowledge is all too readily rejected in public debate these days as inconvenient and 'soft'. No, 'hard' is in. The various political approaches to this problem differ only marginally. In the Netherlands, for instance, although Geert Wilders steals the show with his willingness to kneecap Moroccan hooligans, almost everywhere the tone is much the same: deal with the problem by going in early and hard: whether young troublemakers, potential offenders, early school-leavers or recalcitrant youths – not forgetting, of course, their parents. Because many of the policy measures are aimed at children and parents from ethnic minority groups, youth policy – whether intentionally or unintentionally – inevitably promotes stigmatization. The problems that arise within these groups become implicitly – and often explicitly – acculturated. That is, they become associated with a particular cultural background – 'a typical immigrant problem'. In discussions the social context of the problems concerned is frequently ignored, as though the background had been airbrushed from the picture. Koops regards such stigmatization as a social variant of eugenics (Koops, 2007; see also Noordman, 2010).

This field of tension between science and ideology in the area of youth policy is by no means a new phenomenon. Many of the concepts and practices from the recent history of this policy area, although they were argued or fought for out of scientific conviction, were in fact also loaded with normative assumptions. Nor is that so surprising, since youth policy deals with themes which by definition are not value-free: the whole point is to advance or curtail certain things.

In this chapter I sketch developments in current youth policy against the background of two historical movements: Social Darwinism and social hygienism. The term 'Social Darwinism' refers to the application of theoretical evolutionary principles to human social life. This ideological outlook assumed concrete expression in the propositions of eugenicists, who advocated that the poor and the mentally subnormal should be prevented from breeding, thus maintaining the standard of inherited characteristics among the population. It should be said at once that Darwin himself was hardly responsible for this social application of his theory of natural selection. It was Spencer (1851) who coined the expression 'the survival of the fittest', frequently mistranslated as 'the right of the strongest' or 'might is right'. He qualified this mechanism (literally: the survival of those who have best adapted) as a necessary condition for social progress. Darwin on the contrary considered altruism to be a principle characteristic of the human species that had played an important role in human evolution (Darwin, 1859).

Around the mid-nineteenth century there arose a movement of progressive medical practitioners who campaigned for the improvement of public hygiene, public health and the living conditions of the poor. This group of 'public hygienists' particularly focused on the link between public health and poverty, and more especially between poverty and epidemics. The idea was that 'impoverished classes produced epidemics, but also that, vice versa, the recurring epidemics maintained poverty' (Houwaart, 1991). Although Social Darwinists and social hygienists shared some ideas (for example, the great expectations they both held of prevention for public health), they differed starkly in the type of interventions they recommended: whereas the Social Darwinists mainly wanted to intervene in private lives, the hygienists were concerned with the public domain. It appears to be a fundamental opposition which has actually always played a part in youth policy and still does today. The conflict over this difference of outlook has invariably been conducted with scientific arguments, but in the background it is the ideological and political considerations that play the dominant role.

2.2 CHILD MORTALITY: NATURAL PHENOMENON OR PROBLEM?

In many European countries throughout the second half of the nineteenth and the first decade of the twentieth century, infant mortality was enormous. Around 1850 the average rate of infant mortality in the Netherlands was about 25%. Among the poor, less than half the children born survived their first year, while of those who did survive almost 10% died in their second year and another 5% in their third year (Koppius, 1958). To complete an even blacker picture, Daels (1936) referred to a Belgian study from 1910 from which it appears that the children of unmarried

factory and mineworkers held the absolute record: almost without exception they died in their first year (Daels, 1936).

At the time of Spencer and Darwin, there were many who did not particularly consider this such a disaster. On the contrary, their idea was that a high rate of infant mortality had to do with 'hereditary weakness' that had to be eliminated by natural selection – an idea that still echoed well into the twentieth century. The ethnologist Steinmetz, a well-known advocate of eugenics in the Netherlands, thought that 'care and education for children who 'are already complete trash at birth' was damaging and superfluous. He considered, for example, the practice whereby babies were kept alive in an incubator to be 'a wretched and painful parody of our misplaced over-sensitivity'. Infant mortality, according to him, was merely 'the weeding of humanity by nature' (Steinmetz, 1910; see also Noordman, 1989, p. 65). The idea that government should not interfere to combat alcoholism – because this fight only helped to maintain inferior qualities – also fitted into this way of thinking. M.P. Vrij wrote in *De Toekomst der Maatschappij* [The Future of Society] that the new science of sociology demonstrated that there were only two rational ways toward a better future: either one strove to do something about poor living conditions or one tried to improve humanity itself (Vrij, 1917). The latter approach formed the core of social eugenics and led to proposals for racial improvement. The former view was mainly held by social hygienists, idealists of a liberal and progressive persuasion who advocated equal rights to health, but who at the same time developed new scientifically based ideas of the causes of infant mortality. For example, the hygienists proposed that if it was true that a high infant mortality was the consequence of hereditary weakness, in areas where mortality was high, the surviving people ought to be stronger and healthier and there should be less sickness death and infirmity than elsewhere. But the statistics showed that in reality the reverse was the case (Koppius, 1958, p. 9). The social hygienists discovered that early infant mortality had little to do with hereditary weakness. Poor nutrition and hygiene, bad housing and poverty were the causal factors they were able to identify (Houwaart, 1991). For example, in 1875 Coronel pointed to the difference in infant mortality between urban and rural populations, to the high death rate among illegitimate children and the effect of the warm season on death rates. And in 1906 Sternberg came to the conclusion that mortality among bottle-fed children was seven times higher than among breast-fed children, and that more than 70% of infant mortality was caused by intestinal diseases during the summer months. Similarly, a major research project into the causes of infant mortality carried out around 1910 in The Hague demonstrated that living conditions, health and size of family were of decisive influence (Koppius, 1958, p. 11).

The early hygienists were well ahead of their time. They strove for improvement in the living conditions of the poor and argued for the laying of drains, raising health standards, improvement of working conditions and nutrition. Interestingly enough, they based their arguments on theories that, measured against present levels of understanding, are completely untenable: the so-called miasma theories, according to which poisonous emanations in water, atmosphere and soil were the causes of disease and death. Time and again in their accounts one comes across

such terms as ‘rotting’, ‘stink’, ‘plague vapours’, etc. (for example, Corbin, 1986). Under the influence of Pasteur’s discoveries, these miasma theories gradually disappeared to be replaced by the principle of contagion.

With the government showing little interest in these social problems – which, after all, mainly affected the poorer classes – the first societies for social and preventative health care were set up at the end of the nineteenth century. These saw social-hygienic work as a ‘war’, a battle that had to be waged using all possible means. In propaganda films of the early twentieth century and in countless commemorative books one comes across such terms as ‘crusaders’, ‘holy war’, ‘harbingers of health’, ‘hygienic aftercare/resettlement’, etc. This battle was waged on several fronts. Advice bureaus were set up, to which milk-kitchens were often attached; district nurses paid visits to check up on every family in which a new child was born; ‘hygienic literacy courses’ were organized, travelling exhibitions, etc. Beside this, a wide range of activities were developed: hospitals were founded, transport for the sick was organized, bath-houses were opened and in several places these social health societies themselves built roads to provide more easy access to the countryside in case of calamities such as outbreaks of disease.

Another important aspect was the fight against the prevailing abuses the first district nurses encountered round the childbed:

> I was informed that the nurses leave the women filthy for 9 days and also don’t properly clean the external genitalia: because, they say, ‘what comes by itself must also be got rid of by itself. (Hagemaker, 1904, quoted in Stöpetie, 1983)

The societies tried to combat these practices by instituting in 1899 training for their own nurses. But above all, general principles of nutrition and hygiene, such as the pasteurizing of milk, the availability of clean water and the laying of drains appear to have made a huge contribution to the reduction of infant mortality (McKeown, 1979).

Social hygienism, maternity care and child hygiene in the form of advice bureaus, maternity care and family care were all very much concerned with raising the quality of life, especially the existence of the poor. Concomitantly, few saw the moralizing and normative slant as a problem. The hygienists succeeded in linking their new insights to the moral force of contemporary philanthropy. Health was a virtue, hygiene a social obligation. Infant welfare work must be educative and elevating, missionary work based on modern scientific insights (Van Daalen, 1981). In the Netherlands, many generations of parents have been raised on the three R’s of child care: *Rust, Reinheid en Regelmaat* [rest, cleanliness and regularity]. For many hygienists the fight to improve the quality of existence was politically charged. It was the progressives among them who campaigned for public drainage and clean drinking water, while it was those in power and the wealthy bourgoisie who blocked these measures for so long. For others, the hygienist outlook was primarily a moral one – a campaign to civilize the lower classes, whereby new ideas about health were tied to civil ideals such as decency and a regular family life.

The means the societies employed to propagate modern hygienic understanding would not be so readily accepted today. In Utrecht, for example, before the First World War there were 'the seven sisters', a group of nurses who together exercised a kind of surveillance over virtually all families with small children. These sisters did not make appointments or give notice, they simply entered the home at random moments – often via an open back door – and carried out their controls.

Toward the end of the nineteenth century, a growing group of doctors came to see this openly normative bias as an obstacle to the emancipation of medicine as a science and a profession. As Ten Have (1988) states: 'These doctors wanted to move from the domain of subjective evaluation and normative judgements to an objective value-free description of hard fact (…) with their criterion the natural normality of the human body'. With the help of this criterion, a sharp distinction was drawn between medical and moral domains. The explosive growth of medical and biological science from the beginning of the twentieth century led to the development of an increasingly mechanistic conception of health and disease. Man was seen as a machine that either did or did not function well. Whereas the hygienists were still arguing for measures that that were essentially social and, strictly speaking , fell outside the field of healthcare, the mechanistic approach led to an increasingly narrow vision: the measures needed to combat and prevent diseases were narrowed down to medical-technological interventions focused on the individual. With the rise of this scientific outlook in childcare, the openly moral and political engagement gradually declined. Overtaken by the pursuit of objectivity and moral neutrality, the social-contextual orientation disappeared and care became mainly an individual affair.

2.3 PRESENT-DAY CHILD POLICY

Morbidity and mortality among children in the Netherlands and other western countries has for many decades now been among the lowest in the world. This has to do with the high standard of living, a high level of education and good preventative and curative healthcare. Yet there are a number of the same ideological and scientific conflicts referred to in this brief account of the approach to child mortality which today play an important role in relation to a different problem: how to raise children into society. I shall illustrate this by means of two examples where the different perspectives are very clear: the first, the phenomenon of child-raising contracts whereby governments or professional bodies try to compel parents to exercise in an approved manner the responsibilities for their children's upbringing; and secondly the repressive policy for combating youth nuisance, or the problem of loitering street gangs of youths. Where are the analyses that provide the basis for such policy measures? Are there moralistic, social-Darwinist or social-hygienist traits to be discerned in them? And finally, what are the normative assumptions behind such interventions?

2.3.1 Child-raising contracts

Early in 2009 there surfaced a rumour in the Dutch media and in political circles concerning a proposal by a Rotterdam councillor for a so-called school-parent contract. Under such a contract between the school and parents, the latter would be obliged to fulfil their responsibility for their children's upbringing. For example, parents would have to promise not to let their children go to school without a healthy breakfast, to allow them to watch educative television programmes and to ensure that their children went to bed in good time so that they were capable of concentrating in class the next day. Apparently the councillor had come to the conclusion over the past years that far too many Rotterdam parents had failed their parental obligations. Shortly after this proposal became known, the English sociologist Frank Furedi wrote in a newspaper article that he thought contracts with parents were a nonsense, in particular because they would formalize the relation between school and parents excessively and in the process parents would be infantilized (Salm, 2009). But perhaps such a categorical rejection passes too easily over the experience of many governors of large cities and educationists that there are considerable numbers of parents who do not adequately supervise, care for or stimulate their children. Publicized family tragedies are often quoted as evidence. In itself ,there cannot be any great objection to making agreements over children's upbringing, nor even against formalizing them. It could be seen as a consequence of the International Convention on the Rights of the Child, according to which governments are obliged to ensure adequately the safety and interests of the child. But from the perspective of democratic citizenship (cf. De Winter, 2006a) two very important conditions attach to such an agreement:

– that it should be reached through serious consultation between partners who take each other seriously;
– that the agreements reached are reciprocal.

And it is precisely these conditions that were missing from the proposals for the school-parent contract. It appeared as though they were primarily intended to make 'bad' parents to face up to the reality of the situation. But after a storm of criticism, the councillor pointed out via his website that with such a contract, parents in turn would be able to hold the school to account – for example, their obligation to provide a good education. It was precisely this element of reciprocity that was invisible in the publicity.

Many proposals of recent years to improve the situation of children in the Netherlands are well-intentioned. Thus, for example the mayor of Utrecht deploys street supervisors in a deprived area to take home young children who are out on the streets too late in the evening, the aim being to force the parents to face up to their parental responsibilities. And at the beginning of 2009 the Dutch parliament approved a curfew for under-twelves who caused a nuisance. From now on, parents who fail to keep these children indoors are liable to be punished. The intention is clear: to put a stop to the confusion of children through parents' negligence and

free neighbourhood citizens from the nuisance that this causes. Even the voluntary urine tests that the Rotterdam city government wanted to implement to combat the use of stimulants by secondary school students was a praiseworthy endeavour. For when it comes to drink and drugs teaching meets with little success. More important, however, is the question of why, in pursuit of widely supported laudable aims, we so often use interventions whose effect is precisely to hinder them. Nobody wants drugs in school, but it is known from international research that controls at the gate only make the problem worse, because they are a symptom of organized mistrust (see e.g. Noguera, 2008). That mistrust arises in environments where people hardly know each other and in which mutual involvement is reduced to virtually nil – and where relationship and discussion have become impossible all that is left are tests, gates and cameras, which in turn only serve to deepen mutual distrust. Something comparable also applies to child-raising contracts. If parents are presented with one-sided agreements over behaviour, at least two things happen. Firstly, they are implicitly being told that they are no good as parents, for why otherwise would such a contract be needed? And secondly, one is letting them know that no-one is interested in hearing their own story. What leads parents, for example, to send their children to school without breakfast, or let them play in the streets in the evenings? Such a one-sided and uninterested approach is extremely humiliating for parents, and it is precisely this humiliation that once again obstructs an equal dialogue over child upbringing. In this way various possible remedies are also excluded, for if parents are *a priori* put in the dock, there is hardly any further possibility of discussion over the circumstances that might contribute to an improvement in the situation – of what solutions parents themselves see, and what assistance might be necessary to achieve them. Can and should all these solutions be found within the family, or would it also help to strengthen the social networks around families?

In *Het pauperparadijs* (The poor man's paradise), Susanna Jansen describes the 'trap of good intentions' in which her family had been caught since the nineteenth century (Jansen, 2008). Briefly: people in extreme poverty were, for their own good, taken to institutions for re-education where they were supposed to be re-socialized as respectable, self-reliant citizens. On the whole nothing came of it. For generations her ancestors had remained with very many others imprisoned in a system of painful dependence, stigmatization and humiliation. The message of this story is that interventions such as imposed help and re-education, however obvious a solution these may appear, can trample on human dignity. The chance of this is all the greater if citizens are categorically declared incompetent, when contracts are forced on them without parents' own side of the story being listened to. Authorities tend to be over-optimistic with the short term effects of this kind of intervention when, in fact, caution should be urged. The actual impact – as is so well documented in *Het pauperparadijs* – can be perpetuated for generations, for example through an enormous aversion to society, lethargy or antisocial behaviour because, after all, there is nothing to lose: in short, through the destruction of human and social capital through a well-founded distrust of the democratic state.

2.3.2 The approach to the problem of loitering youths

Many local authorities in various European countries have to deal with residents who complain about loitering youths and the anti-social behaviour of groups of these boys in their neighbourhood. For the Dutch citizen this would appear to be the second most serious source of nuisance after the fouling of public spaces by dog faeces. Often such groups are categorized into: annoying, causing serious nuisance and criminal (Ferwerda, 2009).

It is interesting that the basic level for youths is 'annoying' and thereafter becomes more serious. There is apparently no 'understanding' – in either sense of the word – for young people who just hang out on the street or square to chat with each other, to flirt with each other, to kick a ball about or show off with their scooters. One could compare this situation with the social disquiet over youth that was so prevalent after the Second World War. In the Netherlands, the Utrecht educationalist Langeveld was then commissioned by the government of the time to investigate the mentality of the mass of young people, a study that led to the report *Maatschappelijke verwildering der jeugd* – the social brutalization of youth (Langeveld, 1952).

The gangs of loitering youth – were typified as a totally separate, almost soulless species of primate. One quotation will suffice:

> The feral youth lives in a world that may be called formless in the extreme, in a hollow void: (where) one bellows, roars, talks endless drivel, shrieks, rages, whines and whinges. In their families there is no real love, though there is the blind animal love of a parent for its offspring.

The author of this report moreover reports the threat of a decay of sexual morality in the town of Veenendaal. In the war young people had come to learn far too much about contraceptive means and were as a result far less afraid of free intercourse between the sexes: they apparently knew how to avoid the consequences. 'On a square in the centre of town', writes the distressed author, 'contraceptives can be regularly found in the morning where children who play there happily suck on them …'. His colleague blamed the threat of moral collapse, among other factors, on the arrival of 'foreigners' – young men and girls coming to work in the factories of Veenendaal from neighbouring towns and villages – and you could see that they were of a different, more southern type. They were less well dressed, their behaviour was rougher and more careless, with primitive, retarded characteristics. Before their arrival, the way of life in Veenendaal had proceeded as a matter of course, whereas afterwards manners began to change. Intervention was required: more help with upbringing organized leisure time, youth leaders, youth clubs. Now, some fifty years later similar concerns are being raised. But our current ideas seem to be less about upbringing, aimless youth seems rather to have become the enemy: there is much more talk of urban marines, street supervisors, taskforces, a policy of zero tolerance, attack plans, hot spots and finally, of course, of the mosquito, the ultrasonic precision weapon that hunts out the loitering enemy without anyone getting their hands dirty.

A recent Dutch report on problems of youth nuisance made it clear that street gangs of youths can cause severe levels of nuisance (RMO, 2008). They litter the neighbourhood with rubbish, they make a row, they insult and threaten residents. Authorities are under pressure to take strong action against these youths. At the same time, however, these authorities willingly acknowledge that the future belongs to the young and that these youths have to be drawn into society. According to the report, *hangjongeren* (hang-around youth) proves to be a catch-all term. Youths can hang out on the street and must be allowed to continue to do so. Some of these youths treat others insultingly and such behaviour and that kind of behaviour must mainly be firmly contained within clear limits. And of course the criminals among them must simply be arrested. It was recommended that clear limits be set to unacceptable behaviour in the public space; but this should not happen solely by anonymous, technological means. Setting limits is part of upbringing and that means being prepared to confront youths where necessary. That could happen in various ways. There are destructive methods whereby people are pitted against each other, whereby mutual animosity is encouraged and any connection to society is undermined. But there are also much more constructive methods of confrontation – having a firm talk with youths, for instance, or community mediation, or victim-perpetrator conferences. After all, nuisance is always an interactive phenomenon, requiring both the causers of the nuisance but also those who experience it. Many local councillors and professionals talk about youth nuisance, but also of the extremely limited tolerance and short fuses of some of the older residents in the community. Where such strained relations exist, what is required of these authorities is that they de-escalate the tensions. For example, with the help of youth community workers who set clear limits but also work to build social connections, who ensure that youths continue to feel part of society. A one-sided, repressive regime only contributes to an atmosphere of fear and intolerance among those living in the neighbourhood , who are then even less inclined to come down to the level of young people and have a normal conversation with them. The report argues against exclusively whitewashing or repressive actions but rather for setting boundary limits as a way of offering a future perspective. This is referred to as the ‘combined approach’: acting when and where necessary but at the same time implementing a more constructive repertoire, because repression without perspective simply does not work, nor does the converse of offering perspective without setting clear rules of behaviour. By this approach, policy-makers and politicians must not focus exclusively on youths but also on their environment – physical, social, cultural – and on improving relations between youth and the rest of the neighbouring community.

2.4 TO CONCLUDE: YOUTH POLICY AND IMPROVING THE FUTURE

In the light of the alternatives for ‘improving the future’ as set out by M.P. Vrij in 1917, how should we characterize the current youth policy reflected in these two examples? To begin with, we can safely say that reconstruction of the social and material environment as advocated by the social hygienists is not one of the

priorities of modern youth policy. Today's youth and family policy is in the first place aimed at improving the early signalling, referral and treatment of so-called risk children and risk families. It is an approach based on the assumption that such problems have individual causes that need to be dealt with at the same individual level. In chapter 3 I shall show that this individual-based thinking does not so much represent reality as – at the least – reconstruct it: for important contemporary problems like child-abuse, school drop-out and youth criminality, in addition to risk-factors there are also determining variables which exert a powerful influence at the level of society (poverty, migration, social exclusion, etc.) and at the level of living environment. Neighbourhood factors such as social-economic deprivation, the number of migrants in the area, a highly transient population, a lack of mutual solidarity and trust and a lack of social control are found to be powerful predictors with regard to all the problems mentioned above (Junger-Tas, 2008), yet such social risk factors have no place among the priorities of current youth policy. Instead, this policy seeks the origin of these problems in the family home. Thus, as is evident in the cases of child-raising contracts and of youth nuisance, almost all resources have been put into attempts – with or without compulsion – to improve the individual. And in part this occurs through means – to hark back to M.P. Vrij's terminology – that belong to the category of 'admonishing, moralizing or exhorting'. But the most important aspect of present-day youth policy is the management of individual behaviour. In this discourse conducted by behavioural technologists problems are situated within the individual and the family, while the wider social context is held to be more or less unalterable. The normative frame is utilitarian: the appropriate actions are those that produce the desired result or 'the end justifies the means'. If this principle is applied to the case of child-raising contracts, the question of whether such contracts are ethically and democratically sound is less relevant than the supposed efficacy in leading to the kind of behaviour approved by authority. More particularly, it almost always boils down to a question of short-term effectiveness. This has to do with a governmental and scientific culture in which there have to be 'quick results': a politician wants to see a quick result or he won't be re-elected; a modern scientist has to have a quick result in order to reach the target norm; a manager of a child/youth welfare institution must see quick results to guarantee further funding. Beside this, research on the long-term effects of interventions is in the first place expensive, but more importantly it is methodologically virtually impossible to carry out because of the number of 'disturbing' influences which increases exponentially with time.

Can one detect a certain analogy with Social Darwinism in modern youth policy, as suggested by the title of this chapter? In many respects this analogy does not apply, certainly not in as far as Social Darwinist proposals were aimed precisely against protecting vulnerable individuals. Much of today's child and youth policy is, after all, intended to strengthen the care of vulnerable children and families. But this policy is emphatically focused on the care of vulnerable children and families and not on dealing with social situations which amplify vulnerability. There lies the great contrast between the work of the socially-inspired doctors, educationists and governors who took up the cause of deprived children and

families from the latter half of the nineteenth century. A social hygienist such as Samuel Coronel, for example, strove untiringly against the social deprivations that were a constant threat to the health and the lives of poor children; the educationist Jan Ligthart devoted himself to raising the intellectual level of the worker's child, and governors like Wibaut campaigned against the degrading way the poor were forced to live. The mission – the normative framework – of the elevating child policy was totally clear: to combat the suppression and poverty (of the working class), to fight for humane living conditions for everyone. In the neoliberal philosophy that currently dominates not only the modern economy but also the modern child and youth policy, welfare and development are individual attributes: everyone is responsible for the creation and exploitation of their own and their children's chances. Success is thus a personal choice and whoever makes the wrong choices is held personally responsible for it. In such a philosophy the survival of the fittest child assumes a very real form. In any decent society, of course, the issue should be the survival of all children.

