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People, Care and Work in the Home

Edited by
**Mohamed Gamal Abdelmonem
and Antonio Argandona**

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UpToYou, emotional education for personal growth in the early years Educating interior dispositions

José Víctor Orón Semper

Introduction

UpToYou is a proposal of emotional education (www.uptoyoueducacion.com) that directly influences family coexistence and the way parents interact with their children and the spouses among them, as reported by the testimonies of the people who have done the training (see web). In the present chapter we will present the basis of the proposal of UpToYou in the development of the first years of the child's life promoting health and the emotional development of children.

Childhood is the time to lay the foundations that will be the starting point for future life, as the studies of psychoanalysis clearly show: "everything starts at home" (Winnicott, 1986). The dispositions acquired at that time towards oneself will last throughout life. This educational key is not usually considered in the day to day of the family when a family focuses on behaviour (behaviour routines) and not on those interior dispositions. For example, a child is playing and it is time to eat. When the father or mother tells the child that it is time to eat and the child wants to continue playing, conflict arises. The child lives a correction and a frustration. We could ask ourselves what is the most important thing: that the child learns to sit down early to eat or that the child knows how to deal with frustration? We will see that it is one thing to educate pretending to acquire behaviours, and a completely different thing to educate pretending to learn how to situate oneself before the person's inner complexity. It does not mean that you do not have to pay attention to behaviour, but that if you focus primarily and exclusively on the behaviour, it can generate contrary provisions to it. Besides, if you learn to deal with frustration you will learn not only how to sit down to eat, but also to face other common and varied experiences of frustration that we encounter throughout life. It was Erikson who explained how, in fact, during the first years of a child's life they acquire a series of dispositions both towards themselves and towards the world (Erikson, 1963).

UpToYou wants to invest in the future child's life and focuses on educating to generate appropriate dispositions in diverse emotional situations. In this sense, from a general perspective, we seek that the person gets to know themselves starting from the emotional reality they live, and, secondly, that they learn to make

choices considering the complexity of different decisions (Orón Semper, 2016). But, in the first years of life, there are not many decisions to make. Instead, as we shall see, it is a time when the child will grow a lot in self-knowledge based on his interaction with his mother and father. Therefore, what we can educate on are the proper dispositions towards oneself. In the first years of life, it is more important to educate about the dispositions than specific behaviours. For example, the psychoanalyst Winnicott comments that it is more important for the child to develop creative dispositions than being successful according to the adult's evaluation (Winnicott, 1986: 53). For instance, developing the initiative to move one object is more important than putting the object in the right place. These dispositions are going to be the rulers of your future behaviours and even thinking styles. Since the child, according to Piaget, reasons not according to conceptual chains, but according to psychological principles (Piaget, 1928: 91), at UpToYou we ask ourselves about the non-rational logic (psychological principles) that the child uses. From there, assuming it and making a proposal according to it.

Let's go deeper now to discover the child's logic, and his way of understanding the world and himself, to end up showing an educational proposal of emotional education in childhood according to this investigation.

The development of the child in trust, attachment, and social reference

Erikson, whose studies are very relevant in the field of the psychosocial development of the human being, pointed out (1963) that in the first two years of life, the child lives a series of experiences that will lead him to adopt an attitude of basic trust or basic distrust. If the child discovers that his needs are known and met by the caregiver, father or mother, the child will grow in basic confidence. If the experience is that these needs are not covered or only some are covered – for example, only the physical ones, but not the psychological ones (playing, caressing, etc., which implies spending time interacting with the child) – then the configuration that child acquires is basic distrust according to the type care missing. Basic trust and basic mistrust are two models, between which there are all types of gradation. It is called basic trust because it refers to a basic disposition of the child to the world and to himself or herself and it would mean that basically he or she can trust what is presented to him or to her and does not adopt any defensive posture. The basic distrust would lead to the opposite disposition.

In the 1980s, new literature in psychology illustrated the power of the affective bonds between the mother and the child showing how the child learned a concrete evaluation of the context in relation with the mother's understanding of the world, and also in relation with the quality of the relationship between the mother and the child. The first is called "social referencing," and the second "attachment theory." Children appreciate the emotional meaning of the affective samples of caregivers. Not as mere modulators, but as what allows or impedes the development of the child (Tronick, 1989). Experimentation discovered that the communication

was fundamentally due to the visual triangle son-carer-object by which the child learns the meaning and guides its behaviour based on the facial expression of the caregiver. This phenomenon coined the term "social reference" (Walden and Ogan, 1988). In attachment theory, Trevarthen, a reference author in psychology who has been studying this phenomenon for years, said that attachment is not a simple matter of feeling safe, but is the basis in order to get to know the world and to reach a meaning (Colwyn, 2005).