CHAPTER 3

THE MODERNITY OF CHILD ABUSE

How is it that in highly developed countries such as the United States, the United Kingdom, Australia, Switzerland and the Netherlands somewhere between 10 and 20% of all children, at an estimate, are being maltreated, abused, or neglected (Health Council of the Netherlands, 2011)? The answer to this question is often sought at the level of the individual or their psychology: the parents concerned are disturbed, they have relational problems, they were themselves abused as children, are drug addicts or incompetent to rear children. These answers in turn determine the most important remedies: early detection, psychological help and child-upbringing support. The bleak statistics however indicate that child abuse cannot be brought under control by these means alone. Moreover, a number of questions remain unanswered by this individual-psychological approach. Child abuse,[iii] by definition, takes place in a social environment peopled by family members and neighbours, by fellow church or mosque-goers, teachers, community police officers and social workers, etc. How is it possible that all these onlookers remain unaware, look the other way or are unwilling to go further than communicate their misgivings via a telephone call? Is this the end-result of a process of individualization, a culture of absence, a lack of interest or fear? In short, what is the social context of child abuse? As long as this vital question is left out of consideration, a number of potential ways of protecting children against abuse and neglect will remain unexplored.

3.1 CHILDREN AND MODERNIZATION

In many ways, the recent history of children in the western world can be seen as a story of steady progress and modernization. At the end of the nineteenth century, in most West-European countries, some 10 to 25% of all children died before the age of one, whereas today the figure is 1 to 2.5 per thousand – "only" a tenth of what it was. Among other things, this has been thanks to the enormous rise in living standards, to effective measures in the area of hygiene (clean drinking water, sewers, healthier eating), and to the rise of social healthcare (including, in the Netherlands, through health clinics for babies and infants). All this has meant that the availability of parental counselling and the surveillance of children are taken for granted. Mass vaccination campaigns have ensured that diseases like polio have been virtually eliminated from the population. Many more such stories of progress could be told: for instance, of the guaranteed access to education for every child, of the humanization of care for the disabled, of the fact that there is an international

convention which establishes the rights of children. Thus, generally speaking, the transition to modernity has done western children no harm at all and anyone who doubts this has only to travel to the plains of India of Tanzania, or visit the slums of Rio de Janeiro or Manila, to see with their own eyes what child labour, exploitation and hunger actually look like. There one gets a fairly true impression of the situation in which poor children lived 100 to 150 years ago in western countries.

And yet, against the trend of this success story, it seems there is an important exception. The American historian Peter Stearns writes in his book *Childhood in World History* (2006) that the modernization of formerly agrarian communities has not been able to put an end to child abuse and maltreatment within families. It is true that present-day governments increasingly come to recognize this as a serious problem and feel themselves called upon to take decisive action, but as Stearns remarks, the means that are available to them, such as accurate monitoring by experts, count for very little compared with the type of social control that people exercised amongst themselves in small rural communities. There it was almost impossible to hide abuse – abuse, that is, as measured by the then accepted standards, for the rise of modernity also meant the rise of rather different ideas about the way children should be dealt with. Some of the ways in which children were (and still are) punished in some traditional societies would be seen as abusive in a modern perspective. And yet all things considered, according to Stearns, it is quite possible that abuse has actually increased with the arrival of modernity (Stearns, ibid., p. 137). This suggestion would seem to be at odds with the classical thesis of such authors as DeMause (1976), Shorter (1975) and Stone (1979), who point out the enormous change in mentality regarding children that accompanied the rise of modernity. In their view, compared with a black and violent past, the compassion for children has in fact increased dramatically and the use of violence against them has emphatically declined. But whether this change of mentality has actually been paralleled by changes in the actual treatment of children is nowadays seriously open to doubt. The work of historians such as Peeters (1975) and Pollock (1983) reveals that there was also much affection and consideration for children in pre-modern families, while the current prevalence of child abuse hardly chimes with, for example, the rights to protection that modern children officially enjoy (cf. Breeuwsma, 1987, 2005).

3.2 CHILD ABUSE AND THE ‘AT RISK’ POLICY

According to two recent reports in the Netherlands, where 180,000 children are born annually, between a hundred and seven thousand and a hundred and sixty thousand children are seriously neglected and/or abused every year. That is a shocking figure, even when we take into account that it is a question of estimates whose reliability is still rather uncertain, not least because of recalcitrant questions of definition.[iv] In any case, these figures have led the Dutch government to launch an ambitious Action Plan to Tackle Child Abuse (Ministry for Youth and Families, 2007). In particular, this plan emphasizes the work of the various professionals in

the field: they must give more and better child-rearing support, they must cooperate with each other better to ensure early detection and early intervention, their level of expertise must be raised and coordination of their work must be improved, for example via the Centres for Youth and Families being established throughout the country. The electronic child register and the reference index for children at risk are seen as important aids to achieving a better exchange of information between the different agencies involved.

Although not in so many words, the Action Plan implicitly assumes two clear basic premises concerning child abuse and the way in which this problem needs to be combated. The first premise is that the abuse and neglect of children are mainly endogenous problems within the family. It might be a question of individual psychological problems of parents, or of problems in the relational sphere, or simply of an inadequate ability to rear children. Certainly, it is known that external factors can magnify the risk of child abuse – unemployment, for example, poverty, poor educational background – but then, according to this view at least, we are in the arena of "wider social problems that are the responsibility of other policy areas". The second assumption is that these problems can best be identified and solved by experts, monitored from a distance by the government. Whilst it is acknowledged that the general public must be made more aware of the serious consequences of child abuse with the help of educational campaigns – says the government – the plan is first and foremost aimed at the efforts of professionals.

Both these premises fit into the so-called 'At Risk' model, a typically 'modern' way of thinking in which dysfunction – whether of families or individuals – is mainly seen as the outcome of individual 'risk factors' and pathologies. I refer to this model as 'modern' because, in the cultural-historical sense of the word, it derives essentially from the Enlightenment discourse which construes modern man as a rational individual whose fate lies in his or her own hands, who bears responsibility or his or her own actions and is ever decreasingly embedded in a stable community or religion (see, for example, Palmer et al., 2007).

From the perspective of this modern 'At Risk' model, professional help should be aimed at identifying individuals within a population who are most liable to disease, problems or deviancy, and by means of this approach, professionals should be able to implement preventative measures as early as possible. Over recent decades this model has assumed an increasingly dominant position, both in academic research on behavioural and family problems and in the policy and practice of child welfare work. One of the forms of expression of this is the development and implementation of 'risk-assessment instruments' in child welfare, whose aim is to be able to predict as accurately as possible such future problems as criminality, violence and abuse. The emphasis in such instruments falls on the psycho-social characteristics of children and parents. Interventions are also geared to these same factors (cf. Inventgroep, 2005). Although the social context in which problem behaviour develops is incorporated as a risk factor in most of these assessment instruments (e.g. under such headings as "family stressors", "social-economic disadvantage" and "cultural influences" – see Inventgroep, p. 120), the associated interventions, almost without exception, are directed at the micro-level

of child and/or family. Thus, the kind of intervention proposed for a family housed in a much too cramped flat, in a disadvantaged neighbourhood with a high level of criminality, is to be put on a waiting list for larger accommodation (Inventgroep, p. 124). Interventions aimed at tackling structural, systematic and social risks are not usually considered to belong to the realm of child welfare (see, for example, Commission on Children at Risk, 2003). Koops (2007) characterizes the basic thinking behind such risk assessments as "largely useless" and "discreditable on scientific grounds". In his view, such a discourse is based on a technological and mechanistic conception of child-upbringing, including the assumption that all dysfunction can be corrected by interventions. And implicitly it represents a social darwinistic tendency, as risk-assessments tend to confirm the stigma attached to minority groups.

3.3 CHILD ABUSE AND SOCIAL CONTEXT

Although it is of course indisputable that individual factors play a major role in child abuse (the violence, the neglect or sexual abuse is in the last analysis always perpetrated by a person or persons), this is not the whole story. To cite an example of a missing link: one may well wonder how it is possible that that somewhere between 10 and 20% of all children can be mistreated or neglected more or less unremarked?can be mistreated or neglected each year more or less unremarked. As said earlier, this always happens under the noses of neighbours, family, acquaintances, members of the church, sport clubs, classmates, etc. But apparently there is something the matter with many of these witnesses. Either they look the other way, or they find innumerable reasons not to act on what they see – out of fear of reprisals, fear of exacerbating the child's situation, respect for the privacy of the family, a lack of time, etc. (Bensley et al., 2004). Of course, many abusive parents do their very best to hide the abuse and its consequences, but it is often precisely these reasons that bystanders give for not having to act which make it abundantly clear that they already had a good idea of what was going on.

In recent decades a considerable amount of research has been carried out on the social, social-economic and demographic context in which child abuse arises and in which it can persist. With the help of data from such investigations it is now possible to broaden the excessively narrow, psychologizing perspective of the 'At Risk' model. The reductionist thinking behind this does tends to prevent seeing a number of potential possibilities for dealing with the problem: for example, in the way that both signalling and intervention have become matters for the experts.[v]

The fact that child abuse is often correlated with unfavourable social-economic circumstances – poverty, unemployment and a low educational background – has for years been beyond dispute (Coulton et al., 2007; Drake & Pandey, 1996; Garbarino & Crouter, 1978; Garbarino & Kostelny, 1992; Jones & McCurdy, 1992; Van IJzendoorn et al., 2007). The same is true for a number of demographic factors. Children who grow up in one-parent families, with a teenage mother, or in families that move frequently, are at greater risk. Such factors, particular when they are combined, produce considerable tension and critical situations that can

eventually lead to abuse (Connell-Carrick, 2003; Garbarino & Sherman, 1980; Jones & McCurdy, 1992). Yet such circumstance can never be seen as the immediate cause of abuse and neglect. After all, there are many more parents who, under the same circumstances, treat their children perfectly well. Another complicating factor is that cause and effect are often difficult to distinguish from one another. Drake and Pandey (1996) conclude from their study of the relation between poverty and various forms of abuse that some qualities which help people to achieve economic success at the same time discourage the maltreatment of children. Among such qualities they cite: having a future orientation, being able to delay gratification, higher educational achievement, the ability to control anger and impulsiveness, good communication skills, being able to resist addictions, etc. (Drake & Pandey, 1996, p. 116).

Many studies point to the importance of the neighbourhood. The social quality of the environment in which parents raise their children is found to play an extremely important role with regard to abuse and neglect. Garbarino and others have shown that the quality of mutual support and the involvement of local residents can be decisively significant in whether or not violence or neglect develop within families. Thus, neighbourhoods which may be comparable in socio-economic terms can nevertheless produce remarkably different statistics when it comes to the prevalence of child abuse. The social characteristics of neighbourhoods that appear to protect children against these ills are mutual support and involvement of parents and other local residents, readiness to exercise informal social control (e.g. minding each other's children), a sufficient degree of mutual trust and sharing of communal values, but also the quality of social policy and good access to agencies (Brisson & Usher, 2005; Garbarino & Crouter, 1978; Garbarino & Kostelny, 1992; Garbarino & Sherman, 1980). Similar characteristics are also found to have a protective role against such psycho-social problems as depression and drug addiction (Benson, 1998, 2003; Wickrama & Bryant, 2003). Conversely, neighbourhoods where social isolation is prevalent, and where there is little social cohesion, are found to be dangerous environments for children, not only on the streets but also in their own homes. Although social isolation cannot be seen as the immediate cause of domestic violence, it indisputably plays a role in its complex aetiology (Gracia & Musitu, 2003; Korbin, 1995).

Although it is difficult to demonstrate precise cause-and-effect relations (do dysfunctional residential areas produce dysfunctional families, or vice versa?), it is in any case clear that child abuse cannot be seen as a purely family problem (Coulton et al., 1995, 2007). Explanations and interventions require a wider perspective than the dyadic model of victim and perpetrator (Korbin, 1995, 2002) because, as Garbarino and Kostelny conclude, "child maltreatment is a symptom not just of individual or family trouble, but neighborhood and community trouble as well. It is a social as well as a psychological indicator" (Garbarino & Kostelny, 1992, p. 463).

3.4 A SOCIAL CONTROL THEORY OF CHILD ABUSE?

The social influences that play a role in the complex aetiology of child abuse also appear to correlate very closely with the characteristics associated with youth criminality. Junger-Tas and colleagues (2008) discuss the relation between neighbourhood characteristics and juvenile delinquency. It is a question of factors which, when present in sufficient concentration, exert an exceptionally strong influence on the behaviour of youths: socio-economic disadvantage, the number of migrants in the area, a high rate of turnover of residents, a lack of mutual solidarity and trust, and a concomitant lack of social control. From a study by Sampson et al. (1997), it appears that this social control *("collective efficacy")* is strongly dependant on the social cohesion of a residential area. If residents do not trust each other and have no solidarity with each other, they do not seem to be prepared to maintain norms of behaviour on the street. The resulting lack of social control turns out consequently to be a powerful predictor of violent criminality among youths.

It is worth noting, in fact, that concepts like social control and social cohesion, which play such an important role in research on youth criminality, have a very different significance in theories and investigations concerned with child abuse. For instance, when it comes to child maltreatment, no equivalent of Hirschi's influential social control theory (Hirschi, 1969) is anywhere to be found. Let us just see what such an equivalent theory might look like. The question would not then be why do some parents neglect or abuse their children, but why most parents do *not* do so, even when they are placed in the same sort of socio-economic circumstances as parents who do maltreat their children. The explanation for this could then be sought in the ties that integrate parents have into their community. When those ties are strong and contribute positively to the quality of their lives, the parents stand to lose a great deal if they do not care well for – or even maltreat – their children. If on the other hand those ties are weak, and if parents are cannot find their proper niche in the conventional society (of work, residence, social networks), then it will matter less to parents what society expects of them or what conventional others think of them. Hirschi's social control theory is only partly concerned with the direct control that people exert over each other (i.e. the external mechanisms); what is perhaps more important is the extent of their integration into society. Anyone who succeeds in participating in that society will be less inclined to exhibit transgressive behaviour, because the cost of such transgression is very high, in both material and immaterial senses.

According to our tentative theory of child abuse, such preventative interventions should primarily be aimed at strengthening social ties and the integration of families into the neighbourhood. This might entail, among other things, strengthening relations with significant persons, such as family, friends and neighbours, and strengthening the connection with such institutions as the infant playgroup, nursery school, child health centre, school and other local provisions. Because ties and integration are reciprocal processes, interventions should not be aimed solely at individual families. According to this way of thinking, the

educational or socializing quality of the local civil society should be the target of intervention.

3.5 CONTEXTUAL INTERVENTIONS

The fact that such contextual approaches to the problem of child maltreatment attract so little interest has to do with the dominant social and scientific discourse which feeds modern youth policies. In the public debate, abusive or neglectful parents are immediately portrayed as bad, problematic or inadequate individuals, as often as not psychologically disturbed. The idea that 'bad surroundings' can elicit or promote bad behaviour is one that can count on finding little support in current youth and family policy-thinking. This is very evident in the 'modern' approach to child abuse, where almost all the attention is directed toward the identification of risk-families and toward effective individual interventions. Whilst it is true that there are demands for awareness campaigns, child-rearing guidance and information ('universal prevention') through the media, it is regrettably also the case that interventions aimed at social risk-factors have no place in this vocabulary (RAAK, 2007). Yet there are clear reasons for thinking further along the lines of such an approach.

Much recent sociological and demographic research has confirmed that social networks are diminishing. People are less dependent on each other, have less time for contact with neighbours, and often choose solitary pursuits and activities (cf. Breedveld et al., 2006; Putnam, 2000). When a deficiency of social ties are found to constitute an important risk factor for child abuse and neglect, part of the remedy lies in resisting further individualization, anonymity and isolation, especially in relation to the upbringing of children. In this connection, Blokland speaks of the importance of 'public familiarity' (Blokland, 2009). When people regularly meet each other in their day-to-day environment, it leads to recognition; they are no longer anonymous to each other, without necessarily having to know much about each other's lives. This recognition, according to Blokland, does create space needed to make social identifications, and consequently to start to make contacts and connections – for example between parents. It is precisely this public familiarity in neighbourhoods, villages and towns that has steadily disappeared over recent decades (Blokland, 2005). Under the influence of such modernizing processes as increase of scale, technological change and the spatial separation of living, working and recreation between entirely different locations, there are fewer and fewer possibilities for regular, repeated meeting with neighbours. According to the RMO, Governments could and should invest more in the promotion of public familiarity and the institutions of public space. One thinks here of such obvious meeting spaces as parks, playgrounds, multifunctional accommodations, parents' rooms in schools or infant playgroups, etc. Resistance to further increases in scale is also important. As more and more social and economic functions disappear from local neighbourhoods (as shops, businesses and agencies, for example, are increasingly relocated to the edges of towns), numerous possibilities for spontaneous meeting and bonding disappear with them. De Vos et al. (2009) also

argue for an active governmental policy to oppose this weakening of communal networks. Among other things they want to reverse many administrative increases of scale so that people regain more say over their local environment and more mutual involvement. They also argue for renewed mixing of functions. This could mean reversing commercial increases of scale, making it easier to shop or go out in one's own neighbourhood or village. In short, it is a question of policy measures that could help enhance the local life of the community. The government does not itself intervene in the social life, but creates the conditions that favour people once again beginning more involved with each other, for example in the form of social support and social control in the upbringing of each other's children – what might be called 'strengthening the infrastructure for socialization' (De Winter, 2000).

Professionals can also contribute specifically to this strengthening of social ties when it comes to the upbringing of children. Whether in the parenting course of the child health centres, during the parents' evening at school or the infant playgroup, the present address is exclusively concerned with the development and possible problems of parents' own children. Even 'Triple P' – an 'evidence-based' programme of parental support – is entirely directed at the individual level of one's own family (http://www.triplep.net). This is not an inevitable fact, it is a clear choice. There are possible alternatives. Why not, for a change, discuss with all the parents the theme: what do you do if you notice that all is not well in the upbringing of the children of neighbours of friends? Should you say anything, and if so, how can you do that without appearing meddlesome or pedantic? More generally, child-welfare institutions should see it as one of their tasks to strengthen communal responsibility for bringing up children. In institutions like children's day-care centres, infant playgroups and preschools, where the emphasis is placed on the child's individual development, it would be well-advised to invest more in the 'public familiarity' of parents.

I also mentioned earlier, among various protective features of neighbourhoods, the accessibility of agencies and institutions. In this context it is important to look at the contacts between parents and such institutions as schools and child-health clinics. In some countries it was long considered normal practice for district nurses and educators regularly to visit parents at home in order to get to know the families better and to build trust. Such contacts have since tended to disappear, either because it was no longer seen as useful or because it had become too expensive. Thus, in both sectors there has been a disinvestment in contacts that were previously taken for granted. The consequence of these 'economies' is the development of the problem of families that are allegedly 'difficult to reach', i.e. to which nobody has easy access (see, for example, Dogan et al., 2003). Experts in child welfare then have the unenviable task of responding to signals, which in themselves are difficult to interpret, of possible abuse in families that no-one knows. This has the inevitable consequence of many failures, varying from cases of child abuse and neglect that are not noticed in time to situations in which parents are unjustly placed in the dock because the signals have been wrongly interpreted. From this perspective, re-investing in the obvious, human contact with professional people like the district nurse and teacher could provide an important and probably

effective contribution to prevention – not only of the abuse itself but also the prevention of professional failures.

Actively promoting a shared responsibility for children's upbringing in the day-to-day environment (including reciprocal support and supervision) should, in my view, be an important function of family centres such as the Sure Start Centres in England. So far, these centres are primarily intended as early warning and adequate, low-threshold help to individual parents and children, and therefore fit precisely into what I earlier referred to as the 'At Risk' model. But once the infrastructure is there it would not be difficult to add to this function the important task of strengthening those aspects or agencies of civil society that are influential in the socialization and education of children.

3.6 CONCLUSION: A MODERN PROBLEM DEMANDS A MORE MODERN RESPONSE

Whether large-scale abuse and neglect of children is indeed a 'modern' phenomenon is, as Stearns says, difficult to prove. It is in any case clear that, so far, the success story of modernity does not encompass this serious social problem. Enlightenment optimism has patently reached its limit here. In the modern discourse, child abuse and neglect are mainly seen as problems situated within families and problems that have to be solved in that context. However, the instruments appropriate to that view, such as the application of scientifically based risk-analysis and the deployment of highly qualified psychosocial professionals, have evidently been insufficiently powerful to reduce the prevalence of child abuse substantially. Does then the solution lie in restoring mutual social control, which according to Stearns was the most important restraint against abuse in pre-modern society? Or should we look for the answer to this problem of modernity in a postmodern direction, for example by deconstructing the modern idea of social engineering or even by deconstructing the concept of abuse itself? The question to what extent the way people raise their children can be influenced by intervention is one that is still strongly disputed[vi], so some deconstructive activities can do no harm. As far as a return to pre-modern solutions is concerned, a strong mutual social control may sound tempting from the point of view of social security for children, but the dangers and disadvantages are sufficiently well known: group coercion, the restriction on the possibilities for individual development, limitations to the rights to freedom and even social exclusion.

The type of approach for which I have argued in this article I would characterize as 'modern – but better'. The type of knowledge and intervention on which current policy on child abuse is based is, at the very least, one-sided. Much relevant scientific knowledge on the social backgrounds of child abuse, for instance from the ecological research tradition (Bronfenbrenner, 1981) or from sociology and social epidemiology, is scarcely – if at all – translated into policy or interventions. The question is: where does this one-sidedness come from? Why, for example, do national approaches pay hardly any attention to the promotion of public familiarity and 'collective efficacy' in streets and neighbourhoods, or to counteracting

individualization and anonymity? Why is there no demand for the re-definition of the tasks of child health and welfare centres that would encompass such a direction?

The approach which construes child abuse and child neglect as family problems, independent of the social context in which these phenomena can exist, is in fact a normative choice. In itself that is difficult to avoid, since questions of upbringing are normative by definition. The problem, however, is that in both research and policy this choice is hardly ever made explicit, giving the false impression that it is based on an objective, empirically grounded approach which stands in no need of any social debate. The use of such terms as 'effectiveness', 'evidence-based practice' and 'working to the "what works principles"' that currently dominate western youth policy, merely serves to strengthen the public image that the point of a policy-plan or intervention is established beyond dispute because it is based on scientific evidence. Yet this claim to scientific objectivity is certainly disputed (cf. Biesta, 2007; Norcross et al., 2005). Admittedly, attempts are being made – using controlled, scientific methods such as an experiment or a randomized control trial – to establish whether a particular intervention can help to reach a particular goal. But what precisely that goal should be, and what means to achieve it are ethically acceptable can never be objectively determined. Do we want a child welfare that reaches well beyond the front door in order to reduce the risk to children as much as possible, with the nightmare possibility of the loss of all privacy? Or do we want to promote the kind of society where citizens themselves assume more care of each other and look out for each other (with perhaps a Stasi-like neighbourhood warden as the nightmare scenario). It is precisely these kinds of normative questions that are invisible in the discussion over the correct approach to child abuse.

Among modern behavioural scientists – and in their wake the policy-makers – there is a single-minded, almost monomaniac insistence that child abuse and child neglect is a psychological and family problem. The scientific evidence for the efficacy of interventions is almost exclusively sought in terms of the same individual individual-psychological discourse; a comparison with socially-oriented, contextual approaches (or with combined approaches) is scarcely ever made. There may well be ideological reasons for this, but increasingly often one can see the role played by what one might call 'researchability': what is most readily open to investigation. It is acknowledged that research on intervention becomes exponentially more complex – and thus more expensive – the more contextual factors are taken in to account (Rossi et al., 2004). In a policy culture that is overwhelmingly dominated by the question of 'effectiveness', it is therefore hardly surprising that the easiest and quickest measurable interventions are the most popular.

The problem of child abuse can be better approached than is currently the case by keeping in sight the psychological and social complexity of the phenomenon, and by making this complexity the starting point of research, policy and interventions. By doing so, normative aspects will by definition be brought into consideration. We should make these normative aspects visible, rather than camouflaging them with scientific terms that give the public and politicians alike

the illusion that it is a matter of hard, established facts.[vii] The maltreatment of children is not only a family problem or a problem for professionals. It is a problem for us all. Only with such an acknowledgement can there be a beginning of a truly modern approach.

CHAPTER 4

THE EDUCATIVE CIVIL SOCIETY AS REMEDY

Breaking the stressful double bind of child-rearing and socialization

4.1 INTRODUCTION

Anyone discussing children's upbringing these days very soon finds him or herself talking about problems and disturbances. Children themselves also happily engage in the same talk, as one can hear in any playground or wherever they hang about together. Two girls came to sit opposite me in the train . One said to the other: 'It makes me so suicidal, yo, I have to do this homework for the guy all over again just because I gave it in too late'. To which her travelling companion replied: 'You should have just told him: I can't do anything about it, it's the fault of my prefrontal lob, it isn't mature yet'.

Bringing up children is no sinecure. Most people in our society are wealthier than ever before, we have provision in the fields of education and healthcare that can match the highest international standards and life expectancy has increased enormously. And yet, despite all that, the raising of children has not become any easier. One of the indices of this is an increasing demand for social workers and for child and youth welfare. Although international epidemiological research demonstrates that the number and the severity of psychological problems among children and adolescents remains roughly the same (Verhulst, 2005), the demand for professional help has increased spectacularly (Hermanns, 2009). There are several possible explanations for this apparently remarkable contradiction. According to Hermanns, too many parents feel that they fall short, and therefore decide earlier and more often to seek the help of a social worker or psychologist. In addition, there is great pressure from outside. When a child behaves differently from others at school he is no longer considered a maverick, but a problem child needing diagnosis and possibly treatment. Parents who disagree are very quickly given a risk profile and coerced into accepting help.

Increasingly, politicians also get involved in child upbringing. In order to reduce the problems of street nuisance and juvenile crime, most local and national politicians want to introduce a much more intrusive family policy, one that reaches right into the home. Yet despite worrying all the figures, the problems that beset parenthood and the debate over the question of stiffer measures, the language in the popular literature on child-raising is mainly cheerful. The message is that child-rearing should above all be enjoyable and that parents must work on themselves,

because that is what is good for the children. Super-nannies on television teach you that you must be able to take pleasure in bringing up your children and that a few simple tricks can help you create a happy life for the entire family. Child-raising is a matter of individual choice, but if you choose wrongly, well, that's your own responsibility (Wubst, 2009).

Whoever finds him or herself caught between such conflicting messages and feels under surveillance from both sides is likely to feel as though trapped in a double-bind. Am I performing adequately as a parent? Is it happy enough at home, do I provide my children with enough chances and for them to develop their potential, should he be allowed to drink a glass of wine (diluted with water) at a family party, what are the consequences for her brain development if she spends too much time on social networking sites, etc.?

Over recent decades, parents have been made to feel responsible for many more aspects of their children's development. For a long time it was all about diet, hygiene and health, but these days this sense of responsibility extends to emotional wellbeing and happiness (Stearns, 2010). Anyone who talks to parents also hears a great deal of anxiety: what to do if pimps or 'loverboys'[viii] start hanging around the school, how do you arm your children against aggressive drug dealers? Can you still safely allow them to go out? There is the feeling that whichever way you try it is impossible to move, there is no way out. You're caught in an impasse with virtually no room to exercise individual intelligence or spontaneity. There are guidelines for everything, checklists, criteria – and, not least, child-rearing experts. It takes a strong parent of independent mind and background to be able to ignore all this.

Nor is it only parents who are trapped in this impasse when it comes to children's upbringing. The politicians and the media also seem to be cramped by the same mindset. Public discussions over child upbringing and youth policy are heavily one-sided, all dwelling on the aspect of restricting negative freedoms (cf. Chapter 1). It would seem to be a vicious circle in which everyone makes sure that everyone else is caught. Parents trapped in the double-bind are at the same time citizens who elect their political representatives, who in turn think up more measures to deepen the impasse. Politicians often devise forms of intervention for others that they would probably never accept in their own households.

In her essay 'Modern parenthood' the sociologist Christien Brinkgreve describes modern parenting as an undertaking which, under the influence of various processes of social change, has become extremely complex. The result of these processes – secularization, individualization, emancipation and informalization – has been for parents to find themselves ever more isolated: 'Children are considered to be a private worry, but they have to become much more of a public issue, the object of collective concern and involvement. It is a question of civil attentiveness, a feeling of communal concern for children and for the people who care for them' (Brinkgreve, 2008, p. 135). In fact, this is an argument for what we have been calling for some time the '*pedagogische civil society*' (De Winter, 2008). But here we encounter a problem of translation: the term 'pedagogical' in English has a much narrower, classroom-bound meaning than the European

equivalent *pedagogisch(e)* (Dutch) or *pädagogisch* (German). In the continental tradition, *pedagogiek* (*pädagogik*) refers to the entire business or rearing children – educational, cognitive, social, emotional – in family, school and society. In the present book, the term I shall use, even though it lacks something of the depth of connotation of *pedagogische*, is the *educative civil society*. In this chapter I shall explore this concept further and try to show why it is important and how it might function. The question is whether a vital, *educative civil society* would be capable of freeing parents from the impasse and reversing the creeping rigidification of child upbringing.

4.2 THE DOUBLE-BIND AS A SOCIAL PHENOMENON

Many feel that the citizen in modern western society is in the grip of anxiety. Terrorism, large-scale migration, criminality, climate change and new health risks – these are but some of the phenomena making people anxious about the future. Although the process of modernization holds out the promise that major threats like epidemics, poverty and crime can be effectively combated with the help of new scientific insights, it seems that this is far from a watertight guarantee. While old diseases like polio and cholera have been brought under control, there are always new threats – from HIV/aids, legionaire's disease, bird flu, etc. Moreover, this prospect of scientific control itself becomes a significant new source of anxiety and insecurity. When the overwhelming mass of people believed that the worst evils in their lives were due to supernatural powers, they scarcely envisaged any possibility of preventing these ills. At most they could only interpret dangers, death and destruction as punishment for past sins, and there was no cure for this other than a stronger belief and a more virtuous life. These days, on the other hand, people have learned that many risks are in principle avoidable, either by their own personal behaviour (e.g. safe sex, healthy eating, a police sticker 'security protection' on the door), or through collective arrangements (preventive leafleting, surveillance cameras or fluoride in drinking water).[ix] Paradoxically this notion itself gives rise to further insecurity: am I or are we doing our best to arm ourselves against predictable and unpredictable risks?

In this context, sociologists Anthony Giddens and Ulrich Beck speak of a 'risk society'. People are increasingly preoccupied with the future and their security; anxiety about risks and the desire to avoid them form an increasingly more important aspect of their lives (Giddens, 1999; Beck, 1992). Both individualization and globalization have been seen as important social causes of this anxiety, for which the cultural philosopher Zygmunt Bauman employs the term 'liquid fear'. So little is certain in the modern world, everything is constantly in motion and thus fluid. It is not so much concrete events that create this anxiety but more especially the thought of all the *possible* threats, and the fact that you never know where they will come from. On the one hand, people have learned that they themselves are to a significant extent responsible for shaping their own lives – and this holds for their economic possibilities, for their own health and that of their children – while on the other hand they have less and less the feeling that that they can in any away

influence these threats and dangers. Nor is there any point in looking to their government, since much of the threat comes through processes which, although their consequences are locally felt, actually operate on a global scale: terrorism, climate change, insecurity, global capitalism, etc. With many of these threats, government can do little more than warn its citizens of the dangers; protection is scarcely possible. Within the population, according to Bauman, there develops a culture of angst and insecurity, which in turn spawns such phenomena as hatred of foreigners, the development of inward-looking communities ('neo-tribes') and finally excessive confidence in the power of prevention (Bauman, 2006, 2007).

4.3 THE ROLE OF CHILD-REARING EXPERTS

To what extent does this general *angst*, 'liquid' or otherwise, manifest itself in the upbringing of children? The expression 'parental insecurity' is often used in this context, but this turns out to be a rather elusive concept. If parents are asked whether they are uncertain over the upbringing of their children, the answer is usually negative. Most parents have enough confidence in their own capacities as parents and invest much time and energy in their children. But on the other hand, these same parents need a great deal of information and, moreover, there are quite a few parents who think that there are all too few possibilities of supporting their children's upbringing (Rispens et al., 1996). Whether parents are unsure about their parenting thus depends a great deal on the definition of 'parental insecurity'. Moreover, it is not possible to establish whether this insecurity – if it already exists – has increased or decreased over time because there are no empirical data available.

Janneke Wubst, who looked at the changes in advice given to parents after the Second World War, concluded that bringing up children was for a long time regarded as an onerous responsibility with far-reaching consequences. Child-raising was a weighty, difficult and extremely important work undertaken on behalf of society and the future, and as such there were explicit prescriptions and exhortations for parents who failed to make the grade. Today, the upbringing of children is much more treated as a question of individual choice. Parenting thus reflects faithfully a general process of social change, in which freedom of choice for citizens seems to have become a central value. As an adult, you are not only responsible for your own fortune, but also for that of your children (Wubst, 2004). The tone of the message that the experts send out to parents seems at first sight to have become more positive. They are no longer addressed in such a patronizing and prejudicial manner as they were for so long, they are rather seduced into following the right advice. The pressure on parents, according to Wubst, is no less, but has become subtler and as a result more coercive: 'You don't have to learn parenting, you can learn it, but if you don't do it …' (Wubst, 2009, p. 125).

But in the 1970s and 1980s the increasing dependence of parents on child-rearing experts began to be perceived as a problem. This was mainly linked to a cultural change whereby, increasingly, 'normal' problems were translated into a psychological jargon. Whereas traditionally child-rearing problems had been seen

as life-issues belonging to the domain of morality and religion, they were now linked to processes and traumas of the unconscious, relational problems or the wrong conditioning techniques (depending on which school of psychology your expert belonged to). Achterhuis (1988) referred to this process as a 'market of wellbeing and happiness', indicating that on the one hand there were experts busy trying to extend their influence, but also, on the other, consumers who were highly interested in the 'products' these experts wished to sell. French sociologists such as Donzelot and Castel saw this psychologizing as a widespread cultural phenomenon in which more and more aspects of daily life were deprived of their social and political significance. In their view, what was at work here was a subtle power strategy by which governments were able to extend their control over citizens. The subtlety, for them, lay in the fact that citizens experienced this increasing grasp of professionals over their lives not so much as control but rather as positive 'care'. In this context, De Swaan spoke of 'proto-professionalization', a process – which has since become widespread – in which clients and other citizens adopt the language and way of thinking of professionals. For example, anyone looking at the websites where parents discuss their problems with each other will see that they have entirely assimilated the language of the experts. The net result, according to theorists of 'proto-professionalization', is that people increasingly derive their self-esteem from the conceptual framework provided by experts. And because psychological knowledge is seldom unambiguous ('one expert says this, another days that') parents become increasingly insecure and increasingly dependent. Indeed, in this connection the experts on parenting have also been called 'specialists in indecision' (De Winter, 1986).

4.4 THE DOUBLE-BIND OF PARENTHOOD AND MODERNIZATION

In his book *Anxious Parents* (2003) the American historian Peter Stearns explicitly placed the rise in parental anxiety in the wider context of modernization. Over the course of the twentieth century, parents increasingly sought the help of experts because the way of life and living circumstances was drastically changing. With industrialization and urbanization, the traditional ties of extended families disintegrated and were replaced by small nuclear families. Children, less needed for work, spent much of their time outside the close world of the family: they went to school *en masse* and their free time was spent on the street.

In such a new context, new problems arose. Parents were held responsible when their children behaved improperly in the public space or performed badly at school, while social scientists pointed to a direct relation between children's development and their upbringing at home. The child was discovered as an emotionally and physically vulnerable being, whose upbringing called for considerable caution. Specifically, mothers increasingly fell prey to expert advisors and were often openly and directly blamed for almost everything that could go wrong with their children. Parents' uncertainty was also increasingly encouraged and exploited by commercial pressures as the century wore on, leading eventually to what Rosenfeld and Wise (2001) refer to as 'hyper-parenting': the suggestion that every parent not

only had the possibility but also the duty to construct the perfect child. With the right combination of schooling, after-school activities and intensive guidance the way could be smoothed to a top university and a successful, prestigious career. But, say these authors, the responsibility for success in this rat-race actually begins much earlier. Because new research techniques make it possible to follow foetal development through pregnancy, 'his majesty the foetus has become the showpiece of pregnancy'. Where pregnant women themselves could once count on getting special attention, courtesy and support in this vulnerable stage, they are now more and more considered as mere vehicles in which the embryo must thrive. The media make it clear that from the word go parents must work on their bonding with, and the health of their child. For instance, they are exhorted to think before they eat or drink anything: is this or is this not good for my baby?[x] All this, according to the authors, leads to an overprescribed family life, parents who become increasingly nervous and eventually to problems with children who are frightened they are unable to live up to the colossal expectations with which they are confronted. Taking this to a further level, parents can also learn via websites, books and courses how they can counteract the effects of hyper-parenting.[xi]

In several publications, the British sociologist Frank Furedi points out in particular the relation between the growing culture of anxiety in which child-rearing takes place and the behaviour of governments, experts and interest groups. Anxiety, in his view, is an obsession of modern man that has less and less to do with any concrete frightening experience, but is rather a matter of the way in which we try to get a grip on the uncertainties surrounding our daily life – the questions, for example, of security, terrorism, health, child abuse and climate. Much of the policy relating to these topics is legitimated by the idea that it would be irresponsible to do nothing about the immense threats that beset us on all sides. In Furedi's view, however, this is mainly a question of propagating spine-chilling scenarios, unsupported by empirical evidence, whose real purpose is to strengthen the position of lobby groups, or of politicians and policy-makers who want to cover their backs against any possible subsequent accusations of negligence or omission. Two of the many examples he gives are the advice of the American Department of Health to stock up with sufficient food in connection with the approaching bird 'flu epidemic and the task assigned to NASA by the American Congress to detect and follow 'near-earth objects' flying around, after an effective lobby by professional asteroid followers (Furedi, 2006, p. 11).

According to Furedi, the past decades have witnessed the development of total paranoia with regard to parenthood. He accuses in the first place politicians, policy-makers and the 'child protection-industry'. Throughout the entire western world, governments and experts have intruded more and more directly in the upbringing of children on the assumption that many problems of children themselves, but also for society as a whole, are created in the home. Every conceivable aspect of parenthood, and almost every risk that attaches to the lives of children, is placed under the magnifying glass. The army of experts, Furedi writes, preoccupied as it is with the protection of children, lets pass no opportunity to point out the risks that children run: the risks of abuse, cot-death, exposure to sunlight,

'stranger-danger' or an endless series of other threats. In the nineties, commercial day-care centres began to install webcams so that parents at home or at work could keep an eye on their children, to make sure they were not being wrongly treated. An English supermarket chain announced in 1999 that, as an experiment, they were going to introduce electronic tags for children, so that parents need no longer worry about their children being lured away by paedophiles (Furedi, 2001, p. xi). In reality, most of these threats are very improbable but they do lead to action. If someone has noticed that there is the least chance of Pokemon cards being swallowed by young children, the producer is more or less obliged to issue a warning. The forces that generate this paranoia, says Furedi, have to do with the stresses that characterize the lives of modern adults and in particular he identifies the increasing interference by experts, policy-makers and market interests that undermines the self-confidence and authority of parents (p. 186). This growing interference is related to a radical change that has occurred over recent decades in preventive policy, a change characterized as a transition from a danger-model to a risk-model. It is a trend that could easily lead to the development of a 'preventive surveillance state' (Parton, 2008, 2010).

4.5 RIGID 'PREVENTION'

Recent years have seen a remarkable change of direction in the childcare and youth policy of many western countries. This is clearly observable in England and in the Netherlands, but comparable developments have appeared in other western European countries, the United States and Australia. Briefly stated, the aim of such policy is the earlier detection of risk factors in child-upbringing and development, to enable authorities to intervene in good time. To this end, cooperation between professional organizations in the area of childcare must therefore be considerably strengthened.

Remarkably enough, this change began in both England and the Netherlands with a child's death as the result of long-term abuse in the family. Both situations led to an intemperate public and political debate over childcare, which in both countries was accused of laxity, lack of cooperation and careless professional performance.[xii]

Although this was certainly not the first such child death in either country, and although the problems in childcare had long been known, these deaths (in 2004 and 2007 respectively) directly led to the British and Dutch governments initiating a large-scale and far-reaching action programme. In England it was called 'Every Child Matters', in Nederland '*Alle kansen voor alle kinderen*' [All chances for all children]. In fact, the Dutch government took over all the core targets and instruments of the English programme. The main idea is that systematic research into the possible risk factors for all children should create a situation where optimal developmental conditions and results become a possibility for every child. Wherever a high risk factor is found, for children or families, an early intervention should prevent greater problems developing later on. In order to realize this policy, close cooperation is needed between all the agencies involved with children and

families. The objectives were defined as the child's health, security, safety both in and outside the home, development of talents and enjoyment of life, active participation in the community and good preparation for the future (education and work).

The fact that better cooperation between professionals was seen as the most important instrument for achieving these objectives is not in itself so new; it has been a theme in prevention since the nineteen seventies (De Winter, 1986). The major change, however, lurks in the definition of the group of children and families at whom these preventive activities are targeted. Up to the nineties, policy was concerned with tracing children suspected of being seriously at risk of abuse, or children who in all probability were suffering from some developmental disturbance. The term 'high risk' was only used in the context of concrete danger: children who were actually threatened in their mental or physical development had to be identified and as quickly as possible given either treatment or protection. But 'Every Child Matters' and its Dutch equivalent go much further. Because governments, pressured by the public and the media, are no longer willing to accept that there may be more such child murders, all the holes in the net must be closed. Henceforth prevention must cover all children, since vulnerability is not limited to children who are already in actual danger; the idea was that every child can run risks and any child can get into a situation where early intervention will be offered (Parton, 2010).

The scientific basis of this new preventive thinking comes from the so-called 'public health' approach, a way of working originally developed to combat infectious diseases. On the basis of scientific knowledge of the causes of diseases, preventive and/or health-promoting measures are taken. When, for example, it became clear from the scientific evidence that smoking promoted death from lung cancer, educational campaigns and measures to discourage sales of tobacco were introduced. Another well known example is that of the scientific understanding of the cause and spread of HIV/aids, which enabled preventive campaigns to be aimed specifically at risk groups. Thus, the 'public health' approach is not aimed at the cure of individuals but is concerned with preventive interventions aimed at population groups that are statistically at a greater risk of succumbing to some disease or dysfunction.

Although both the English and the Dutch policy programmes were in the first instance intended to prevent child abuse, the adoption of the 'public health' approach made it possible to encompass a whole range of socially undesirable phenomena in one and the same move. Largely on the basis of research by the criminologist Farrington, a list of risk factors was drawn up that were found to have predictive value at the population level for such things as antisocial behaviour, criminality, drug addiction, school drop-out, unsafe sex and mental disturbances (Farrington, 2000, 2007).[xiii] The starting point was that the increase in knowledge concerning the relation between risk factors and children's development could be used to intervene at a young age. In this way, for example, such later problems as antisocial behaviour and criminality – but also unemployment – could be prevented (Parton, 2008, p. 169). It was precisely the

combination of this fight for innocent children in danger and the fight against dangerous children which made this programme so extremely politically attractive.

4.6 PROBLEMS OF A 'PUBLIC HEALTH' APPROACH TO PROBLEMS OF CHILDREN IN SOCIETY

Parton (2010), however, pointed out four major problems associated with this policy. In the first place, such programmes assume that early identification via risk factors will lead to a financial saving in the more expensive forms of social work. The evidence for this, however, is disputable. Tracing all vulnerable children – whether or not it makes sense – often leads to a pronounced expansion of the necessary provisions; something in the end must be done for the children identified as being at high risk. Usually governments want to solve such problems by replacing costly provision with cheaper means: for instance, with preventive courses for parents instead of intensive intramural treatment. Evaluations of the English 'Sure Start' centres, which were meant to be just such an easily accessible provision, show that it is precisely the risk families for whom the programme was intended that are not reached.[xiv]

In the second place, the widening of the area of problems for which prevention is deemed necessary entails a loss of specificity. Child abuse and antisocial behaviour, for example, are very different issues that call for completely different approaches. Moreover, there can be very different ideas over the desirability of prevention programmes in relation to these problems. Ethically, for instance, there is a considerable difference between overriding family privacy in order to take a child out of the hands of an incestuous father and doing so in order to deal with socially intolerable behaviour on the streets. The fact that the risk factors screening for all these problems can overlap to some extent does not mean that screening for all these problems is justified. And the same holds even more emphatically for intervention programmes that follow on from a positive screening result. Many people may think it right that parents who are highly likely to neglect their children should be compelled to participate in a treatment programme; but whether that also holds for families in which children are insufficiently cognitively stimulated, or run the risk of teenage pregnancy, is a totally different question. Who is to decide this kind of thing, and who determines where the priorities lie? According to Parton, these questions are too important and too complex to be simply handed down to managers to decide.

In the third place, it is found that the allegedly scientific basis for this sort of 'broadband' screening is – to a considerable extent – shifting sand. First of all, the predictive value for such a problem as child abuse is very small. That is hardly surprising, since we know that the research on which it is based had nothing to do with child abuse but was concerned rather with juvenile criminality. The consequence of this is that predicting the risks of abuse leads to many wrong results: families are unjustifiably suspected (a false positive result) or missed (a false negative). A second point in this connection is that the risk factors are obtained from research where the data collected and processed are drawn from a

large number of children, whereas the professionals who have to work with the scores derived from such data have to apply them to the individual case of child or family. They must reach concrete decisions as to whether a certain risk score for this child or this family actually justifies an actual intervention, whereas the score only indicates a statistical probability (compared with the rest of the population). To establish whether there is a serious mental problem, a thorough-going diagnostic psycho-social investigation would be needed. Prevention professionals are on the whole not trained for this. They have to be very sure of themselves before they dare to conclude that a high-scoring child or family is capable of dealing with its problems without further assistance. As one would expect, many families and children are unnecessarily recommended for social assistance simply to avoid the possibility of subsequent recrimination (cf. De Winter, 2010).

In the fourth place programmes such as Britain's 'Every Child Matters' and the Dutch '*Alle Kansen Voor Alle Kinderen*' have irrevocable implications for relations between children, parents, experts and government. Because such programmes have by definition a strong top-down character, again according to Parton, one has here the beginnings of a 'preventive surveillance state'. When children's interests were at stake, it was always possible – via the courts – to intervene in families. What is new is that such interventions can also take place at the instigation of experts with an appeal to the general interest. In the UK, the New Labour government that came to power in 1997 stated very explicitly that the role of the state had to be widened, more focused on early interventions and the regulation of provisions. When, after some time, it became apparent that too little progress had been made in the ECM-programme, the government launched an 'action plan' which had a harder and more authoritarian tone in its dealing with families that were resistant to offers of help (HM Government, 2000). When it comes to the quality of preventive programmes, the collection and sharing of data over children and families is of essential importance. Not only does the reliability of estimating risk factors depend on this, but in addition the data constitute the material on the basis of which the various agencies concerned have to cooperate.