Studies on "social reference" discover that, in humans, the social is not simply the environment in which learning takes place. In such a case, the social would be just one more modulator more among many, simply because learning happens in that context. But that would be an understatement. The social is a guarantee of significance. The presence of the other human being makes the world significant and valuable enough to be known. For example, learning a language for young children requires the presence of the person (Kuhl et al., 2003), otherwise the sounds of language are treated as noise. For the young child, things have no meaning by themselves, but their meaning is taken, we could say "borrowed," from the emotional reaction of the adult. This is the theoretical basis of the "social reference" most evident in situations of ambiguity (Klennert et al., 1986, Mireault et al., 2014, Pelaez et al., 2012), although we might think that when something new is presented it has an ambiguous character. The social reference will not only provide emotional meaning to the world of objects or events, but also to other people, because if the mother engages in positive communication, the child will also welcome the stranger positively (Feinman and Lewis, 1983). It is possible that this explains that the social reference is affected by the marital satisfaction expressed by the father (Dickstein and Parke, 1988), since in the usual social context, the mother presents the father to the child. The influence of social reference in form and intensity will change throughout life (Striano and Rochat, 2000, Walden and Baxter, 1989, Walden and Ogan, 1988). The social reference also explains the phenomenon of emotional "contagion" of the emotional experience of the mother to the child in pathological cases (Rosnay et al., 2006; Pelaez et al., 2013). Therefore, the social reference is giving meaning to objects, events, and personal relationships.

Attachment theory, which is closely related to what Erikson pointed out about basic trust or mistrust (Pittman et al., 2011), has not changed since the 1980s. The emotional attachment of the child who feels safe and protected by his parents enables him to exercise his search of the world under the paradigm of exploratory curiosity (Carson, 2012, Hong and Park, 2012, L'Ecuyer, 2014). Current research shows how the child's dependence on the mother affects not only the healthy development of the child, but also the child's psychopathologies. The mother passes her psycho-emotional state to the child. A longitudinal study of children aged 0 to 11 years verified that exposure to early and chronic maternal depression significantly increases a child's susceptibility to psychopathology and socio-emotional problems, including social withdrawal, bad emotional experiences, and reduced empathy towards others. When the mother is not in a depressed state, it

is evident that the greater the mother-child synchrony, the better cerebral functioning of the child. Sadly, statistics indicate that 15–18% of women in industrial societies and up to 30% in developing countries suffer from maternal depression (Pratt et al., 2017).

There are other series of studies that clearly support similar conclusions. The depth of the bonds of the mother or primary caregiver with her son or daughter, and the social sensitivity of the child with the mother and vice versa, are no longer doubted. The brain of mothers is especially sensitive to the crying of their children, which activates the relevant areas to detect the intention of behaviour (Bornstein et al., 2017). We have cells sensitive to caress and these (not touching or rubbing) lower the pulsations of the heart, relaxing the child while increasing brain activity (Jönsson and Emma, 2017). The sensitivity of a mother towards her child affects the mother's own brain function (Atzil et al., 2017) and the same with the child. Maternal sensitivity and maternal genetics affect the emotional configuration of the child (Zhang et al., 2014). The way in which the parents care for their children conditions the affection, sociability, and brain configuration of the latter (Silk et al., 2014).

All these investigations and theories lead to the fact that there is no neutral access of the child to the world, but rather that the child projects the quality of the caregiver-child relationship onto the world. We could say that the mother or primary caregiver “lends” her mind to the child. We understand “mind” in this case as the way to understand the world. That is, the child knows the world based on the presentation made by the mother. For example, if the mother presents a ball to the child, the child will hold the ball in a trusting relationship and will not see the ball as a hostile object. The child projects onto the object the relationship of trust or distrust it has with the mother. However, not only does it serve to know the world, but also oneself. The way the child is treated is the basis for knowing himself. Therefore, the way to access the world and oneself is always a social access. Even if the child is alone, the child's social relationships are equally present.

That is, the dynamic of trust makes the child perceive the new thing with astonishment and makes him want know more about it. The dynamic of distrust makes the child perceive the new thing with some mistrust and look for a way to feel safe in the face of this unknown thing, which is more or less hostile. But in a child's emotional experience, what is new for the child, the object to be known, is the same child. For this reason, we need to go deeper in the child's emotional experience.

The emotional development

Katherine Bridges (1932) already showed the process by which the child is gaining expressiveness in his emotional repertoire. Contrary to what is usually believed, Bridges postulated that there are no basic emotions (joy, sadness, fear, disgust, and anger), but the child is simply born with a capacity for basic excitability. Bridges assumes that we can recognise that the child differentiates two different

emotional situations if he or she offers different bodily expressions. For example, if something disgusts, scares, or hurts him or her, and the child has the same body reaction, it means that the child does not distinguish between disgust, fear, or pain. Bridges observed that at birth, the child has the same corporal expression before any event. Very soon he learns to differentiate the unpleasant from the pleasant. At this moment, their differentiation and emotional knowledge is simply dual: pleasant-unpleasant. But, for example, everything pleasant – being satiated after eating or the caresses of the mother – is not differentiated since they have the same corporal expression. This Bridges proposal is similarly followed, more or less, by other authors (Campos et al., 1989, Jack et al., 2014). But the key point is that this emotional development is not merely driven by biological processes but also social, cognitive, intentional processes, etc.