Of course, because this whole issue concerns privacy-sensitive data, caution and confidentiality are of the greatest importance. Both in the UK and in the Netherlands there is great concern about this. The question is how far intervention on the basis of risk factors can be squared with the rights and civil freedoms of parents and children, particularly if it is a matter of far-reaching and compulsory interventions. But there is also the question of how far this top-down approach will affect the trust of parents and children in official agencies. It is certainly true, in any case, that many adolescents will not tell their story unless confidentiality is guaranteed (De Winter & Noom, 2001; Hallett et al., 2003). It is evident from an evaluation study of a screening programme now in operation in many Dutch child-health clinics that immigrant parents in particular are not at all keen on screening questions over matters of privacy, such as the state of the marriage relationship and the family's financial situation. 'Such questions', the authors observe, 'induce suspicion, especially with fathers, and this does not foster a relationship of trust'. Further, it is found that many parents who are referred on the basis of screening

results are unwilling to cooperate and in some case react aggressively (De Wolff et al., 2009).[xv]

It is beyond dispute that the interference of government and professionals in the upbringing of children has increased under the influence of this preventive surveillance. It would be too easy, however, to conclude that the result is a kind of 'big brother' conspiracy against parents and children. Where problem families are concerned, abused children or anti-social adolescent behaviour, there is wide political and social support for early and tough intervention. However, the same preventive surveillance strategy that makes such interventions possible also has a less attractive side: it has irrevocable consequences for all parents and children. It is one of the factors that makes parenting ever more stressful, because it seems to demand that every move be carefully weighed. In the context of screening programmes (such as mentioned above) intrusive questions are posed concerning almost every conceivable aspect of family life and upbringing. The legitimacy of this, it is claimed, comes from the importance of child protection. The usual response is that if parents object to being questioned in this way, that's their problem and a sign that better questioning techniques need to be employed by the professionals (De Wolff et al., 2009).

4.7 FREE AND NOT-SO-FREE CHOICES

As we have seen, for many people child upbringing seems to have become a question of personal choices and responsibility. That, in any case, is the impression conveyed by popular literature for parents on child-raising: make sure it is enjoyable, be always aware of what you do and above all do not make the wrong choices. If there is anything wrong with children, if they have problems at school or if they start doing risky things in adolescence, the accusing gaze automatically turns toward the parents. They should then either reflect on their own role or consult an expert. There is but one way of escaping the parental liability, and that is if the problem can be labelled a syndrome, or disturbance. In this sense, for example, the epidemic of ADHD-type disturbances and the culture of personal responsibility could be part of the same phenomenon (Bolt, 2010). But there are also many parents for whom this picture has little to do with reality. They are mainly busy trying to keep their head above water and have much more the feeling that for them and for their children there is in fact far too little choice in life. According to a Dutch study, 3 to 11% of the children in the Netherlands, depending on the exact criterion, can be classified as 'socially excluded'. This refers to material deprivation (parents lacking money), insufficient social participation (in sport and culture, social contacts) and/or inadequate access to basic social rights (which includes insecure and unpleasant neighbourhoods). Poverty is the decisive factor. Again depending on the precise definition chosen, 26 to 58% of children from families on support may be considered to be socially excluded. Besides being on benefits, there can be other factors in play here: when parents themselves participate little in society, have a low level of education and few social skills, there is a greater chance that their children will also fail to keep

up in a social sense. The chances are greatest for children from a non-western background (SCP, 2010). Yet even these parents do not escape the coercive pressure of personal responsibility. For in a neo-liberal society every citizen is responsible for shaping his or her own existence. This means that people who do not match up to this ideal are held personally responsible for their failure. It is precisely those who fall behind in a financial or social sense and consequently are more likely to have family and upbringing problems who are confronted with the most coercive measures. 'Because you have made a mess of things yourself, we are prescribing compulsory counselling, we are putting your children under supervision', etc.

Parents in a secularized and individualized culture come to believe that, at the end of the day, they have sole responsibility for their children's future. Who else could be? Traditionally, there were family members, neighbours, school, the church or clubs and associations who all played a role. But relations with most of these traditional 'partners' have changed drastically. The church has for the most part lost its influence over child-rearing, families live spread far apart from each other and neighbours are nowadays locked into their own concerns. The school is perhaps still a partner in children's upbringing, but at the same time adopt the position of an independent party with their own professional responsibilities.

On the one hand, there are many gains from the disappearance of this 'middle ground' of educational influence. Parents have more autonomy, are less bothered by social control and in raising their children are no longer obliged to take into account the ideological and religious prescriptions – either implicit or explicit – that framed the upbringing of earlier generations. In Isaiah Berlin's terms of negative and positive freedom, we can safely say that parents' negative freedom has markedly increased. The other side of the coin, however, is that the new autonomy of child-raising seems to have resulted in a greater dependence on experts. In addition, the government itself, through the same experts, increasingly interferes in children's upbringing, certainly where risk families are concerned. For these families, this constitutes precisely a restriction of their negative freedom. When we look at the implications for positive freedom, parents have perhaps made little advance. The prescriptions for a 'good upbringing', for so long dictated by ideology and religion and practised within the context of communities, have now been replaced by 'choice' and child-raising experts.

4.8 THE 'EDUCATIVE CIVIL SOCIETY' AS REMEDY

When one reads between the lines of their argument, one finds that several of the authors referred to in this chapter suggest possible directions in which a solution might be found. For example, Brinkgreve (2008) argues that children's upbringing has to become more an object of collective concern and involvement. Furedi (2001) is of the view that adults' authority over parenting has been undermined by the rise of professional experts, resulting in the development of a vicious circle that necessitates ever more professional interference and behavioural management. His remedy is that parents should cooperate more to break out of the isolation that

undermines their authority: 'We need to contact other parents and make friends with them to try to create our own little community of stakeholders in our children's welfare … it is also the most effective alternative to the disempowering consequences of the professionalization of parenting' (Furedi, 2001, p. 188). Historian Peter Stearns also proposes that parents – individually and collectively – need to show more guts in the face of experts and popular media who are constantly feeding their baseless feelings of guilt. These sources paint an exaggerated picture of the vulnerability of children and thereby underestimate their resilience. Furthermore, they pretend that everything is going downhill as far as youth is concerned, whereas in fact, violence in the 1940s, for example, was much more normal than in the nineties. Parenthood, too, is supposed to have become much more difficult, whereas – writes Stearns – one no longer has any idea of how difficult it was to bring up children a few generations ago. Parents themselves must become much more critical, for one can hardly expect any restraint from the commercial and interested agencies. He argues for parent-response groups who can counter this collective attack on the self-confidence and pleasure of parents with the help of objective information and historical insight. Together they could ensure that parenthood 'relaxes': there is nothing wrong with organizing mutual aid, with reducing the list of parental anxieties, or with reversing the trend of worry that has gripped (American) parents (Stearns, 2003, p. 227 et seq.).[xvi]

More cooperation between parents , better links between parents and schools, more equal relations between parents and parenting experts and a preventive surveillance state that behaves in much less top-down manner: these are essentially the ideas emerging from all these proposals. We are talking, in fact, about *strengthening civil society* (the community of citizens), especially where this relates to the socialization of children and adolescents, but also to the active role that young people themselves play in the society: in short, precisely what I have advocated as a '*pedagogische civil society*' and here refer to as an 'educative civil society' (cf. De Winter, 2008; see also chapter 3).

The sociologist Anton Zijderveld situates civil society within the 'democratic triangle' of society. This triangle is formed by the state (which formulates and operates laws and regulations), the market (trade and enterprise) and the civil society from which people take their individual and collective identity through various ties which they either voluntarily undertake or organize (Zijderveld, 1999). These spheres of influence vie with each other in the political world, and that is precisely what is seen in the field of child-rearing and youth policy. There have been periods when private initiative dominated youth policy and childcare, followed by periods when the state claimed the central role; nowadays we have a more mixed picture in which government and private initiative hold each other in balance, and in which at the same time there are commercial parties pursuing their interests (e.g. insurance firms). In this dynamic force-field , as we remarked earlier, neither parents nor children themselves exert much influence. We can speculate over the reasons for the weakness of their position: is it the fault (or perhaps even the wish) of parents themselves that they have given so much room to experts, the government and market players, or was it forced on them? But more important is

the question of what the effects of such an educative civil society could be on the quality of children's upbringing and development. Coleman (1990) uses the term 'social capital' to refer to the norms, the social networks, and the relations between adults and children that are important for their growing up. The assumption is that communities characterized by reciprocity and mutual trust promote the effectiveness of institutions like schools.

The American sociologist Robert Putnam investigated the relation between 'community-based social capital' and educational results of children and adolescents (Putnam, 2001). In his celebrated study *Bowling Alone* he had already noted that communal networks in the United States had been drastically reduced over several decades. This reduction was accompanied by a decline in social trust, generosity and altruism in American society. In the same period, educational results also declined (Putnam, 2000). Educational reforms were implemented to reverse this trend but, as Putnam wonders, perhaps this decline has nothing to do with the education itself but to changes in the area of social linkage and social involvement (ibid., 2001). One of the links that turns out to be of vital importance for children's educational achievement is the relation between the parents and the school. Where schools and parents cooperate well this has a positive effect, not only on school performance and the developmental possibilities in the later lives of children but also on the quality of the schools themselves. Schools that fostered strong social links were found to be more effective than bureaucratically organized schools (Henderson & Berla, 1994). Putnam combined a great many indicators for the density of social community networking to produce an *index* of social capital. He then looked to see whether there was a connection with educational performance, measured in several ways, including the end-scores of primary education and numbers of premature school-leavers from secondary education. This research showed that there is indeed a very strong link between social capital in the community and educational performance, even when corrected for such important variables as educational level, ethnicity, affluence, economic inequality, etc.[xvii] It was further found that the force of community-based social capital was a good predictor of the well-being and health of inhabitants: in neighbourhoods that scored high on the social capital index there is less crime, lower child mortality, fewer teenage pregnancies, more participation in higher education, and a higher level of tolerance of diversity. Putnam concludes that social capital in a community is an important source for the development of children and adolescents, precisely because this capital promotes the involvement of parents and wider circles in that developmental process. When the level of citizens' general social networking in a particular neighbourhood is high, then the involvement of parents in their children's school is also found to be high and there are relatively fewer behavioural problems among pupils. For all these reasons, the revitalization of community networks is the obvious way forward.

4.9 BONDING AND BRIDGING

The upbringing and development of children and adolescents thus seems to be strongly favoured by firm networks. There is, however, a catch. Putnam makes a distinction between 'bonding social capital' (networks of 'our sort of people') and 'bridging social capital' (networks with others). In a globalizing world where people feel threatened by various perceived dangers, there is always the tendency to seek safety in one's own familiar circles and concomitantly to shut out others (cf. Bauman, 2006, 2007; see also chapter 6 of this book). In a pluralistic democracy both kinds of capital are very necessary, but bridging is considerably harder to achieve.

Many programmes designed to strengthen the social environment of child-raising are especially aimed at 'bonding'. This is true, for example, of the community approach worked out by the Search Institute (Benson, 2003) in America. From research conducted among more than 100,000 children and adolescents, this institute distilled forty so-called 'developmental assets': that is, building blocks for healthy development. Instead of risk factors for problem development, attention was focused on the conditions and contexts that contribute to young people themselves developing in a 'healthy, considerate and responsible manner'. These included social support from the family, the neighbourhood and school, an environment that young people appreciated, and gave them room (i.e. 'empowered' them), clear boundaries and high expectations, responsible leisure activities, motivation to learn, positive values, social skills and a positive identity. The emphasis in this 'developmental assets approach' falls on the importance of connectedness with a caring community in which children and adolescents are welcome, are given room to develop and make a contribution, but in which they are also given careful attention.

The notion of 'bridging' – of creating a bridge between different communities in society – is found only in the passing observation that 'young people must be familiar with different cultural, racial and ethnic backgrounds'. The minor importance that is apparently attributed to this is in itself not so surprising. The normative frame within which such research is conducted could be described as 'personally responsible citizenship': the purpose of child-upbringing and education is to develop the character of young people such that they take up their position as responsible and active members of their community. Virtues such honesty, integrity, self-discipline, hard work and love of fatherland feature prominently in this normative, moral outlook (Westheimer & Kahne, 2004), but bridging is not really necessary to achieve these objectives. Putnam's reference to the need of 'bridging capital' is based rather on a conception of democratic citizenship that is aimed at enhancing social participation, social justice and resisting social and moral exclusion.[xviii]

Richard Lerner, an American developmental psychologist coming from the ecological systems tradition of Uri Bronfenbrenner, argues for a form of youth policy that connects with the latter conceptions of citizenship. He defines positive development in terms of a fruitful interaction between individual and context: 'A

thriving young person is an individual who – within the context of his or her physical and psychological characteristics and abilities – takes actions that serve his or her own well-being and, at the same time, the well-being of parents, peers, community and society … a path that eventuates in the young person becoming an ideal adult member of a civil society' (Lerner, 2004, p. 4). Lerner points to this reciprocity as a central ingredient of that core principle of the American life, the principle of liberty: a society of free individuals who strive for social justice, social equality, democracy and individual rights and obligations. Democracy means not just that citizens always show 'good behaviour' but more significantly that they learn to acquire and exercise informed judgement of politics and policies. And they know how to resist these policies when necessary, for instance by means of civil disobedience (cf. Sherrod et al., 2002). A child-raising environment that prioritizes this liberty will promote the active participation of children and young people in their social environment and hence the functioning of civil society itself. Lerner defines this as 'the values and institutions of a society which, independent of government, guarantee democracy and freedom (2004, p. 6). He calls for the development and implementation of programmes that promote the social involvement of children and adolescents, precisely because, as Putnam's work shows, there are large groups who have absolutely no experience at all of democracy or of an active civil society. This is neither a propitious starting point for individual development, nor for the future of democratic society itself.

4.10 A SOCIAL-CRITICAL POINT OF VIEW

When it comes to strengthening the educative civil society, the urban sociologist Noguera takes a different, more social-critical point of view. In his book *The trouble with black boys* he shows how schools in the impoverished inner cities of America in fact often represent 'negative social capital' – which is to say that they are scarcely capable of giving pupils the necessary intellectual and social equipment that would give them a perspective on a better future. On the contrary, says Noguera, many of these schools merely serve to reproduce the marginality of the children and the families they come from. [xix] One of the factors contributing to this state of affairs is that the connections between school and local community are often weak. The teachers frequently come from a different social stratum and usually don't live in the same neighbourhood. There is a considerable body of research showing that these differences tend to foster within the schools a distorted view of parents and children.[xx] It is all too easy for 'outsider professionals' to regard children from poor families as hopeless cases with serious short-comings and suffering from disturbances (Noguera, 2008, p. 224). Poor school results are therefore accepted as self-evident, just as the 'given' that violence in and outside school is a natural phenomenon in this kind of environment. Another aspect is that, from the perspective of the children and adolescents, there is little continuity between their different worlds. I referred earlier to this discontinuity as 'the gap in socialization' (De Winter & Kroneman, 2003) and in this context Coleman speaks of the importance of 'closure'. What he means by this is the degree of

correspondence in the most essential values and norms of the different milieus in which children are brought up, such as between school and family (Coleman, 1988). It is precisely in the poor neighbourhoods that there is so little correspondence. The different adults involved in the education and development do not adequately support each other and, indeed, sometimes work directly against each other. If such problems are to be overcome, according to Noguera, the gulf between school, parents and community must be closed. Because it is almost always a question of neighbourhoods where one could hardly speak of a civil society,[xxi] schools offer the best prospect as the points where any such process of change could begin. These schools must then be transformed into centres of stability and support for families and children. To this end, they must form a source of bonding and bridging, by working toward integration within the local community, and by facilitating links outside it (Noguera, 2008, p. 230). Because the social capital of the families involved is mainly very low, it is important to involve as many organizations as possible in this process. One thinks, for example – in as far as they are present – of churches, local businesses, non-profit-making organisations and existing citizens' action groups.

Noguera described how a number of schools in the derived areas of San Francisco successfully mobilized the involvement of parents and neighbourhood in the education of their children. Through the school boards, 'offices of parent-relations' were set up, specially charged with strengthening contacts with parents (the office of parent-relations parents' centres came into being where parents could meet each other and organize activities, various activities were undertaken in the neighbourhoods aimed at promoting parent participation (including conferences, political actions to improve school buildings and facilities), and finally, serious work was done to give parents a part in the running of the school. For example, they were involved in the appointment of new staff (p. 244). What is essential in Noguera's approach is that, unlike the dominant tendency these days, he does not shrink from the political character of social problems round the upbringing of children and adolescents. When problems occur round the school or in the neighbourhood that have to do with the social policy or local educational policy, even if they are politically controversial, these should be discussed with parents – for instance, in workshops or focus groups. After all, these are problems or decisions that are directly related to the social chances of their children. It is precisely parents' own perception that they have so little influence in such matters that sometimes tends to make them lethargic and apathetic. And vice versa, an active involvement, or sense of ownership, promotes the empowerment of parents in the face of such problems. This empowerment is essential for firm parenting (De Winter, 2000). But the active involvement of parents in the education – and in other activities – of their children can by no means always be taken for granted. Parents with a low level of education or parents who are struggling under combined financial, social and/or psychological problems are less likely to give it priority, or simply have no energy for it.[xxii] Parents of children who have problems at school or in the neighbourhood are readily seen as problem parents, considered to be more of an obstacle to their children's education than the source of it. And

although it is undeniable that there are very many parents labouring under a problem background and who have great difficulty in keeping their heads above water, these are the very parents it is important to get to acccept a more positive, shared involvement in the bringing up of their children. According to Noguera, the way they are treated by organisations and professionals can make an enormous difference here: 'When parents are respected as partners in the education of their children and when they are provided with organizational support that enables them to channel their interests to the benefit of the school, the entire culture of the organization can be transformed… More important, the familiarity between school and parent that develops as a result of such partnerships can also begin to generate social closure and transform urban schools from alien and hostile organizations into genuine community assets …' (Noguera, 2008, p. 250).

4.11 FINALLY: HOW DOES ONE STRENGTHEN THE EDUCATIVE CIVIL SOCIETY?

In my experience, many parents, professionals and politicians see the need and welcome the idea of strengthening the links between adults engaged in socialization of youth, yet at the same time they see many obstacles to achieving it. Of these, the most important are the following:

- Is not this effort to regenerate a community public spirit merely a form of nostalgia for the 'good old times' which, as well as its advantages, also entailed evident disadvantages, such as excessive social control, carping criticism, paternalism, lack of freedom of choice, etc.?
- Does not the promotion of a strong community spirit also entail the exclusion of others, or any deviation from the mainstream social norms? In this context, the example is often raised of 'white disadvantaged neighbourhoods' where inhabitants may well support each other through thick and thin, but have little regard for the law or for outsiders. But one could also point to religious or ethnic communities that are strongly turned in on themselves. Although the upbringing of children in these communities is often considered a social responsibility, the other side of the coin is the desire to maintain the gulf that separates them from other communities in order to protect the group identity.
- How do you manage to get citizens, who already have their work cut out just maintaining their own lives (and those of their children), to concern themselves with the educative quality of their communal neighbourhood? Why should they want to?
- Do modern, individualized citizens still have the skills necessary for an educative civil society? For example, the skills to support usefully, address or correct someone else's children in the public space[xxiii]; to offer a helping hand to other parents and to ask for help or advice when it is needed; to be able to give and accept critical or constructive questions over the upbringing of your own children; to be able to accommodate your own views and insights to those

of others who are also responsible for your children's upbringing, such as the school.
– In a time when treating the problems of raising children in terms of individual dysfunction appears to be beyond any scientific dispute, is it not then anachronistic to search for the causes of problems in a wider social context than the family alone?

When we look more closely at these questions, we see that some of them have to do with facts, others with outlooks and motivation. For instance, it is an empirical fact that a couple of modern parents, both earning, have less time to devote to voluntary activities and social contacts in the neighbourhood. I think the same goes for the lack of adequate communicative and intercultural skills that are needed to deal with groups of youths on the street.[xxiv] Research on child abuse and juvenile criminality, such as described in the previous chapter, demonstrates that a certain degree of community spirit is necessary for children's chances of development. However, as is painfully clear from research that will be discussed in chapter 6, a community spirit can all too be associated with the social and moral exclusion of others. Finally, one cannot overlook the fact that social sciences such as child and adolescent psychology increasingly become clinically oriented behavioural sciences in which individual problems and disturbances become the main object of study. Concomitantly, any interest in the *context* of children's upbringing beyond the microcosm of the family and school has considerably diminished.

Of course, these matters of fact are important when it comes to thinking about the educative society of the future. But facts in themselves offer no direction. For example, if overloaded parents now have too little time and energy to organize care for their children together, that does not necessarily mean that this would not be a very good idea; an idea that could considerably increase the pleasure of raising children, reduce the individual workload of bringing up children and reduce to a minimum the number of questions for which experts need to be called in. Yet another example: if it is actually established that modern citizens these days dare not address groups of youths in the street directly when these are making too much noise or causing destruction, then perhaps more police on the street is the most obvious reaction. But from a socio-educative viewpoint it would be extremely unintelligent: this is precisely *not* the way that adolescents and older inhabitants are taught to communicate and to resolve daily problems together. The end result is then a society in which it is not the citizens among themselves, but rather the government that regulates the daily intercourse between citizens. In relation to the development of democratic citizenship, of course, this is wholly counter-productive (see chapter 5).

The aim of strengthening the educative civil society has thus, on the one hand, an empirical background ('proven useful for the development of child, family and society'), but on the other hand also stands for a normative conception: that some forms of society are more enjoyable and more durable than others, or, for example, are more consonant with the ideal of a democracy. In principle, parents have no need to involve other adults in the raising of their children. That is, if they prefer,

they can simply put any question that arises to an expert. The government can in principle, in the interests of the child, introduce anti-child abuse monitors into every home. But whether that will ultimately lead to a desirable situation is highly disputable. The conclusion is that strengthening the educative character of society cannot be a purely scientific affair. Social science does indeed provide powerful arguments for it, but as history teaches us, these can all too easily be pushed aside by political interests. The socializing function of a civil society can never be imposed from above – if only because it is, any case, a contradiction in terms. It has to grow from within, and to achieve that, a debate on child-upbringing is necessary with *and between* citizens of all ages.

Allemaal Opvoeders [child-raising as everyone's responsibility] , and 'De Vreedzame Wijk' [the peaceful neighbourhood]

From the idea that parents need to have sufficient positive socio-educative capital at their command for the raising and the development of children and adolescents, we have been working from the University of Utrecht for several years now together with different partners on development – and research projects whose aim is precisely to build up this capital. In 'Everybody a Child-raiser', together with the Dutch Youth Institute and twelve local municipalities we are investigating the possibilities to enhance civil society's involvement with youth and families. In the Netherlands, the new Centres for Child and Family, originally intended for signalling risk and the support of child-raising, could also play a facilitating role, as could also Community Schools or child and youth work. Parents, children and others involved tour the neighbourhood in order to assess the quality and safety for children (called: '*wijkschouw*'); debates on child upbringing are organized in neighbourhoods, parent-rooms installed in schools; gatherings organized in people's living rooms, initiatives to promote dialogue between residents and street youths, etc.[1] The project '*De Vreedzame Wijk*', set up by Pauw and Verhoeff (ref), is trying to develop a climate in neighbourhoods of shared socio-educative responsibilities. Through this project, principles of democratic child-raising developed in the primary school (promoting learning to resolve conflicts themselves via peer-mediation, promoting active participation in decision-making through group meetings, etc.) are widely applied in the neighbourhood. Staff workers in playgrounds, in child welfare work, sports associations, the police and even from the local supermarket learn the same principles and methods so that they can also apply them with 'their' children. Parents are also actively involved in the project, for example in the role of mediator, thus making a contribution in the public space to a coherent positive social climate.[1] Our research group at the University of Utrecht undertakes the evaluation of the *Vreedzame Wijk* and thus helps further develop and underpin the programme.

CHAPTER 5

SOCIALIZATION FOR THE COMMON GOOD

The case for a democratic offensive in upbringing and education.

5.1 INTRODUCTION

In a well-known collection of essays edited by Kessel and Siegel, *The Child and other Cultural Inventions* (1983), the Swedish developmental psychologist Rita Liljeström suggested that the traditional 'child of the family' in the western world has gradually had to give way to two new types of child: the public child and the commercial child (Liljeström, 1983). The author is here alluding to the fact that, over the course of western history, the family has lost considerable ground as a source of influence and values in children's upbringing, while two other spheres of influence have become much more significant: firstly the government and professional institutions, which have increasingly assumed responsibility for the welfare and education of children; and secondly the market economy which, in the author's opinion, has succeeded to a remarkable degree in filling the moral and emotional vacuum in which children grow up. According to Liljeström, these two influences have combined in a disturbing way to undermine parenthood and responsible citizenship.

Whether this diagnosis is correct is still difficult to say. Nevertheless, the fact is that some twenty years later the call heard on all sides is for a greater sense of responsibility from citizens – and from parents in particular. The currently dominant ideology is that citizens in general have become too dependent on government and professionals. The market is no longer a threat to independence, but has become celebrated as an ideal that is supposed to liberate citizens and parents from their alleged inertia. The idealized parent of today chooses – whether it is a childcare centre, or some product in the field of child nurture, or a series of childcare modules – on the basis of a comparative quality analysis. Governments are increasingly withdrawing and want to lay more responsibility at the feet of the caretakers; but when it comes to combating such social problems as juvenile criminality and the rise of radicalization, there is no question of government withdrawal. On the contrary, the credo is: 'not withdrawal, but action'. This remarkable scissor movement – on the one hand greater aloofness, on the other, ever more forceful interference – fits seamlessly into the neoconservative outlook that the government's concern should lie with matters of public order and security. Socialization, i.e. the parenting and upbringing of children to become constructive

citizens in society, thus becomes increasingly a private affair and a task for the social middle ground of schools and institutions which, in turn, are more and more governed by the laws of market forces. The question is thus whether the public child does not lose out, through neglect, to the private and the commercial child.
In this chapter, I want to draw attention to the public, general good that is at stake in children's upbringing. That this general good is an important goal of child-raising has, in my view, been sadly neglected. Under the influence of various social developments, child nurture, education and youth policy have become almost exclusively focused on the personal interests of young people themselves. This emphasis on the individual finds expression in the objectives of modern child-rearing and child psychology, such as discovering one's own identity, functional autonomy, being happy, developing your talents, making a career, physical and mental health, etc. These all reflect the emancipation of the child, which can rightly be considered an enormous historical and social achievement. We see the child as not so much as a means to a higher end, but as a person, which is not only good for the child but also for society.

Indisputably, achieving these individual goals (sometimes referred to as 'developmental tasks') not only benefits the person and his or her social network, but also to some extent also the society as a whole, yet the lack of any reference to 'the general good' is a conspicuous omission. After all, no society in the world can function well if it consists purely of unquestioning citizens who see themselves simply and correctly having fulfilled their individual developmental tasks. Surely such citizens must also, at the very least, want to raise among themselves about the way they should live together. They must, for instance, be prepared to find consensus over ways of dealing with each other in their personal and social lives, about justice, solidarity and how to deal with social norms. Such social engagement does not automatically come into being by itself, it has to be actively formed, and for this reason the nurturing and education of new generations of young people directly involves the general good of society; we have to think in terms of the 'societal upbringing of children' (De Winter, 2000).

5.2 THE COMMON GOOD AS THE GOAL OF CHILD-UPBRINGING

What precisely should be understood by the 'general good' very much depends on the type of society one is referring to. For western societies it may be defined as the maintenance and development of democracy, based on the assumption that most citizens prefer this system to a dictatorship and is thus the greatest common denominator of interests. It should at once be added that it is not only a question of the formal aspects of democracy, such as those laid down in the constitution, in human rights treaties and so on. Democracy is also – and predominantly – characterized by a social ethic, or as the American philosopher John Dewey called it, 'a democratic way of life', whose core lies in the recognition of shared interests of individuals and groups, in the way in which people associate, consult, discuss and debate their experience and participate in communal practices (Dewey, 1923; Berding, 1999, p. 166). Such a democratic way of living together assumes, for

example, that citizens are prepared to resolve conflicts through dialogue and negotiation, if necessary through the mediation of the law, but in any case not through the resort to violence. More succinctly perhaps, democracy could be described as a form of living together designed to resolve conflicts between individuals and/or groups in a humane, orderly and peaceful manner (Gutmann & Thompson, 1996; White, 1999).

Apart from conflict resolution, in a democratic ethos there are also issues of equality and parity, social responsibility, rights and obligations, the proscription of discrimination on the grounds of belief, background or disposition, etc. The guiding principle is that a democratic state is the only form of society that allows the peaceful, orderly coexistence of different forms of, for example, religious, cultural or political conviction. This also implies the protection of minorities against the rule of the strongest, containment of the power of fanatics, while the use of violence is the preserve of government and the freedom of the individual is constrained by the freedom of others. The great force of democratic states, according to Holmes (1995), is that so far they seem to have succeeded in solving both the problems of anarchy *and* of tyranny in a single coherent regulatory system. At the same time, this democracy is highly vulnerable, both as a political system and as a form of society: it is always open to threat from lack of interest, from the assumption that it is the obvious, natural form life that goes without saying (or effort), and from the concerted attacks of those who would forcibly impose on everyone their own totalitarian values.

5.3 CHILDREN'S UPBRINGING AS ESSENTIAL INTEREST OF SOCIETY

The fact that the *general good* features nowhere as a principle for the orientation of children's upbringing and education is not only remarkable, it is above all cause for concern. In the first place, children are not just the product or possession of their parents; they are also the future citizens of a free society. This means that the citizens as a whole – and that includes the children themselves – will either profit or suffer from the success or failure of their upbringing. Whether one wants it or not, upbringing by definition has consequences for others. In the second place, child upbringing and socialization are inextricably linked with the conscious reproduction of the democratic state (Gutmann, 1987; Gutmann & Thompson, 1996). This kind of constitutional state can only function when there is sufficient willingness and capacity on the part of its citizens to support and reproduce this form of society.

There are various signals indicating that the democratic outlook can easily lose its hegemony as the self-evident form of social organization. There are various reasons for this. Increasing emphasis on individual interests, calculating citizenship, migration from other countries whose regimes and culture are far less democratic, lack of identification with the common good, the rise of fundamentalism and political apathy all play a part. Some even predict the end of democracy as a consequence of internationalization and globalization (Guéhenno, 1993).

It is precisely in a period of individualization, fragmentation and increasing diversity that the general interest, the common good, needs to regain a more central position in our thinking and policy-making about the upbringing and education of children. If we are to prevent an implosion as a result of negligence or an explosion through direct attacks, democracy and its associated forms of social life must be much more strongly foregrounded and actively cultivated. Unlike a dictatorship, a democracy cannot enforce its basic principles by decree, it can only try to instil them by persuasion (e.g. Frimannsson, 2001). And for this reason it should be obvious that the aim of socialization is the formation of democratic personalities for whom, to refer to Dewey again, seeking a balance between individual and social needs is second nature: 'If then, society and the individual are really organic to each other, then the individual is society concentrated. He is not merely its image or mirror. He is the localized manifestation of its life' (Dewey, 1888, quoted in Berding, 1999, p. 162).

5.4 'DEMOCRATS ARE MADE, NOT BORN'

Too few people have much idea of exactly what democracy is. To be able to appreciate this democracy, you must at least be aware of the alternatives. What it comes down to is the opposition between self-governance by citizens on the one hand, and either anarchy or dictatorship on the other. Unless one understands that historically such a system has usually been gained only through hard struggle, one is likely to find it difficult to identify with it – let alone take up arms to defend it. There is therefore every reason to look critically at the ground support for democracy. The steadily diminishing turnout for elections in various western countries is often seen as a sign of the erosion of the vitality of a democracy (cf. Kymlicka et al., 1994). In particular, observers have remarked that the zest for democracy is weak among young people. A comparative study conducted in 24 countries shows that civic education almost everywhere is accorded low status and priority, and that there is similarly little interest in the subject from students (Torney-Purta et al., 1999). One of the conclusions of this study is that many students in secondary education do not meet the criteria of 'good enough democratic citizenship', i.e. the criteria of: support for democracy, being well informed about politics, having a political preference and being prepared to go out and vote (Dekker, 1999).

A lack of knowledge of, and involvement in democracy makes democracy extremely vulnerable. If too many citizens lack any interest in it, the democratic structure and rules themselves eventually have no basis, claims the American political scientist Meira Levinson. The 'liberal state' is a communal good that has to be maintained communally by the citizens: 'It depends for its stability and preservation on there being a sufficiently high percentage of citizens who behave in public and private in ways that advance democracy, toleration and non-discrimination' (Levinson, 1999, p. 43). Every democratic state is seriously weakened if it remains underused – which is to say, if too many people adopt a passive or sceptical attitude toward the political process and each other. In that

case, the socio-political order can very quickly develop in a direction antithetical to freedom, where a small, fanatical minority can make all the running (Levinson, ibid.). The best way of combating underuse and neglect is to ensure that there is a growing number of citizens who take democracy seriously and for whom involvement is a habit. The essential remedy, therefore lies with the upbringing and education of children. At the same time, although the transfer of knowledge is necessary, it is not a sufficient condition. Future democrats must be certain kinds of person, according to Patricia White – to whom, in fact, the heading of this section refers (White, 1999). Knowledge and skills can be learned, assuming that someone is prepared to learn. Motivation and openness to the views and needs of others are therefore an important point to attend to.

5.5 MORALIZING OR DEMOCRATIZING

Some behaviours and utterances on the part of youth arouse disquiet and indignation in western societies: anti-Semitism, discrimination against homosexuals, provocative ostentatious religious utterances and manifestations, violence, etc. These expressions are sometimes seen as merely adolescent provocation by young people in search of their own identity, but also sometimes as expressions of fundamentalism or cultural backwardness that have to be taken seriously. In any case, they can count on little sympathy.

These days it has become rather popular (though actually tautological) to apply psychological labels: someone who behaves in an anti-social manner is almost automatically suffering from an 'anti-social personality' disorder. In certain situations, of course, this kind of 'explanation' may be valid for certain youths. But when we choose the basic principles and forms of conduct of democracy as our frame of reference for judging such expressions and behaviours, perhaps we should rather speak of a *democratic deficit*. When this kind of deficiency is manifest in the behaviour of young people, of course, they bear their own responsibility for it, but it has to be stressed that it is also a failure of the socializing persons and institutions, and indeed of the functioning of democracy itself. According to Biesta, the decline of the public sphere should not so much be seen as the *result* of a lack of good citizenship, but rather, he argues, the cause. Instead of blaming 'individuals for an apparent lack of citizenship and civic spirit, we should start at the other end by asking about the actual opportunities for the enactment of the experiment of democracy that are available in our societies, on the assumption that participation in such practices can engender meaningful forms of citizenship and democratic agency' (Biesta, 2011, p. 8).

As is well known, alarm over the behaviour and moral outlook of the younger generation is not limited to Europe or even to the present time. In the United States, one of the forms taken by this disquiet is the movement of 'Character Education', whose basic idea is that 'good' character (defined by such virtues as honesty, sense of justice, care for others, self-discipline, etc.) is necessary to become fully human and to realize a moral society. This is a clearly normative, moralizing approach which deviates from the dominant model of psycho-social health, according to

which any judgement of behaviour takes average scores in the population as its point of reference.

The problem with concepts like 'character' and 'virtues', however, is that they – to put it euphemistically – are rather open to multiple interpretation. Many virtues or descriptions of 'good character' would seem to be universal; they are found in Aristotle, the Ten Commandments, the Koran or even in manifestoes of the Komsomol), but in their more specific interpretations they turn out to be highly ideological (Nikandrov, 1999). In any case, the question of which virtues should be taught and in what manner arouses strong differences of opinion. There is a clearly discernible conflict over the essence of virtue between neo-conservative schools of thought on the one hand and the progressive liberals on the other. In neo-conservative thinking, it is essentially a question of the transfer of religious and family values, national pride and love of fatherland (Bennett, 1993; Wynn, 1992), while for the progressives the meaning of virtue lies in social values such as care, reciprocal regard for others, solidarity and tolerance (Steutel & Spiecker, 2000). Whereas the neo-conservatives have, as one would expect, a strong preference for authoritative methods of instruction, for rules and group pressure, the liberal ethics tend toward methods more in keeping with their content, viz. methods based on mutual regard and responsibility. It is striking, however, that from whichever position on the ideological spectrum there is almost always a reference to democracy. On the importance of this there is a remarkable degree of consensus. Writing about the need to inculcate values for citizenship, White says: 'There is no need to search around for a basic framework for citizenship education, still less to attempt to find an insecurely based consensus on values. There exists a framework of values given by the democratic values which are embodied more or less successfully and full heartedly in the institutions of our society' (White, 1999, p. 60).

The best evidence for this proposition is in fact the struggle itself between the various champions of morality competing with each other. The evidently still sufficiently shared values of the democratic state make it possible for the competing parties to hold fundamentally different views over the desired morality without this turning into religious strife. In my own view, the cultivation and maintenance of democracy is therefore more fundamentally important than finding consensus over morality. The focus on morality leads to an amplification of difference and to ethnocentrism, which in turn promotes further discrimination and injustice (Puka, 2000, p. 133). A democratic ethic, on the contrary, is characterized by the acknowledgement of mutual interests, the recognition of difference and by 'the interaction of as many individuals and groups as possible, as intensively and with as few barriers as possible' (Berding, 1999, p. 165).

Giving shape to an educative upbringing out of the general interest demands no less than a reversal of cultural attitudes toward child-raising. To achieve anything like this will require new socializing arrangements, for example in order to give a structural place to the active participation of youth, and to promote the sharing of responsibility for child-upbringing (e.g. between parents and schools). I limit myself here to the discussion of consequences for family upbringing. The

implications for education and youth policy will be briefly dealt with at the end of this chapter.

5.6 FAMILY UPBRINGING AND DEMOCRACY

Over recent decades a considerable amount of research has been devoted to the question of democracy within the family. Under the influence of general processes of democratization in society the western family has also undergone a modernization process of its own: power differentials have been reduced, both between parents and between parents and children. Personal development and the emancipation of family members have become more important; there has been more room for the expression of feelings, and the running of the household has changed altogether from a command economy to one of negotiation (De Swaan, 1979; Torrance, 1998). Children have increasingly been allowed to have their say over more issues, which has been interpreted by some commentators as an incapacitation of parents, making it impossible for them to run the family and cited as a possible cause of various behavioural problems (Lodewijcks-Frencken, 1989; De Winter, 1995; Schöttelndreier, 1996). In the Netherlands and many other western countries, the negotiating family seems to have become more or less the norm. Of course, there are still many families, both immigrant and indigenous, where manners and authority are more traditionally maintained, but even there one observes changes (Kagitcibasi, 2001; Nijsten & Pels, 2000). If the nature of the family has become more democratic, does this mean that democracy itself has become a more important objective of family upbringing? Or in other words, do parents have 'democratic virtues' in mind when they describe the aims underlying the way they bring up their children?

Research on upbringing in the Netherlands reveals that most indigenous parents score highly for autonomy and social awareness (Rispens et al., 1996). Large groups of immigrant parents also increasingly give priority to such aims. The greater importance they attach to conformity, obedience and performance gradually becomes mixed with the realization that personal development can enhance their children's chances of social success in a western society. The goals of upbringing are found to be closely linked (among other factors) to economic background, social provision, level of education and work, migration, culture and custom (Kohn, 1977; Kagitcibasi, 2001; Nijsten et al., 2000). Thus, although parents raise their children to help them become independent, socially aware and concerned adults, so far this research has found nothing like 'the common good' or a 'democratic attitude' mentioned by parents as an ideal or objective of upbringing. It is impossible to say whether this is due to the parents' answers, or perhaps to a blind spot of the researchers themselves.

Because the attitude and behaviour of certain groups of children and youths gives rise to public alarm, one increasingly hears criticism of the parents. they instilling the right norms and values in their children, does their upbringing adequately meet the demands of modern society, do they sufficiently keep an eye

on what their children are doing, who they associate with and what they get up to at school and in their free time, etc.?

There is no debate about the fact that parents play an important and, in certain respects, a decisive role in their children's upbringing, but the extent of that role and its influence is indeed open to question (Harris, 1998). That a so-called authoritative style of parenting, measured against the demands of modern western society, leads to the best developmental outcome for the children living in such a society, is even more open to doubt (see, for example, Baumrind, 1971; Maccoby, 1980; Hoffman, 2000). After all, excessively authoritarian parenting allows insufficient possibilities for adolescents to develop their own identity and sense of responsibility, whereas an all-too-permissive attitude means an absence of boundaries and leads to uncertainty. On the other hand, the authoritative style, i.e. a well balanced mix of support and monitoring, when combined with a less explicit way of correcting, leads to an optimal fulfilment of developmental tasks (again, in the context of a modern western society).

The authoritative style of parenting is associated with an image of the family as a mini-democracy. Although the 'results' of this style are almost always measured in terms of personal development and individual psycho-social health (and therefore not in terms of social objectives e.g. democratic citizenship), these certainly include character traits relevant to social functioning. Important democratic faculties like the will and the ability to reach consensus are in the first place learned by many children within the family. As a civic virtue that can be applied in a wider context, suggests Frimannsson (2001), this should be practised and extended later in education. But it is the family context which is supremely appropriate for the transmission of these so-called 'hot cognitions' (i.e. affectively charged cognitions), because of the enduring and intimate affective relations between parents and children.

It is known from the well-known study by Oliner and Oliner (1989) of the motives and backgrounds of persons who saved Jews during the Second World War that the vast majority of these individuals came from warm, close-knit families that placed high demands on individual responsibility and moral behaviour. They were people who were conspicuous for their many and firm relationships with others. But the characteristic the authors singled out by as playing an especially important role was their moral commitment to the values of care for others, justice and humanity.

On the basis of the available empirical literature, Berkowitz and Grych (1998) identify five strategic principles that parents can implement to promote morality in their children:

- induction
- considerateness and support
- making demands and setting boundaries
- providing a living example of social-moral behaviour
- open democratic discussions and conflict resolution.

What morality actually entails, however, is left rather unspecified here and thus the principles can be applied in various directions. It is therefore important, as Hoffman says, to ensure that a clear content, a *moral ethic*, is communicated. Just as in a pluralistic democratic society, it is important that parents and other moral educators make children aware of the similarities between people, for instance in their emotional reactions, their reactions to unfair treatment or in their reactions to major life events such as divorce, loss and becoming a parent (Hoffman, 2000).

5.7 DEMOCRACY AND EDUCATION IN PARENT-EDUCATION

Family upbringing is of great influence on the development of values and morality. Research has shown unequivocally that, in the context of western democratic societies at least, a democratic, authoritative style of parenting leads to the best developmental results. The term 'authoritative parenting' primarily refers to a style, to the character of the process of parenting; no moral content is determined by it. One principle of moral content, however, is inextricably linked to this style, and that is democracy itself. Anyone wanting to transmit anti-democratic values to his children is, after all, unlikely to employ an authoritative style of parenting. On the other hand, anyone who wants to pass on democracy and inspire by example can hardly do so by *authoritarian* means.

The implication of all this is that the general interest – defined in terms of a democratic state – is best served with as many parents as possible raising their children in an authoritative manner. In all probability, they pay a crucial role in establishing a democratic habit in the young. In the context of the 'conscious social reproduction of democracy', therefore, we should be thinking of different ways in which the relation between parenting and democracy can be given far greater prominence – whether through counselling and advice, parental education, media attention, courses in citizenship, etc.

Parental support these days is mainly concerned with the recognition and remedying of problems; normative discussions over the goals of parenting are mostly avoided. Research, however, shows that parental support becomes much more effective when it is focused much more strongly on these objectives – in fact, by adopting a goal-based approach. Bettler and Burns (2003) point to three specific gains:

- Reflection on the goals of parenting lays a foundation for parenting methods that one learns.
- This way of working dispenses with the 'deficit approach' that has so long characterized parental assistance.
- It offers more possibility to do justice to the cultural and social diversity of the goals of parenting.

To this one should add that the avoidance of normative discussions in parental support misses out on many opportunities to promote involvement and integration in society. Firm discussions of the direction of upbringing can help to break down

isolation, apathy and a culture of aloofness. For parents, who naturally want to create the best possible chances for their children in today's society, it is enormously important to learn how they can advance those opportunities. In that light I want to argue the case for a consultative approach, oriented toward dialogue, whereby the specific demands that living in a democratic state places on children (and thus also on parents) are discussed with parents in a pragmatic fashion. Because such knowledge is part of the basic equipment that parents need to be able to bring up their children successfully in a democratic society, it would seem an obvious move to expand the standard advice offered by child-health clinics for parents of infants and toddlers with courses on authoritative parenting.

5.8 THE PUBLIC CHILD AND THE 'SOCIALIZATION-GAP'

In earlier publications, I devoted considerable attention to the holes that have appeared over recent years in the layers of necessary provisions and activities aimed at the raising and education of youth, in other words in the infrastructure for socialization and education (see, for example, De Winter, 2000; Raad voor Maatschappelijke Ontwikkeling, 2001). Among other things, these gaps relate to the decay of the traditional continuity between the different contexts in which children and adolescents are brought up. It would appear that family, neighbourhood, school, church and the clubs no longer play the same significant role as parts of the infrastructure for socialization and education that they once did. At the same time, they are far less coherently attuned to each other. We know for example that many youths from deprived areas often feel themselves to be merely a cipher at school, unsafe in their own neighbourhood, as well as unwelcome in and superfluous in society. Their description of the world they lived in evokes an image of a social no-man's-land in which, apart from parents and friends there were few people who actually bothered with them. An ideal breeding ground for various possible kinds of derailment, which these youths themselves also thought, all the more so when problems they encountered in the one domain (on the streets, for example) tended to extend to other domains, such as the family and school (De Winter & Kroneman, 1998).

In fact, what these youths complained of was an inadequate public upbringing or education. When they receive insufficient support or any counterbalance from adults in public life they take this as an invitation to educate themselves. In this way the so-called 'street code' very quickly takes over (Anderson, 1999; De Winter, 2005). Anyone in society who feels insufficiently respected or valued, who sees little prospect at work and minimal social status, is going to take his sense of self-esteem from the degree to which he can command respect from the world he inhabits daily. You get respect on the street through your capacity and willingness to use violence. American research on young people growing up in large inner city ghettoes shows that children learn to be 'tough' from a very early age. The first lesson of the street is that survival is never a matter of course. Children must (also literally) learn to fight for their place in the world and that happens by commanding respect, whether by verbal or physical means (Brezina et al., 2004).

Anyone who does not succeed runs the constant danger of being humiliated in public, molested or worse. Anderson (1999) explains this hard social reality by the enormous gulf that even young ghetto-dwellers experience between themselves and the rest of society. He considers the street code as a cultural adaptation to a deep-rooted lack of confidence in the democratic state and its institutions.

Against this stubborn reality stands the increasing quantity of hard data that tell exactly what such a socializing and educative infrastructure would have to look like to offer these young people a better chance of individual and social development. In the so-called developmental assets approach, for example, some forty factors are listed, all empirically established as contributing to the healthy social development of children and adolescents. Families, neighbourhoods and schools should provide, among other things, adequate care, support, involvement and clear boundaries. Young people should be appealed to for the constructive contributions that they can make to society, rather than being seen in advance as a potential source of problems (Benson, 2003). Such data mean that investing in a high quality, principled *social-pedagogical* infrastructure is in the direct interests of society. A youth policy that neglects the upbringing of children in the public domain (as we now have, for instance, aimed at a one-sided repression of undesirable behaviour) is damaging the future of the democratic and, of course, the possibilities of individual development for the young people directly concerned.

Traditionally, education also played an important part in the public upbringing young people. But as a consequence of individualization and the growing influence of the market, this sector threatens to lose sight of that public interest. Schools are forced to concentrate more on their image and 'customer pool' and their work is increasingly 'demand-oriented', i.e. the individual 'customer' is king, the interests of society are shoed to the background. For example, anyone looking in the present-day educational curriculum for a systematic approach to democratic education will be generally disappointed. On the question of how you can impart to children from a young age the knowledge, attitude and skills that they will need to be able to participate as democratic citizens in society, there is very little consensus in the land of education. Of course, there is the odd school that has a course on conflict management, another teaches social skills and yet another has a project running on European elections.[xxvii] But in countries like the Netherlands which have no national curriculum, schools have a large degree of autonomy, certainly when it comes to the 'soft' subjects like civic knowledge. And there the risk is that, baecause they are free to give almost any interpretation they like to this subject, schools can teach ideas of citizenship that are at odds with the principles of the democratic state – such as, for example, discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation or religion. In my own view, there should be a clear limit to the autonomy of the school. For the future of democracy and the 'democratic way of life' it is necessary to transmit to children via education the knowledge, attitudes and skills they need. This, I believe, should be a firm requirement of all schools, whether public or private.

5.9 FINALLY: THE NEED FOR A DEMOCRATIC OFFENSIVE IN UPBRINGING AND EDUCATION

> The price of liberty may once have been eternal vigilance; the splendid thing about Civil Society is that even the absent-minded, or those preoccupied with their private concerns or for any other reason ill-suited to the exercise of eternal and intimidating vigilance, can look forward to enjoying liberty. Civil Society bestows liberty even on the non-vigilant. (Gellner, 1996)

The picture sketched here by Ernest Gellner is a reassuring one. Civil society with its active, involved citizens, its social networks and organizations has more than adequate consistency to maintain democratic values, even though there are many citizens who never involve themselves in the active propagation of those values. But I mentioned two cases which serve to undermine somewhat this image: an implosion of democracy through an increasing fixation on one's own interests coupled with a lack of interest in public affairs; and an explosion through the growth of anti-democratic sentiments, possibly accompanied by a deliberate undermining of the state. In this context, Bauman (1999, p. 156) also refers to the danger of complacent or ideologically driven government constantly giving ground to the market: the further this process advances, the more the citizen changes into a consumer. This may be good for the economy, but it leads inexorably to fewer and fewer citizens prepared to contribute actively to the functioning of democracy. It becomes a sport to outwit the government while rules and regulations are seen as mainly applicable to others.

Of course, the first line of defence against implosion or explosion is a good system setting laws and regulations plus a willingness to maintain them. But ground-level support from the citizenry is need for this, and that is not self-evidently present. A democratic society must therefore consciously engage in its own reproduction and renewal, through socialization. For various social and historical reasons, there is a great resistance among western citizens to looking at the upbringing and education of children from the viewpoint of the social interest. Discussions over family upbringing almost immediately run up against objections to the invasion of privacy and parents' right to determine for themselves how they will bring up their children.

The fear that the state might control the upbringing of children is apparently so great in many countries that it threatens to throw out the baby with the bathwater. This fear – or rejection – has long prevented western society from strengthening its defence of a common interest in a democratic state through the education of the young. And perhaps this has not for a long time been seen as a matter of urgency. The collective abhorrence of violent dictatorship after the Second World War was probably sufficient in itself to maintain a sufficient degree of commitment to democracy. But now that those experiences are gradually disappearing from the collective memory, the foundations of the democratic state need to be renewed and strengthened. Individual freedoms can only be gained through the collective efforts of citizens. This is why I argue for (what I call) a democratic offensive in

upbringing and education. This does not mean child-raising by the state but a conscious effort by citizens, organizations and government – not a one-off effort: socialisation is a longitudinal process that has to be exercised and maintained from different domains, both private and public. Such a democratic upbringing by citizens implies the transfer of knowledge, attitude and skills and is essential for a well-functioning democracy. But because democracy is a process and not static, and therefore has constantly to be re-invented, it is of essential importance that children and adolescents get sufficient opportunity to experience democracy personally and actively participate, in situations that have meaning for them. There is probably no better way to inspire new generations with enthusiasm for democracy than letting them see from an early age that active engagement in the common life of the society is worth the effort. You can be heard, you are part of a joint venture. But such engagement does not happen by itself. To harmonize your needs and actions with those of others you must, according to Marquand have command of "a certain discipline" and "a certain self-restraint" that does not come by itself. 'It has to be learned and then internalized, sometimes painfully' (Marquand, 2004, p. 57, cit. Biesta, 2011).

CHAPTER 6

EVIL AS A PROBLEM OF UPBRINGING AND SOCIALIZATION

Hate, dehumanization and an education that stands for the opposite

> The problem of evil will be the fundamental question of post-war intellectual life in Europe. (Hannah Arendt, 1945, p. 134)
>
> I did my best – and it was possible – to shoot only children. The mothers always held the children by the hand. My neighbour then shot the mother while I shot the child belonging to her, because for various reasons I told myself the child couldn't survive without its mother. (Member of Reserve Police Battalion 101)[xxviii]

6.1 INTRODUCTION

People can do the most appalling things to each other. It happens within families where power conflicts are fought out with physical and mental violence, in schools or in groups of boys or girls where bullying and exclusion are rather commonplace. It happens in the public space in the form of violent crime, or – on a totally different scale – in areas of conflict, by means of ethnic cleansing, terrorist attacks, organized death squads. It can reach the level of genocide.

Much has been written about the causes of group violence and genocides, mainly from a historical, political or juridical perspective, but also from a psychological, sociological and anthropological viewpoint. The upshot has been a wide range of suggested ways of dealing with this problem of mass violence, varying from international treaties and trials, psychiatric classification of the perpetrators, strategies for reconciliation, etc. Hannah Arendt used the word '*evil*' to refer to this kind of violence and, correctly in my view, gave the word a strongly moral meaning. But for precisely this reason, and despite Arendt's prediction, the term has never really gained currency within the empirically oriented social sciences. However, following her example – and that of the more recent social psychologists Staub (1989) and Waller (2007) – I see no reason to avoid this charged word. On the contrary, as a child psychologist, I want to raise the question in this chapter: to what extent can upbringing and education contribute to combating phenomena that, by universally accepted standards, can only be considered repulsive. This is thus by definition a moral position. Besides, such

normativity is inherent in any question of child-rearing, which is necessarily concerned with goals that are – or are not – desirable.[xxix]

The historical continuity and the massive scale of group violence and genocide have led many thinkers to conclude that man is evil by nature. Evil is linked to the hereditary sin, or – in a modern variant – with the genetic hard-wiring of the human species (cf. Dawkins, 1999). Present-day evolutionary psychologists would say that humans have developed the capacity for extreme violence as a result of natural selection and adaptation. However, the fact that man has this innate capacity for violence does not mean that it necessarily has to be practised: 'We do evil because we can', but this propensity has to be activated by cultural, psychological and social constructions (Waller, 2007, pp. 155-161).

One of those who offer a much more nuanced picture of the presumed natural wickedness of man is the ethologist Frans de Waal (2007). On the basis of his research on the social behaviour of primates, he reaches the conclusion that the usual 'veneer theory' of human behaviour will not do – the idea that it is only a thin cultural covering of morality that restrains the inherent evil of humans. But research demonstrates that the capacity for moral emotions and behaviour – empathy, sympathy, compassion for weakness mutual solidarity, reciprocity, conflict resolution, etc. – is also present in the higher apes. There are many indications that a comparable moral talent is also inborn in humans. De Waal suggests an evolutionary explanation for this: groups that have developed a mutual, good moral regulatory system, and as a result show a strong social bond, have a greater chance of survival in a world in which one constantly has to defend oneself against hostile forces.

But if morality is anchored in naturally evolved social emotions, such as empathy, how is it that humans nevertheless often treat each other so 'bestially', even when there is no question of external attack? De Waal seeks an explanation in the fact that morality is *par excellence* a phenomenon that is manifest in small groups. It is in fact hardly surprising that outsiders are almost always treated by members of a community worse than the members themselves, and that moral rules are not considered applicable to them. To put it more bluntly: hostility with regard to others is one of the most important sources of communal feeling. 'It is thus deeply ironic, writes De Waal, 'that our noblest achievement – morality – is, in an evolutionary perspective, closely linked to our most basic behaviour: conflict. The feeling of community that was necessary for the former was produced by the latter' (p. 75).

Morality with regard to one's own group, hostility regarding others: that is apparently what the evolution of the human species has bequeathed. An optimist will see in this enormous progress. The definition of what is considered as one's own moral group has in general grown wider over the course of civilization: from family to village community, from tribal bonds and common language to states or even international community (Elias, 2000; see also Pinker, 2002, p. 167). Many countries have developed into more or less democratic states in which citizens enjoy rights of freedom and are legally protected from the arbitrary will of governments. There are international treaties governing the conduct of war (the

Geneva Convention), on human rights, such as the International Convention on the Rights of the Child, which is ratified by all the countries of the world apart from Somalia and the United States. Such treaties can be seen as attempts to establish a universal and juridical frame that guarantees equality and human dignity.

Against this, however, one has to acknowledge that the universal application of these principles is disputed by some and that their observance still leaves much to be desired. This immediately presents us with a rather more pessimistic reflection. Anyone who takes a look at recent historical events can see that, as well as progress, there have also been genocides – such as the extermination of the indigenous Indian population of America, the mass murders of the Armenians, the Nazi Holocaust, the Pol Pot-regime, Rwanda, Darfur, etc. But hostility also lurks in our own multicultural environment –between groups who scarcely tolerate each other's existence, in politics where condemnation seems to play such a major role, between religious denominations disputing who possesses the truth, and habitually in the school playground where pupils abuse each other using every name under the sun on the basis of some trivial difference. Such differences seem to become greater and more numerous these days – or at least they appear to be increasingly magnified in politics, in the media, on the internet and on the street.

Before turning to the 'roots of evil' I want first to look briefly at the question of whether there is actually any role that *education* can play in the face of such huge world problems. Certainly, in recent decades the great majority of psychologists and experts on child-rearing, developmental psychologists and educationists have steered well clear of them, if only because this sort of question is hardly open to the dominant kind of experimental research design. The flagrant error in this stance is that the research designs take precedence over the actual problems to be studied. That, in my view, is to get things back to front, and in the process these academic disciplines threaten to lose an important part of their humane and social significance.

6.2 EDUCATIONAL SCIENCES AND IMPROVING THE WORLD

This question of whether, and if so how upbringing and education could play a role in 'improving the world' has often been raised throughout history. In any case, there have been educational scientists, child psychologists and philosophers of education who have demanded precisely such a role for their own discipline. For them, the central focus was on the person of the child and the role of parents and of other carers in a position to influence the child's development. But the pedagogical ambition has sometimes gone much further, frequently driven by strong criticism of the educational conceptions and practices of the time. Occasionally such criticism has alleged a direct causal connection between child-raising and the various abuses in the world. In his famous treatise *Zum Ewigen Frieden* [Towards Perpetual Peace] (1795), the German Enlightenment philosopher Immanuel Kant set out his view on how violence between nations must be banished. At the core of his argument was the emancipated, mature citizen. His idea was that if the latter were given more say – compared with the feudal tradition of his time – then there

would undoubtedly be fewer war fought. It is, after all, the citizens who bear the burdens of warfare, so if they themselves were in charge they would certainly think twice before they waged war. For the emancipation of responsible citizens, and thus for democracy and world peace to be possible, the upbringing and education of the young generation are crucially important. Wars are not natural disasters, says Kant, but a product of human actions and therefore humans must learn to use their own intelligence and morality.

The prevention of war is also an important theme in the work of the influential Swedish educationist Ellen Key (1909), who proclaimed the twentieth century the century of the child. She opened her attack on what she saw as the unscientific and inhumanly harsh child-raising practices of her time which she considered to be the main cause of social and political evils. Children are, she said, drilled into obedience with almost military methods, taught to deny their own knowledge and to follow slavishly the 'codes of honour' of patriotism and sense of duty. In this way they become ideal fodder for a system that produces its own political scandals and wars. In contrast, she proposed an approach which, in the tradition of Locke and Rousseau, placed the natural needs of the child at its centre, whereby the child was protected from the dangers of the rationalized and industrialized outside world. We can place the work of Maria Montessori in this same tradition. In 1937 she gave a series of five lectures in Copenhagen on the theme 'Educating for peace' (Montessori, 1937). 'The Community', she asserted, 'must take into account the importance of the child as the builder of humanity, and value basic human principles, because the good or evil in the adult person stems from these principles. This has to be the work of childhood education, which only in this way will be able to contribute to the building of a new world, to the realization of peace'.[xxx]

John Dewey is also seen as an educator for peace, or '*peace pedagogue*': much of his work dealt with the question of how childhood education could contribute to the securing of democracy in a time of industrialization and scientific revolutions (Dewey, 1916). Democracy demands that people be able to live together as active, responsible and critical citizens, for this kind of citizenship is an important weapon against social disadvantage, indoctrination and slavish chauvinism. In the wake of the First World War, he argued for an explicit curriculum for peace: 'If we can manage to instil in children respect and friendship for other people, we shall make it a bit less likely that they will be inflamed with hate and mistrust' (Howlett, 2008, pp. 25-33). In this context, Dewey was also one of the initiators of the 'Outlawry of War' campaigns conducted in the United States around 1920.

Paulo Freire, the Brazilian educator, was also extremely explicit in his ambitions to improve the world. In his celebrated book *Pedagogy of the oppressed* he says that upbringing and education are by definition political, in the sense that they will always be linked to particular social interests (Freire, 1971). Education and upbringing can therefore be used for radically different ends: as an instrument of oppression, but also of liberation. Education, according to Freire, both within and outside the formal educational framework, must be aimed at developing critical awareness and the emancipation – and in the end the resistance – of the poor and those without rights. The instruments that he developed for this were literacy, and

above all dialogue and the shared development (as opposed to imprinting) of knowledge in a democratic context.

One could cite many more examples of educational/pedagogical thinkers who entertained explicit ambitions for 'world improvement' (cf. De Winter, 2003), but those mentioned above form what I earlier called the most important sources of inspiration for a '*peace pedagogy*'. This is a polymorphous movement of socially and politically engaged educators and educational specialists developed since the Second World War. Various themes were grouped under the heading of 'peace', depending in part on the spirit of the time and political fashions – ranging from nuclear disarmament, via international understanding, ecological sustainability, human rights, diversity, gender equality, the renunciation of violence to conflict resolution. Up to the nineties most educative peace programmes were perhaps the products of ideological enthusiasm, but as Vriens points out, in an educational sense they were generally very one-sided (Vriens, 1999, pp. 27-58): the younger generation were mainly seen as an instrument to be used in achieving the kind of peace the authors envisaged. The fact that children had their own world of experience and that they had the right to make their own choices seemed to escape the earlier authors' notice. I shall return later in this chapter to the subject of peace education, to see what contribution might be possible from such an educational genre in relation to present-day social-political issues.

6.3 THE ROOTS OF EVIL

6.3.1 Socio-political backgrounds

Just why and under what circumstances people turn to 'bestial' behaviour vis-à-vis others whom they do not count as belonging to their own moral community is a question which, as already said, has engaged serious thinkers for a long time. Even when viewed strictly from an educational perspective, it is almost impossible not to see these questions against the backdrop of the larger context. For behaviour always arises in response to a long chain of developments and events, and if you neglect these by concentrating solely on the 'end product', that behaviour remains largely unintelligible. The anthropologist Veena Das describes, for example, how the assassination in 1984 of the Indian Prime Minister, Indira Gandhi, by two of her bodyguards set in train a series of events which eventually resulted in an extreme outburst of violence between Hindus and Sikhs. Although a complete narrative explanation is by definition impossible (since each account is based on a foregoing account), in this specific case the struggle for autonomy by the Sikhs can serve as a basic starting point. The escalation that followed the suppression of this struggle by the Indian government, and the consequent radicalization of groups of Sikhs, eventually led to an attack on the Golden Temple in Amritsar by the Indian army, during which the leader of the Sikh militants was killed. Subsequently Sikh bodyguards murdered Indira Gandhi, setting in motion a whole machinery of rumouring, stereotyping and reciprocal hatred that eventually led to massive bloodshed and violence. Under certain conditions, writes Das, a relatively stable

community can suddenly change into a 'structure of paranoia'. The 'social production of hatred' leads to narratives and practices which can eventually degenerate into genocide: 'my fear of the others' is transformed into the idea that 'others are out to get me' (Das, 1998). This rather randomly chosen example will stand for any number of ethnic, religious or political-economic conflicts in the world that have demonstrated their capacity for breaking out into large-scale violence. Anyone who follows the events in Rwanda leading eventually to the mass slaughter of Tutsis in 1994 will see clear parallels with the Indian example (see, for example, Brandstetter, 2010; Waller, 2007, pp. 221-229).

In *The Roots of Hate* the American sociologist William Brustein investigates the sources of European anti-Semitism in the period preceding the Holocaust, from 1870 to 1939. His comparative research shows how hatred can have multiple roots – in this case in religion, in the growth of racial theories, in the economics and politics of the period. Recessions, large-scale immigration of Jews from the East, and the role they played in the rise of revolutionary movements, were also found to be factors capable of lighting the fuse in such charged situations. An interesting aspect of this systematic research is that the differences between countries become very obvious: thus, Italy hardly experienced any anti-Semitism before 1936 because there had been no immigration worth speaking of. France, on the other hand, was a land in which a strong streak of hatred of Jews was endemic, partially explicable by its strong nationalism and by the significant role played by Jews in the socialist movement (Brustein, 2003).

6.3.2 Worldviews

A focus on these major socio-historical sources of hate, of course, reveals very little about people's actual emotions and behaviour. One of the elements to consider if one is to understand why ordinary people perpetrate mass murder and genocide is the cultural worldview constructed by their social group. In this context, according to the social psychologist James, one needs to look at three cultural aspects: collectivist values, orientation toward authority and social dominance. In collectivist cultures a person's individuality is primarily defined in terms of the group interest. On the one hand this leads to strong social cohesion, but on the other hand it can generate strong hostility toward outsiders. Genocidal regimes live off such a division. The lives of individuals are subordinated to the larger interests of the collective – the in-group. Dying for the survival of the race, the fatherland or some other good often then becomes a question of obligation or of honour. Within societies organized on this collectivist basis the orientation toward authority is almost always hierarchical and vertical. Obedience, for example to parents but also to leaders and to the state, becomes a central cultural value. For instance, the unconditional obedience of the Rwandan population to authority is seen as having been an essential element for the speed and extent of the genocide there. The same goes for the Pol Pot-regime in Cambodia (Waller, 2007, p. 181). This blind obedience is often coupled with a very limited level of education, which makes it very easy for leaders to pull the wool over the eyes of the population. The

third cultural aspect to consider is social dominance. The need to dominate others differs not only from one individual to another but also within and between cultures. A strong orientation toward social dominance is linked with feelings of superiority vis-á-vis other groups, with racial prejudices, political conservatism and low tolerance (see for example Sidanius & Pratto, 2001).

Danesh's distinction between three main types of worldview is highly relevant to this question of orientation toward violence and its converse of peaceful coexistence. Taking them in order, these worldviews are based on conflict and survival, on identity and development, and on unity and equality (Danesh, 2006). The worldview centred on conflict and survival is characterized by the stress placed on collective identity, on authority and obedience. The worldview of identity and development is based on the notion of an autonomous individual who goes his own way and comes into competition with others. The worldview of unity and equality is based on such universal ethical principles as security, distributive justice, empowerment, etc. In the literature on the causes of group violence and genocide, these are always associated with collectivist cultural elements such as an emphasis on obedience and authority. Although there is also much empirical evidence for this, it is interesting that Danesh sees both the first and second worldview as creating a frame of thinking in which power and violence play major roles and are thus both capable of providing fertile soil for such violence.

6.3.3 Hate

In a culture of hatred and violence people naturally play different roles: there are perpetrators, victims, and onlookers. Much has been written about perpetrators, considerably less about onlookers. Nobel prize-winner Elie Wiesel insists that without the total indifference of onlookers the murderers of the Third Reich could never have made so many victims. The opposite of love, according to him, is not hate but indifference – just as the opposite of knowledge is not ignorance but indifference (see for example Wiesel, 2007). There are many reasons for assuming that the indifference and distancing of the onlookers has similarly played a crucial role in other murderous conflicts. Prevention, as will later become apparent, goes further than combating the hatred of the perpetrators.

The psychologist Robert Sternberg says that hate, i.e. intense hostility towards others, can have three components: the denial of intimacy to the target of that hate, passion and engagement (Sternberg, 2005). The denial of intimacy means that one creates a psychological distance, denying any possibility of a bond with the other and depicts that other as repugnant or subhuman. Passion refers to the intensity of the emotions of hatred such as fear and anger, while engagement is a matter of the thought process that leads to contempt. The latter is often triggered by socialization. The actual form of expression of hate depends on the degree to which the three components play a role. For instance, if someone only denies the possibility of intimacy of intimacy with another person or another group, one can speak of 'cool hate': disgust. Once the component of passion enters into it there can suddenly be a very strong aversion: boiling hate. When all three components

are present, the desire arises to destroy the object of that hate: burning hate. When one looks at the way hate propaganda works, as for example perpetrated by the radio stations of the Hutu rebels in Rwanda, one immediately sees how all three aspects were expertly woven together. The psychological distance was created by the imputation of various characterizations: Tutsis were intruders, snakes, cockroaches who drank 'untrue blood' (Waller, 2007, p. 187). The passion was incited by means of a permanent stream of texts and music, and the cognitive framework was created with stories from which it was evident that the Tutsis and their accomplices were on the point of slaughtering the Hutu people. Hatred, according to Sternberg, is largely acquired through the persistent reiteration of stories that people in a community tell each other. These 'hate-stories' have a more or less constant structure which consists of five steps:

- The hated target group is cursed; for instance, because they have in the past killed God.
- The target group is planning to undertake some action against their own group.
- The target group is perceptibly present e.g. as a result of immigration.
- The target group is almost at the point where they are about to attack.
- The target group has actually had successes.

People tell each other such stories to bolster or to defend their own self-image by denigrating others[xxxi] and to give their own lives more meaning. Such stories are often deliberately disseminated by cynical agitators with the aim of convincing the population that 'the others' are responsible for their problems, so that hatred and violence are perfectly justified (Post, 1999).

6.3.4 Sources of hate

Hate, in the psychological literature, is usually explained as having three sources. In addition to the inherited behavioural basis (the hard-wiring–that I referred to earlier), individual problems of identity and an enduring hostility between in-group and out-group ('them and us') (Opotow, 2005). Raphael Ezekiel's splendid book *The Racist Mind*, the fruit of many years of participant observation, gives a fascinating insight into the development of identity of a group of seriously rabid haters, young American neo-Nazis and members of the Ku Klux Klan (Ezekiel, 1995). In a cognitive sense, these youths are rather conflicted: on the one hand they are enormous fans of Hitler – precisely because of the holocaust – while on the other hand this same holocaust is flatly denied. Many of these young racists turned out to come from poor, desolate, one-parent families and neighbourhoods in which violence and humiliation were normal. The schools they attended offered hardly any security, merely reflecting the suffering and lack of interest of the wider society. The youths are almost all white drop-outs, without school diplomas, without networks and therefore with very few chances of a reasonable existence. In fact, writes Ezekiel, these were youths who were extremely fearful and with a highly fragile self-image: 'At an unspoken but deep level, the members seemed to

feel extremely vulnerable, that their lives might be snuffed out at any time like a match flame in the wind' (Ezekiel, 2002, p. 58). What drives these youths toward violent racist groups, according to the author, is the opportunity to satisfy their basic needs: authority figures to give some organization to their lives and give it meaning, protection, camaraderie, identity, somewhere they belong. Within these groups the anxiety, frustration and rage over their hopeless lives are given a focus: the racist ideology offers a clear narrative view of a threatening enemy who has to be fought with fire and sword. According to Staub, it is the frustration of such fundamental needs as security, solidarity and autonomy that lays the foundation for hatred. This hate is directed not only against those whom they hold immediately responsible for their rejection or abuse, such as their parents, but can find expression in a generalized hatred of others (Staub, 1989, p. 56).

Hate is thus partly rooted in the opposition of 'them against us'. The dividing line can be drawn in any number of ways, but it is usually defined by religion, ethnicity, cultural customs, social status or political outlook. But equally it can follow totally artificial boundaries, as was demonstrated by well-known experiments in which adolescents, during a camp, were assigned randomly to one of two groups. Within a few days each group developed an identity and culture of their own, considered itself in every way superior to the other, and began to insult and fight with each other (see e.g. Sherif et al., 1961). Often such phenomena as ethnocentrism (where one's own group represents 'good') and xenophobia (the fear of foreigners) are seen as universal human characteristics. And although admittedly they do not necessarily lead to hate and violence, they promote both cohesion within the group and the tendency to exaggerate differences with others. Erik Erikson used the term 'pseudo-speciation' for this: people have the tendency to think that members of other groups are not only 'other', with inferior customs or codes, as the case may be, but even belong to a different biological species (Friedman, 2000, p. 442).

The question now is what role hatred plays in extreme group violence and in genocides. In Sternberg's classification, mentioned above, only the most intense forms of hatred are linked to actual violence. However, a great deal of research on perpetrators shows that hate is not an absolutely necessary precondition for violence. Moshman studied people who had been very actively involved in perpetrating the genocides in Rwanda, Nazi-Germany, Argentina, El Salvador and the United States (in the mass murder of Indians at Wounded Knee in 1890) (Moshman, 2005). His conclusion is that there can be many motivating factors, such as love of fatherland, military honour, ideology or simply a sense of duty. But there was no question of a 'genocidal hate' – i.e. a murderous hate directed at an abstract group – in the perpetrators he studied. In his view, hate is an attitude that someone develops in relation to a person he considers responsible for deeds that harm him or those close to him. Hate, according to Moshman, makes it possible to murder someone we consider as a person. But to make it possible to use violence against an entire group requires a further step: the denial of human characteristics to the victims. The pioneering work of the German social psychologist Harald Welzer points in the same direction. Welzer studied hundreds of dossiers of trials

of men charged with participating in the mass executions of hundreds of thousands of Jewish men, women and children in Nazi-occupied East Europe at the beginning of the Second World War (Welzer, 2006). His fairly shocking conclusion is that most of those involved were very ordinary people: 'friendly fathers of families and average citizens', of whom there was no real question of psychopathology. Nor did most of them feel they had done anything wrong. Their work had been 'worthwhile' and simply had to be done. The enemy was a threat to the German people that had to be dealt with – as decently and professionally as possible – once and for all. 'What is most depressing when one reads the interrogations and autobiographical backgrounds', says Welzer, 'is the complete lack of understanding of what they had done, the lack of any psychological split, so that the perpetrators could lead a daily life in which shooting dead some 900 men, women and children has the same degree of significance as thinking about where best to send your son to study' (p. 14). The explanation for this seems to be that one believes not that one has murdered people, but has rather contributed to the elimination of a virus.

6.3.5 Dehumanization and moral exclusion

Hate is thus not the only, and not always even a necessary precondition for committing genocidal or other forms of extreme group violence. What is hugely important for this is that 'the other' is construed as an entity without human characteristics, or in any case without characteristics that would make you think of them as belonging to your own 'species'. After all, most people are brought up with the idea that you should treat others as you would wish to be treated yourself. In order to feel no moral obligation at all and to be able to switch off one's conscience, the enemy has to be dehumanized. On the evening preceding the genocide in Rwanda, the radio stations began calling for the cockroaches (the Tutsis) to be exterminated. Franz Stangl, commandant of Treblinka, said in an interview that he considered the prisoners he received for extermination as 'cargo'. Adolfo Francisco Scilingo, lieutenant in the Argentine army during the Videla regime in Argentina, let it be publicly known that he actively participated in the practice of dumping living prisoners from aircraft over the Atlantic Ocean. The prisoners were not human individuals, they were 'subversive elements' who constituted a danger to the state and therefore his contribution was a form of patriotism (see e.g. Moshman, 2005).

Dehumanization is a form and a means of moral exclusion. In this context Opotow uses the term 'scope of justice': anyone who belongs to a community can lay claim to distributive justice (fair sharing), procedural justice (legal protection) and social provision (Opotow, 2005, p. 127). This scope of justice in general extends to all whom we feel in some sense related: family members, friends, fellow-countrymen, fellow-believers, etc. For most people this scope is limited, i.e. there are people who fall outside it. Peter Singer calls it the 'moral circle': the circle of people with whom we feel related in a moral sense (Singer, 1983). To give a personal example: during my work for Unicef in the refugee camps in Darfur I

discovered that my own 'scope of justice' was considerably more limited than I had imagined beforehand. As an international consultant, one was considered to be completely neutral and to have left any prejudices at home. It sounds simple enough, but when I began to hear first-hand the stories of fighters who, on a large scale, raped women and slaughtered the men in front of their own children, my scope of justice began to shrink. This process was only strengthened when a commander explained to me that harmful insects simply had to be eradicated. Of course the perpetrators have the right to a fair trial, if it should come to it. But certainly in this situation I found it difficult to remain convinced that the perpetrators were also human.[xxxii]

In times of conflict the scope of justice shrinks while the tendency toward more exclusion grows (Opotow, 1995). Moral exclusion, according to Opotow, is a psychological orientation in which one experiences a great distance and a complete absence of any connection with, or obligation or responsibility for those who are excluded. They are considered as worthless non-entities, and as a result any violation of their rights is entirely admissible. Where hatred is mainly the expression of emotional-cognitive drives, justification plays a very prominent facilitating role in moral exclusion. 'Together, the emotional-cognitive logic of hate combined with the justificatory framework of moral exclusion can be sufficiently powerful to jump levels of analysis – from individually experienced hate to contagious, collectively experienced hate that has the potential to be destructive in unprecedented ways' (Opotow, 2005, p. 130). In this context, Waller (2007) speaks of the social death of victims which often precedes their actual death. This is a process that involves various social-psychological mechanisms. The expansion of the distinction between Us and Them (in-group and out-group) legitimates violence against its victims as a justified act that benefits the group, culture or nation. The actual application of excessive violence demands a moral disengagement between perpetrator and victims and a dehumanization. With almost all forms of group violence and genocide the perpetrators try to prove that the victims are responsible for what has befallen them. The social psychologist Lerner calls this the 'just world phenomenon': people tend to believe that the world is ultimately a just world and that therefore people 'get what they deserve and deserve what they get' (Lerner, quoted by Waller, 2007, p. 213). By making the victims scapegoats both perpetrators and onlookers need feel less guilt and thereby less concern for the suffering they inflict.

6.3.6 'Killing with decency'

I referred earlier to the work of the German social psychologist Harald Welzer. His book *Täter. Wie aus ganz normalen Menschen Massenmörder werden* [Perpetrators. How entirely normal people become mass murderers] (Welzer, 2005) lays bare a possible complex of causes which until recently has largely been overlooked in the study of mass murders. Because the perpetrators showed no indications of a deviant psychological condition, moral deficiency or specific ideological conviction – still dealing with the mass executions of Jews in Eastern

Europe – Welzer looked at the commonplace reality of the killing. How is it possible that young men, who saw themselves as decent people, were able to maintain that image of themselves even after having committed the mass murder of men, women and children? The answer to this question is two-fold. In the first place, there had been a pervasive moral revolution in Nazi-Germany after 1933. 'From that time on', writes Welzer, 'a huge majority of normal people took the decision to participate actively in the process of exclusion which was carried through with amazing speed and which represented a radical departure from their usual system of values …. This becomes intelligible once we realize that only a single coordinate in a social structure needs to be shifted – social membership' (p. 220). Exclusion, stripping the enemy of all rights became the most normal thing in the world. This new culture of exclusion created, as it were, a new moral framework within which the battalions could straightforwardly carry out their work in East Europe. Killing was no longer immoral. In the second place, the members of the killing squads finished up in their roles as killers via a series of steps. No-one, apart from those who actually pulled the strings, could ever foresee the following step. This process of escalation began by surrounding residential quarters, then hauling people out of their houses, robbing them of their possession, herding tem together, until the orders came to execute them – first the 'criminal elements', later ordinary men, women and children. The logic of the process was in fact: if you say a. you must also say b. Or: the consequences of yesterday are the conditions for today (Goudsblom, quoted in Waller, 2007, p. 79). It took only a few months to create a new moral universe in which evil had become completely normalized. Everyone was in the same boat, no-one wanted to be seen not pulling their weight or reneging, and with each step the following step became easier. All their efforts created a feeling of belonging together: we stand together for a very difficult but justifiable purpose.

The picture that Welzer paints on the basis of his research is that of a professionalizing practice in which ethical questions are very quickly replaced by the question of efficiency: how to regulate the arrival of thousands of people and dispatch of dead bodies; how can the available munitions be used as efficiently as possible; how do you kill women and children in a decent manner, etc.? One of the things that were gradually discovered was that the social proximity of victims constituted a threat to the efficiency of the system. If perpetrators knew victims, or for whatever reason had some connection with them, or if in the process there was too much opportunity for the men to start asking themselves ethical questions, they could start to find the killing difficult, so that someone else had to take over the task. This was why the system had to be increasingly industrialized: there must be no opportunity for the victims to be seen as thinking, acting beings who also had feelings.

According to Welzer the greatest risk of inhumanity lies in the fostering and manipulation of the need for collective security. For it is from this need that the division of the world into good and bad arises, friend and enemy, member and non-member. The way to genocide is prepared when, under the influence of racial, ethnic, religious or other ideologies, groups with whom people have lived together

–sometimes for a long time – in a 'universe of general solidarity' (Fein, 1990) are excluded. In this context, morality changes and normal people change rather easily into mass murderers.

6.4. EDUCATIONAL REMEDIES

Many of the suggested explanations discussed above for how it is that ordinary people come to perpetrate extreme violence, for example during civil wars, ethnic cleansing and genocides, are summarized by James Waller in his book *Becoming Evil* in the form of an explanatory model (Waller, 2007, p. 138). The main assumption is that, during the process of evolution, humans have developed the potential for extremely violent behaviour. Whether they – individually or in groups – also actually manifest violent behaviour depends (in Waller's model) on a number of proximate variables, i.e. nearby and direct influences.[xxxiii] The three main areas of proximate influence in his model are, in the following order, the dominant Cultural Worldview in a society, the way in which others are constructed (in the psychological sense) and finally the concrete processes that lead to cruelty. The Cultural Worldview refers to collective values, attitude towards authority and social dominance orientation. The Psychological Construction of the Other is achieved by such processes as us-them thinking, moral exclusion and scapegoating. The Social Construction of Cruelty works by means of group processes of professionalization, group identification and group binding. There is no question of a 'veneer theory' in this model – of a thin layer of civilization separating man from evil: there are, after all, quite a few political, social, cultural and psychological conditions that are necessary for evil to be able to thrive. In fact, the model can also be read as supporting De Waal's argument that human evolution has not only produced the capacity for conflict and violence but also the capacity for morality itself. Many societies have apparently succeeded in developing systems of moral rules capable of offering a counterweight to the proximate influences described in Waller's model, such that vulnerable individuals and groups are protected against exclusion, dehumanization and violence.

The question now is whether upbringing and education are capable of providing a counterweight to processes that facilitate this evil. Or, putting it positively, are there social or *educational* interventions conceivable that could promote its antithesis? It should be clear that there is no panacea here. For although upbringing and education have a direct influence on our manners, our morality and socio-political attitudes, there are many other important spheres of influence in which socialization has only an indirect and slow effect. A number of studies have shown, for example, that difficult living conditions resulting from serious economic problems, political unrest, rapid social change – but also significant conflicts of interest between population groups – can all lead to intense collective violence (cf. Staub, 1999, 2000; Chalk & Jonassohn, 1990). Nevertheless, it seems worthwhile to consider what concepts and instruments the educational sciences might be able to offer to influence some of these proximate processes. Whether this could eventually lead to influencing the foundations themselves remains a matter of

speculation. Great thinkers like Spinoza (1677) and Kant (1795) were convinced that peace would one day become established in the mind of man and that the inclination towards good could be cultivated in humans.

6.4.1 Influencing worldviews

In *Cultivating Humanity* (1997) Martha Nussbaum demonstrates that human solidarity arises when three kinds of capacity are developed through education and upbringing. In the first place, there is the faculty of self-critical examination and critical thinking about culture and traditions; secondly the ability to see oneself as a human being who by definition exists in relation to others; and thirdly the capacity to put oneself in the place of others (empathy). For example, by studying, together with children, other cultures and societies and teaching them not only to identify with others, but moreover to see further into those tacit assumptions and practices that go without saying in their own culture. In this way, says Nussbaum, a kind of world citizenship can be fostered that will in the end be necessary if we are ever to put an end to chauvinism, moral exclusion and large-scale violence. This idea is an extension of what Hannah Arendt called an 'enlarged mentality': a way of thinking that enables us to 'put ourselves in the position of everybody else' and to compare our judgment with the way others judge. Thinking with an enlarged mentality means developing the power of imagination to 'go visiting' into the realm of thought of others (see e.g. http://www.iep.utm.edu/arendt/). Only in this way can the process be avoided whereby the 'truths' of a few degenerate into totalitarianism.

Nussbaum's case for the cultivation of humanity can be read as an educational operationalization of a cultural worldview oriented towards unity, equality and democratic outlook. This view on the one hand emphasizes the mutual dependence and interconnection of human lives, and on the other hand vaunts such values as autonomy, emancipation and the right to one's own identity. These, of course, are the exact opposite of those cultural characteristics that contribute to 'becoming evil' in Waller's model. In a democratic upbringing environment one would, for example, want children to learn to integrate their own interests and needs with those of others (Dewey, 1923). Neither blind obedience to authority nor the exclusive pursuit of selfish interests are part of that vocabulary. In such an upbringing environment, social dominance and feelings of superiority of one group over another would rightly be put in question (De Winter, 2007).

There is, however, another problem here. Nussbaum – along with many other liberal-democratic thinkers – argues the case for a worldview that is primarily guided by an ideal of rationality. One of the problems that arises in many western societies is that this Enlightenment ideal comes under attack from many quarters – for example, from religious fundamentalism or political extremism in which it is not independently thinking individuals, but rather absolute 'truths' that constitute the foundation for a very different worldview. This is not merely an abstract political discussion, but a field of tension that is all too concretely manifest in schools and other public institutions. Nussbaum is reproached for not taking

sufficiently into account in her proposed solution the opposition it evokes: someone who considers the truth of God, of Allah or even racial doctrines as absolute and untouchable is not readily going to accept that school children are taught precisely to doubt that truth (see e.g. Gunderson, 2005). This problem arises almost by definition when educational changes with ideological objectives are involved. Even apparently neutral goals of child upbringing such as 'democratic citizenship' can easily be challenged as anything but neutral, if only because the ideal of democratic citizenship recognizes no absolute truths. Democratic education is aimed at getting people who adhere to these different 'truths' or lifestyles to live together in a humane, equal society (De Winter, 2007). This assumes a certain degree of common ground, i.e. a certain consensus over the fundamental principles of society. In democratic states, these fundamental principles are established in the constitution; beside which, international treaties concerning human rights provide a more or less universally valid foundation for the freedoms and responsibilities of citizens. These human rights can function as what the English educationist Lynn Davies has called 'hypergoods': values and manners that override private interests and group interests and in so doing provide a binding framework for the upbringing of young citizens. It is therefore precisely in times of rising extremism, diminishing tolerance and growing hostility that an equal claim to fundamental rights, freedoms and responsibilities offers an important and solid basis (Davies, 2008).[xxxiv]

6.4.2 Influencing psychological constructions

Earlier in this chapter I argued that dehumanization and moral exclusion are important mechanisms which open the way to evil in the form of intense collective violence against assumed enemies. It is a well known fact that dictatorial leaders and populist demagogues often make shameless use of this, just as they speculate on fear and greed in the population. In such processes language plays a hugely important role. To give a contemporary Dutch example, when Geert Wilders, the leader of the *Partij voor de Vrijheid* (PVV), demanded a tax on the wearing of headscarves which he called a '*kop-vodden-taks*', this was in fact a classic example of dehumanization and exclusion. In one breath, he managed to communicate that muslim women don't have a human head (*hoofd*) but rather an animal head (*kop*), that they did not wear clothes but rags (*vodden*) like tramps, and that for them an exception could be made to the general rights of citizens by making them pay a tax on the wearing of headscarves. The question here is how upbringing and education can help to counteract such processes of dehumanization and moral exclusion.

A first, rational angle of attack might be to teach children to understand how such processes work. Sternberg – writing about the prevention of hate – says that there is no instant remedy available, although several studies show that prejudice can with some success be combated. However, it is important, he says, to teach people how hate works, how its components (the denial of intimacy to the object of hate, passion and engagement) can be explicitly used to incite people to group violence, even to genocide. Precisely because the passivity of onlookers plays such

an important part in the development of such violence, Sternberg considers it highly important to get this point through to people and show them that there are alternatives (2005, p. 46). At the same time, however, he suggests that it requires more than rational knowledge to prevent hatred towards outsiders. He suggests that wisdom is the best remedy. He is drawing here an important distinction between knowledge and wisdom , and defines wisdom as 'the use of intelligence, creativity and experience in the service of the general interest, by seeking a balance between one's own – or a group's own – interests and that of others, and between short term and longer term interests'. Admittedly, schools try to transmit to children both knowledge and insight, but the promotion of wisdom, according to Sternberg, is seldom part of their repertoire. On the contrary, even: seen in worldwide perspective, hatred of one group for another is taught in very many schools (Sternberg, 1998, 2001). In his usage, the meaning of the term 'wisdom' is in some ways similar to the concept of liberty as employed by the developmental psychologist Richard Lerner (cf. chapter 4). Upbringing and education, in Lerner's view, contribute significantly to the degree to which children and adolescents 'thrive', i.e. the degree to which they mature and blossom as individuals. A 'thriving young person' is defined as someone who on is very much occupied with his or her own development, but at the same time is actively involved in his surroundings and society. For the end-point of such a development Lerner uses the term 'liberty'. In this process a major role is reserved for the civil society, the society of citizens. In this civil society, in places where individuals and groups meet each other, qualities like competence, confidence, compassion and solidarity are cultivated. Lerner considers these qualities to be an effective counterweight to the growth of hate, prejudice and social injustice and as a condition for the development of humanity and world citizenship (Lerner, 2004).

Earlier in this chapter we looked at research which showed that youths who seek their welfare among violent and racist groups are in fact often seeking to fulfil their basic needs. Evidently they find insufficient in their daily lives to satisfy these needs. Both Ezekiel and Staub found that these were youths who were extremely anxious and had a very fragile self-image, which together created a particular need for security and recognition. They felt strongly drawn to authority figures because these were able to give their lives an organization and a meaning that was otherwise lacking. Their fierce dislike of others (non-whites, Jews, etc.) fits this pattern. While their ideological baggage is mostly wafer-thin, they are able to bolster their self-image by despising minority groups and by denying them any kind of humanity (Ezekiel, 1995; Staub, 2005). As a result of participant observation over a long period, Ezekiel came to the conclusion that it is in fact perfectly possible to prevent the hate, dehumanization and exclusion cultivated by such youths. While the neo-Nazi youth with whom he had contact knew that he had a Jewish background, they nevertheless considered him someone they could trust. That is not so extraordinary, says Ezekiel, for every child or adolescent has a need of an adult who will give him or her attention, who does not disappear, who demonstrates by his actions that he takes the youth seriously and accords him significance. At the same time, says Ezekiel, this is not an elegant formula for

prevention: creating a bond with such youths takes a great deal of time and effort and there is no automatic snowball effect. And yet, taken together with socio-economic measures this could well be the only remedy against violent gangs of youths, racism, teenage pregnancy and all the other ways in which vulnerable adolescents damage themselves and others. How simple it all sounds too: time and attention are crucial. 'We perhaps should tithe ourselves – a tithing of time for children in need of relationships' (Ezekiel, 2002, pp. 63-64).[xxxiii] Further, concludes this researcher, young people need contexts that offer comradeship, that are challenging for them and generate activities through which they can distinguish themselves. Like Lerner, Ezekiel places an important educational responsibility on civil society. He believes that churches, neighbourhood and voluntary organizations, political and ethnic organizations have a major role to play here. Schools too could have a far greater importance for these youngsters as a home base; if they thought they were treated there as having some significance, if they felt they had a voice there, in short if the school were to constitute more of a democratic community, they would not need to resort so soon to violent groups. Many of these youngsters are given education in multiculturalism at school. The study shows that that they regarded this kind of lesson as hypocritical preaching; they were convinced there was no place for their own views and feelings. What this means, in fact, is that their own experience is discounted, which in an educational sense is unwise: 'To ignore their emotions and constructs around race is to ignore the sense that they make of their own experiences' (Ezekiel, 2002, p. 66). Anti-racist education, according to Ezekiel, should be about identity: where are my own roots, what is special about my family background, what different backgrounds do I carry with me, why and how have I become who I am? Only if education allows room for this kind of essential questions to be explored and discussed can youngsters learn to see that others also have their own identity, that this identity can also include different aspects, that as well as large differences there are many similarities to be found.

There are many programmes and methods for tackling phenomena like 'them-and-us' thinking, whether in education or other contexts. In the main, it is a question of promoting contacts between different groups, with the aim of removing prejudices. To ensure that such contacts are fruitful, several preconditions have first to be met: common goals need to be formulated and joint activities undertaken, contact must take place in a context in which all participants have equal status, clear leadership is essential and there must be the possibility for personal interaction between members of the different groups (cf. Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006).

To what extent is this kind educational thinking relevant to people who participate in, or passively stand by large-scale acts of collective violence, genocide even? One cannot, of course, give a single answer to this question that is applicable to all contexts. But precisely because dehumanization and moral exclusion seem to constitute such a crucial link, education should always and everywhere include studying both the moral and the social psychology of the process. The moral consideration then becomes a question of what we find

acceptable, for example from the perspective of a religion or of universal human rights. The socio-psychological study should focus on the question of how exactly such processes work, how and why groups of people are made scapegoats, what possibilities there are to intervene, etc. Dehumanization and moral exclusion are in no sense abstract processes for children and adolescents. In their own world, for example their neighbourhood, class or on the internet, they see many examples of it. These examples provide a perfect starting point for gaining knowledge of the subject, for reflection and discussion and perhaps even to connect with some actual project. Both experimental research and research on the perpetration of serious collective violence shows that it is very difficult for the perpetrators to use that violence against people who share their own identity, with whom they to some extent identify, of whom they have to acknowledge that these are people of flesh and blood (see Miller, 1986; Welzer, 2006). In the context of the upbringing and education of children therefore, it is of the utmost importance that they should learn how you humanize, de-categorize and personalize others, not just through specially designed educational programmes but more especially from their parents and other educators in their immediate social environment (Waller, 2007, p. 291). That is, that you are able to discover communal qualities and interests in people who belong to another group, that you do not judge people in advance on the basis of group characteristics but learn to look on them as unique individuals. These are not innate skills or propensities and therefore necessitate a strong and deliberate effort to develop them. In chapter 5, on the basis of the review study by Berkowitz and Grych, I listed five strategies for raising children that demonstrably contribute to moral development: induction, considerateness and support, making clear demands and setting boundaries, modelling social-moral behaviour, and the creation of open democratic climate in which discussion is possible and conflicts resolved together (Berkowitz & Grych, 1998). But in addition to managing such 'implements' a clear educational ethic is needed. As an example, I referred (also in chapter 5) to the suggestion of Hoffman that it is precisely in a society characterized by cultural, ethnic and religious diversity that children must be made familiar with the parallels that exist between all these different people and groups (Hoffman, 2000, p. 23).

6.4.3 Influencing the social construction of cruelty

Certainly, the group processes operating among perpetrators and passive onlookers of collective violence may be some of the most powerful immediate factors influencing such behaviour; but from the point of view of prevention they are probably also the most stubborn. The reason for this is that we are dealing with group behaviour which, in the genocidal contexts of Rwanda, Cambodia or Nazi Germany, for example, had morally become completely normalized. The question is therefore whether anything can possibly be done through upbringing and education to prevent group behaviours that develop in a moral context which is radically different from that of conventionally accepted morality. Yet, however

difficult it may be, it does seem important that children should be taught to understand the relation between morality and behaviour.

A significant conclusion drawn by Welzer from his study of perpetrators was that most of them had absolutely no feeling of having done anything wrong: it was after all what the fatherland demanded of them. Against the background of this moral framework a chain of group behaviours gets under way: 'the consequences of what one did yesterday become the conditions for today'. In other words: once the process of dehumanizing the victims and their pursuit had been set in motion, it would seem that it was almost impossibly to halt it. It had its own momentum. Waller (2007) specifies three mechanisms that operate in such a context where barbarous cruelty has become normalized: killing as a profession, identification with the group, and finally group pressure. These mechanisms also form an important part of the exculpatory strategy by which perpetrators try to justify their behaviour afterwards: 'it simply had to happen, we did it as a battalion in a much less cruel way than other groups, or if I hadn't done it my mate would have had to clean up for me, I had to, there was no escape, etc. Apart from these justifications, the 'work' offered unprecedented possibilities: of personal enrichment (i.e. robbery), sexual excesses (rape), unlimited power over victims.[xxxvi] All these incentives to inhuman behaviour are especially active in a context where the moral universe has – gradually of suddenly – changed: where killing the dehumanized enemy not only becomes permissible, it is celebrated in the name of the love of the fatherland, religion or race. From this it is clear how important the moral and political context of actual behaviour is. The essential need is to change the destructive moral universe. Without that, educating children to resist such behaviour, or to resist the incentives that lead up to it, is probably a hopeless task. In any case, Welzer concludes that 'two to three hundred years of didactic upbringing of (western) man have had little influence on the psychic property of autonomy which must replace the undisputed group mentality'. 'This quality [autonomy]', he says, 'does indeed appear the only thing that stands in the way of the temptation to participate without any personal responsibility in the process of mass murder' (Welzer, 2006, p. 238). One may well wonder whether the German upbringing at the beginning of the last century did aim at autonomy. When one reads the work, cited earlier, of Ellen Key on the Prussian educational and child-raising practices of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, one has to doubt that this was so. In any case, there is a clear need to strengthen education for autonomy and critical citizenship today, both in many western countries and in other parts of the world.[xxxvii] However, the question remains whether the capacity for critical and independent thinking could also actually lead to critical and autonomous action in contexts where strong conformity with the group and the ruling ideology was demanded. Waller primarily looks for possibilities for preventive education in training courses for the military, for paramilitaries and police officers. In such courses, the group processes mentioned above would need to be analyzed and the way group initiations occur would need to be critically examined, as well as the way organizations themselves can contribute to the prevention of brutality against the civil population (Waller, 2007, p. 293).

One way of making clear to school students the complicated interplay between behaviour, group dynamics and the moral context, and to give them an actual experience of this, could be to conduct social psychology experiments with them, in the form of a game, under expert supervision and with the stress firmly on critical reflection. This could be accompanied by observations in real social life, carrying out research with the help of literature, and so on. One could think, for example, of variants on the obedience experiments of Stanley Milgram (at a suitable level for children, of course – certainly not using electric shocks), or of group conflict experiments such as the Robber's Cave experiment.[xxxviii] In this connection it is also worth mentioning the methods that are applied in primary education in the context of our project 'Democratic citizenship'. Children learn there, for example, to resolve conflicts via mediation, or, if there has been harm or suffering caused, to work on restitution for victims by means of arbitration (De Winter, 2000; De Winter et al., 2006: see also chapters 4 and 5 of this book).

6.5 HUMAN RIGHTS AND CRITICAL IDEALISM

Hate, dehumanization and moral exclusion are often the warning signs of impending serious collective violence against individuals and/or population groups. I have discussed before a number of possibilities for offering a counterweight to this kind of destructive process through upbringing and education. The wider aim of this, of course, has to be that people should be able to live with each other in a peaceful manner. Peace education would seem to be a logical answer. We find the following definition of this concept in a recent Unicef document: 'Peace education is the process of promoting the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values needed to bring about behaviour changes that will enable children, youth and adults to prevent conflict and violence, both overt and structural; to resolve conflict peacefully; and to create the conditions conducive to peace, whether at an intrapersonal, interpersonal, intergroup, national or international level' (Fountain, 1999).

One of the main problems, suggests Vriens in a review, is that both in the research and the practice of peace education it is found extremely difficult to bridge the perspectives of adults and youth. Time and again educators and researchers are found to project the specific problems they have experienced in their own time on to children and on to peace education (problems such as the threat of nuclear war in the sixties and the eighties of the last century, or the threat of climate change). According to Vriens, research shows that this kind of strategy is not only ineffectual, but simply does not do adequate justice to the fact that children and adolescents often attribute meaning to the world around them in an entirely different way (Vriens, 1999, p. 48). The specific content of peace education therefore cannot be determined by systematic research, says Vriens, research can only indicate possibilities. If a child has been seriously damaged by the violence of war, it is totally pointless to offer a conceptual analysis of the relevant conflict as a contribution to healing that damage. It would be equally senseless to explain to the child in such a situation that children themselves have an

active responsibility for bringing about peace (ibid., p. 49). To be able to assess properly the educational options, it is therefore essential to take into account the concrete problems and dilemmas of children and adolescents, and to remain open to the perspectives that form their view of reality.

This, of course, holds not only for peace education, but also for various other important educational objectives. Global citizenship education is faced with the same difficulty. In several countries, including the Netherlands, programmes have been developed to familiarize pupils with the fact that citizenship is not limited by one's own national boundaries; that life in one's own environment is increasingly interconnected with that of people in the rest of the world. The idea of global citizenship education is that pupils should acquire knowledge of this kind of interdependence, that they should learn to reflect on the value orientations that can play a role in this and that they gain the necessary skills. In this context, in the Netherlands a recent 'Canon for Global Citizenship' (Windows on the World) listed the following: critical thinking and argument; the ability to expose and denounce injustice and inequality; respect for others who think differently and conflict resolution (Committee Canon for Global Citizenship, 2009). The question here is also where is there room for children's and adolescents' own perspective, their own experience and worldview. What meaning do the problems touched upon have in their own lives? What possibilities are there for action? Do they have the same problems and dilemmas that the designers have thought up for them?

An interesting light is thrown on this question by parenting experts and educationists concerned with political citizenship. Sigal Ben-Porath, who does research on the development of citizenship in the context of threats and conflict, states the problem succinctly: 'the reduction of peace to a utopian era of fluttering butterflies and economic profits, or alternatively to the direct continuation of placid personal relations, fails to become a suggestive alternative to a reality of violence and hatred' (Ben-Porath, 2006, p. 73). Various forms of peace education, in her view, attempt either to translate for children the harsh reality into visions of an idealized future when there will be no more need for conflict, or to reduce conflict in the world to the level of interpersonal relations and personal conflict resolution. But hard reality, writes Ben-Porath, is by definition political and by nature conflictive. If you artificially leave that essential character out of consideration, you falsify the problem and make of peace education an irrelevant and dishonest project. Conflict and threats affect children and adolescents very directly and therefore, by definition, peace education has an important emotional component: 'One cannot grow to overcome a specific conflict without learning to address the emotions that sustain it' (Ben-Porath, 2006, p. 74).

Lynn Davies chooses a comparable perspective when it comes to the prevention of extremism by means of education. Children grow up in a world full of social and political conflict. These conflicts influence education, just as education in turn influences these conflicts. Whether the question is one of actual wars or of tensions such as arise in a multicultural society, pupils do not leave their experience behind when they pass through the school gates. In Davies' view, peace education should be about very real, tangible problems. The school should therefore be a place

where pupils feel safe to reflect on their own position in a conflict situation and especially to compare that position with others. Conflicts, including conflicts between adolescents, are both normal and – in a democracy – essential, says Davies (2004), and must therefore be dealt with in a positive manner. It is most important that children should learn that a democracy takes it right to existence from the legitimacy of a variety of different perspectives. But precisely there lies the problem. In modern western societies, more and more groups claim that they have in their possession the absolute truth – whether that truth is of a religious nature, a political ideology or racist convictions. The characteristic of absolutism is that one denies the other the right to his own 'truth'.

The internet multiplies the problem: it provides youngsters seeking an identity with a direct access to unfiltered extremism. There is no counter-balance; brainwashing is there just waiting for its victims. Paradoxically, multiculturalism in the school, where its determining principle is usually the tolerance of difference, can end up by leading to a sharpening of opposition and segregation. In practice, toleration often means a tacit exclusion of critical conversation; an appeal to a pupil's 'own culture or religion' is enough to put a stop to all further questions. Differences between people are thus enshrined as absolutes and cast in concrete. Respect in this context all too often means: you have your convictions and I have mine. Even the concept of tolerance is problematic, according to Davies: in fact, it means allowing another to express an opinion that you yourself reject, where no consequences attach to that rejection. Tolerance can all too easily slip over into moral indifference (Davies, 2008, p. 95).

The alternative argued by Davies is called education for interruptive democracy. The term 'interruptive' stands here for a culture in which it becomes the norm to question each other critically. Of course, education then becomes politicized, but that does not mean that a political opinion is advanced, either implicitly or explicitly. On the contrary, politicization means doing justice to the fact that people hold different convictions and that these convictions can come into conflict with each other. This produces actual tensions and conflicts and therefore ways have to be found to resolve these conflicts. A term like 'respect' is therefore necessary, but insufficient. Respect for someone else, after all, cannot be unconditional or uncritical, for there are behaviours and attitudes that, in the service of whatever conviction, are by universal standards simply unacceptable. School is the place where children learn to gain insight themselves into actual problems, conflicts and oppositions that they have to deal with every day. Regrettably, it is common practice in schools these days to forbid the expression of extreme views, precisely in order to avoid conflict (cf. Van San, Sieckelinck & De Winter, 2010). In an interruptive school culture there should be room for such opinions, because they can then be confronted and argued against. In that light, Davies argues for the promotion of 'critical idealism', not only through formal education at school but also via informal education in the civil society. This would need to encompass five elements:

- critical erudition (including knowledge about conflicts, politics, comparative religion and media);
- critical (dis)respect (sound understanding of universal rights and responsibilities);
- critical thinking (alternative points of view can be weighed and considered);
- critical doubt (standpoints are always provisional);
- critical 'lightness' (the ability to accept that ideals and their advocates can always be ridiculed).

To promote critical idealism, of course, there has to be adequate support, which can only be provided where there is a minimal, but resolute form of consensus over the essential values and where rules of play are established in the school. International human rights treaties, such as the International Convention for the Rights of the Child, provide a good starting point. The task of education in an open democratic society is to teach children to look beyond their own fences and look for communal interests. Human rights represent a universally shared value and consequently constitute a common good. According to international treaties every individual has the same rights, duties and responsibilities. Children learn thus to think critically and to put critical questions from a completely equal position critical (cf. Oomen, 2009) – whether over politics, cultural practices and religious beliefs, about media, or about conflicts and injustices. The aim is that school pupils should learn from an early age to see that while there are great differences between people, those differences are always subordinate to a shared basis of 'rights, respect and responsibilities' (Davies, 2009). In England meanwhile, together with Unicef this principle has been applied in the so-called 'Rights Respecting Schools'. The basis is formed by reciprocity, the linkage between rights and obligations: if I have a right to something, then I also have a responsibility to extend that right to you, and you have the same rights and obligations with regard to me. If behavioural problems like bullying arise, this is discussed with the children in terms of the violation of rights and the way in which the culpable child can take responsibility for reparation. The early results are promising.[xxxix]

6.6 RAISING CHILDREN AGAINST EVIL REQUIRES INSTRUMENTS AS WELL AS MORALITY

The question I have raised in this chapter is: to what extent can parenting and education contribute to fighting 'evil', i.e. intense collective violence against individuals and groups who have been morally excluded and deprived of their human characteristics and rights. As we have seen, there is no shortage ideals for improving the world, but at the same time it is conspicuous that this theme has for some years disappeared from the mainstream discourse and research on child-raising, and from educational practice. Nevertheless, we believe there are very many windows of opportunities for child-raising and education – for influencing worldviews, for example, or showing the way in which 'others' are constructed

psychologically, and for teaching such concepts as group dynamics, which can bring ordinary people to commit atrocities.

At the same time, however, we have seen that educative programmes for noble causes like peace and global citizenship succumb to the projections of adults' ideals. Youth is then primarily seen as an instrument to be used in the struggle with major social problems. In the process, children's and adolescents' perspectives on all these problems tend to be overlooked.

A second point of criticism is that programmes rather too often leave out youngsters' daily experience, conflicts and emotions. You can speak with them in idealistic terms about what is evil about war or the violation of human rights, but if there is no room – to give an example – to discuss their own feelings of hate or fear of others, education loses its credibility. Such flight into abstraction is certainly understandable, for no-one wants to have to deal with rising tensions and rows over fundamental questions of religion, politics or inter-ethnic relations. Yet from a pedagogical point of view it is very short-sighted to disguise – or even declare taboo – actually existing oppositions for the sake of peace at school, in the community house or the sports hall. Ideals, writes Sieckelinck, are most important, not only for the development of adolescents' identity but also for the renewal of society. In fact, they represent the best that youth has to offer us. And yet it seems as though discussing ideals, particularly of the extreme kind, is discouraged or even forbidden in child-raising experts' circles. The consequence of this could well be that adolescents either fall into a kind of nihilism, cynicism or stupefaction, or else they embrace radicalism (Sieckelinck, 2009). It is much more sensible, just as Davies argues, to provide room for youth's own narratives, perspectives, emotions and ideals. Naturally, this will sometimes lead to conflict. But the important difference from the emotions and hostilities that are released on the streets – or worse, fester away under the surface – is that they can be used in an educational context as a basis for constructive (i.e. controlled) expression of 'positive' conflict. On the one hand it is a question of making explicit actual problems or points of view and on the other hand conveying the methods by which conflicts can be resolved, such as joint studies of the causes and the ways of tackling problems, mediation, restorative justice, etc. In this way, the two major criticisms of education for world improvement – the accusations of projection and idealization – can be overcome. If room is allowed for concrete experiences, hostilities and possibilities for action in an open, but safe educational environment, that is fundamentally different from using children as an instrument. They are treated as critical, democratic citizens in development; they learn that they themselves have a contribution to make to the resolution of questions that are alive and important to them.

Achieving full democratic citizenship requires both knowledge and skills. You need the capacities and insights not to lump together everyone who has a different religion or customs. But you must also be willing to apply such capacities and insight, and this requires a strong moral framework.

In a democracy, as I have written before, upbringing and education are the most important instruments to avert the dangers that threaten that democracy (De

Winter, 2007). Dehumanization, ethnic or religious hatred, moral exclusion are these days serious threats not only to the democratic way of life, but also to democracy itself. Universal human rights, however fragile they may be, constitute an over-arching normative framework in which people – and therefore also children and adolescents – have the right to differ from each other. That normative framework, however, beside the necessary social and psychological tools, is the most important weapon against indifference and moral exclusion.

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NOTES

[i] See for example the interview with Prof. Ron Prinz, *Jeugd en Co,* 27-10-2008. He says: "if we want to improve the development of children and prevent child abuse, we must ensure that every parent gets (evidence-based) information on child-upbringing and support". The problem however is that the effects of training courses in child-raising are determined by people who willingly participate, while the greatest risk lies precisely with those who are not so motivated.

[ii] In England there was the case of the eight year-old Victoria Climbie, who died in 2000 as a result of violent abuse over a long period (Laming report, 2003). In the Netherlands, it was the case of Savanna, a three year-old Dutch girl who died in 2003 following neglect and abuse. In this case the child welfare services were accused of serious negligence, for clear signals were ignored and no action was taken.

[iii] I use the term here as a collective name for physical, psychological and sexual violence against minors, including serious neglect.

[iv] On the basis of data obtained from 1,100 professional informants, the *Nationale Prevalentiestudie Kindermishandeling* (NPM-2005) [Nation-wide Study of the Prevalence of Child Abuse] by the University of Leiden arrived at an estimate of 107,200 children (0-17 years old). The majority of cases involved physical and emotional neglect; the number of cases of sexual abuse was estimated at 4,700 per year and the number of cases of physical abuse at 19,000. The second study concerned a self-reporting investigation conducted by the Free University of Amsterdam among some 1,800 school students from the first four years of secondary education. Almost 20% of these children said they had experienced some form of maltreatment within the past year. About one third of the children said they had been maltreated at some time. See Van IJzendoorn et al. (2005).

[v] According to Hutschemaekers et al. (2006), the process of professionalization can actually amplify such problems, because lay individuals then tend to believe that problems can only be solved by professionals and that they can better maintain a distance from them.

[vi] Koops (2007) for example states that the idea that academically trained child-care professionals are capable of preventing various forms of child abuse by preventative support for child-upbringing is wishful thinking, and is nowhere supported by reputable empirical evidence.

[vii] In order to get this irrationality on to the agenda I have recently taken to calling it the "evidence-beast" (see De Winter, 2006).

[viii] 'Lover-boys' – a term used in the Netherlands for a breed of young pimps – youths who, with smooth talk, expensive gifts and the promise of an exciting future, lure young girls into a life of drugs, sex and ultimately prostitution.

[ix] Some risks are freely taken purely for personal pleasure (bungee jumping, smoking, drinking yourself silly or sailing round the world on your thirteenth birthday), but even then we at least want the government to protect us against the risk involved in taking such risks, for example by guaranteeing the quality of the bungee jump installation (cf. Boutellier, 2002).

[x] See *What to expect when you are expecting*, a bestseller which according to Rosenfeld and Wise (2001) is read by 93% of all pregnant women in the US.

[xi] See http://www.hyper-parenting.com/.

[xii] For England, see the Laming Report (2003). In the Netherlands the case was that of the infant Savanna.

[xiii] These risk factors are: (1) low income and unemployed parents (2) homelessness (3) poor parenting (4) low education (5) postnatal depression suffered by the mother (6) low birth weight (7) addiction (8) personal characteristics like low intelligence (9) neighbourhood factors, such as living in a poor neighbourhood (publications.everychildmatters. gov.uk/…/CM5860.pdf). It is especially noteworthy that a number of these risk factors are obvious candidates for primary prevention. Combating poverty,

housing, neighbourhood improvement etc. can be seen in this light but are nowhere implemented as part of any preventive strategy.

[xiv] Parton's findings are based on the research of (among others) Ormrod (2005), Rutter (2006) and Belsky et al. (2007).

[xv] The recommendations of researchers are interesting in this light: in training courses, more attention should be given to the question of how questions of a privacy-sensitive nature should best be put when dealing with immigrant families; peer supervision and aggression training to learn how to deal better with parents who avoid authorities and/or react aggressively.

[xvi] Rosenfeld and Wise (2001) compiled a long list of various sorts of advice for 'hyper-parents', and developed a training course for how to implement this advice in the life of the family (www.hyperparenting.com). This advice includes: scale back organized activities with your children 5 to 7%; develop a healthy distrust of advice on parenting; allow yourself time to draw breath; give priority to your family relationships; be a critical consumer of false promises; set a good example; make space for unproductive time; the period of childhood is a preparation, not a performance; both parents and children have a right to pleasure (you don't always have to be improving yourself); trust yourself because there are many ways of being a good parent. The question is to what extent such advice may actually enhance the phenomenon it is intended to reduce.

[xvii] Putnam finds strong differences in the amount of social capital per state. States where many descendants of Scandinavian migrants live, for example, score considerably higher than states where there are many descendants of slaves. That is not surprising, according to Putnam, since the social system of slavery was aimed precisely at destroying the social capital of slaves (2001, p. 79).

[xviii] In this connection Westheimer and Kahne (2004) speak of the personally responsible citizen, participatory citizen and the justice oriented citizen. To clarify the differences they use the example of the foodbank. Raising to personal citizenship could mean that children collect money for such a foodbank. In raising children to participatory citizenship children themselves could help to organize foodbanks, whereas an education to become justice oriented citizens would focus on the question of why, in a prosperous country, foodbanks should actually be needed.

[xix] Thus children who at school speak the language that they have learned in their own environment ('Black English') are often denigrated, whereas the school should also be able to teach them to switch codes: to speak standard English when necessary, and their own dialect in other contexts.

[xx] Noguera does not mention it, but this distortion most probably also works the other way round.

[xxi] They are often designated 'no-zones': no banks, no shops, no public services, no hospitals, et cetera.

[xxii] This could equally hold for more highly educated parents with their proverbially busy agendas.

[xxiii] In her research on the social nuisance of youths in Dutch neighbourhoods, the Canadian anthropologist Martineau (2006) found, for example, that there were very few residents who addressed the responsible youths directly when they experienced such nuisance. They often say are frightened to do so ('I watch out, I soon get a stone through my window'), but they also often say that they don't know the right way to address such youths. To deal with this, some local authorities offer training courses for local residents, for example using the book *Hangjongeren: 99 tips voor buurtbewoners en voorbijgangers* [Street gangs: 99 tips for residents and passers-by] (Kaldenbach, 2008).

[xxiv] Although it is for the time being an assumption I indicate this as 'factual'; research should in principle be able to show whether this assumption is correct or not.

[xxv] More recently, programmes have been developed that provide in a systematic manner a content and concrete meaning to 'democratic citizenship'. In recent years, in collaboration with the educational advice service Eduniek, the University of Utrecht Utrecht and a large number of schools, we have worked on the development of the programme 'democratic citizenship in the primary school'/ 'democratisch burgerschap in de basisschool'. This programme has been adopted in the wider programme of the 'The Peace School'/'De Vreedzame School', see http://www.pointofview.nl/vreedzameschool/.

[xxvi] Police battalion 101 was a reserve unit of the German *Ordnungspolizei* which executed some 35,000 Jewish men, women and children and transported another 45,000 to Treblinka in a relatively short period at the beginning of the Nazi occupation of Poland. See Browning (1996, p. 107).

[xxvii] In sharp contrast to this is the paradigm usually employed in descriptive developmental psychology, where normativity is placed outside brackets. When, for example, we look at the definition of stages in moral development as formulated by Kohlberg, we see to our amazement that that many people who

have actively participated in ethnic cleansing and mass murder fit unproblematically the definition of the highest stages. See, for example, Welzer (2006, p. 34).

[xxviii] There have been several published accounts of how Montessori – in her enthusiasm to improve the world with the help of her pedagogical ideals – also formed links with Mussolini's fascist regime in Italy, which in turn was able to parade her educational system for its own publicity purposes (Leenders, 1999; Schwegman, 1999).

[xxix] The social psychologist Baumeister argues against the classical image that low self-esteem leads to aggression. He speaks of instrumental hatred and aggression that is intended to settle scores with those who their narcissistic, inflated self-image ('threatened egotism'). See Baumeister and Butz (2005).

[xxx] See for example Van der Zee (2006).

[xxxi] 'Proximate influences refer to those immediate influences closest to the present moment: "how" a behavior occurs in the here and now. Ultimate influences, conversely, refer to those deeper influences form our evolutionary past – "why" a behavior evolved by natural selection' (Waller, 2007, p. 139).

[xxxii] The term 'hypergoods' was originally introduced by Taylor (1989).

[xxxiii] 'To tithe' means the exact payment of a 'tenth' (tax).

[xxxiv] Welzer remarks that it is difficult to understand that this unprecedented extension of the perpetrators' personal scope and freedom of action was in fact made possible by a totalitarian and dictatorial regime (2006, p. 220).

[xxxv] See for example De Winter, 2007. For international comparative research on citizenship, see for example Dekker (1999) and Westheimer and Kahne (2004).

[xxxvi] Milgram's experiments were designed to test how far experimental subjects were prepared to go under instructions from a test leader in inflicting physical pain on other subjects. The Robber's Cave experiments, in which volunteer youths were divided into two groups and competition organized between the two groups, were designed to see whether this competition had any influence on agggressive behaviour and whether such behaviour would subsequently disappear when frictionwas reduced by getting htem to work together on shared ('superordinate') goals. On Milgram, see Miller (1986); for Robber's Cave, see Sherif (1966).

[xxxvii] See http://www.unicef.org.uk/tz/teacher_support/rrs_award.asp, accessed 7-6-2010.