The baby needs to understand that duality, which requires a cognitive exercise to understand the sources of the pleasant and the unpleasant, and to reconcile experiences. That is, the emotional and cognitive development concur at the same time as the child has to know the world to recognise the cause, so the child knows oneself and knows the world at the same time. It is a *pari passu* process. The child knows the world and expresses what is known in his or her emotional experience. Thus, the child knows what is pleasant and unpleasant because the child needs to reach a coherent interpretation and relates these two experiences, which in turn allows them to differentiate and identify them, and this process allows their own maturational development.

Other authors support the same theory. To the extent that the child relates the diversity lived and integrates emotional diversity, at the same time, the ability to differentiate and identify emotional situations will arise and thus its development and growth will proceed. That is, integration, differentiation, identity, and growth co-occur through the emotional reality of the child (Camras, 2011). That is, emotional development is not biologically programmed but instead depends on the social interaction and the child's own inner activity. After two years, with the appearance of language, the child will have to make a similar but much more socially complex journey to acquire a different emotional linguistic expression (Lewis, 2007).

Towards the educational proposal

We will connect what Erikson indicated, the theory of attachment and social reference, with what Bridges showed in order to make a proposal of emotional education within the family. What is suggested is that the state of basic trust will allow the baby to make a path of differentiation much closer to reality, because it approaches it without prevention. It is being educated in some provisions that will allow a better development. Astonishment, amazement, or wonder does not seek to control, but to know reality as it is. We could say that the wonder approach facilitates unintentional and respectful knowledge. In contrast, the situation of basic mistrust makes the child not approach the world from an attitude of amazement or

wonder, but of distrust, and therefore his approach will be intentional because he or she will want to identify to control, to feel safe.

That is, when the path of identification progresses, the emotions are not a mere affective question of reaction to the stimulus, but they are actually the crystallisation or condensation of a whole-body, intentional, emotional, social, and cognitive experience. Emotion is, therefore, a condensation of the understanding of personal experience in the world and in a social network (Jack et al., 2014). Well, as we have already indicated, it is known that the child identifies and gives meaning to reality in terms of the relationship he or she has with the mother. The reactions of the mother's behaviour serve the child to identify the emotional meaning of the different events.

The disposition that the child acquires about his own emotional reality will be key in adulthood. In order to support this idea, we need to introduce the experience of Carl Rogers (1961) as psychotherapist. Adults who live in mistrust do not recognise their feelings as their own, nor can they think that those feelings are due to something that happens in them. But feelings are provoked by something external and feelings occur in oneself, but they do not belong to the person properly. Feelings happen in the person, but they do not belong to the person because they are a mere reaction to what happens outside of the person. Thinking that way, people do not accept responsibility for their feelings or behaviour. And they take a defensive position towards the world and to their emotional reality.

Certainly, Rogers is speaking from adult therapy, but he indicates what it is necessary to live in a state of health, and I believe that same internal dispositions are needed for every age. That is, the state of health involves recognising feelings as their own and not as merely awakened "from outside." Only then will the person take responsibility.

Roger points out that the person needs to welcome or accept inner complexity. Thanks to this, the client can discover the world of meaning. In such a case, emotions no longer need to be controlled. They are fine as they are, because they "talk" about the complexity of one's life and from them one can grow in self-knowledge. Denying or controlling an emotion would literally prevent growth in one's knowledge, which would lead to situations of unreality. It is not proposed to control, but to receive and accept in order to know them. When the person accepts without wanting to change, then the change occurs without being noticed (Rogers, 2000: 28). This requires the client to perceive that the therapist accepts his emotional reality without trying to change it. The reception of the therapist enables the client to accept its complexity. Without the acceptance of one's own reality, there is no possibility for growth.

Two proposals of emotional education

This brief journey is drawing us a double perspective in the face of emotional education that coincides with the two basic approaches that are being proposed today on the emotional issue: emotional regulation focused on the control and

acquisition of routines, and emotional integration focused on the reception and development of adequate provisions. The "emotional regulation" is the prevailing approach (Gross, 2014, Vohs and Baumeister, 2011). This proposal seeks to identify the emotion to channel it. In such a case, emotions occur in oneself, but outside one's own subjectivity, because it is thought that an external stimulus is what has caused that emotion. Looking at it this way, it is normal that the elimination of the stimulus is proposed, or, if this is not possible, a psychological resource is sought to increase the distance to the stimulus.

In the family environment and with the child, this approach to emotional regulation is concretised in a control of the stimulus and in a control of the internal reactions in the presence of the stimulus. The mentality with which the situation is addressed is that of "solving problems." This mentality assumes that before the problem everything was fine and the event has generated a problem and we must intervene to recover the previous situation. For instance, the child was calm, but now has a tantrum in the supermarket, so we need to recover the previous calm. But we think that focusing on education to avoid problems (the tantrum) is not educating the person to develop. The child does not know what a tantrum and the frustration associated with it is, but if the child notices that the mother does not like it, the child will learn that it is bad and will try to remove it (self-regulation). He or she will be scared from the frustration experience and does not want to learn what a frustration is because the child just wants to remove it. Attitudes of self-control are not the necessary attitudes for personal development.

The approach of emotional regulation ignores the complexity of the formation of emotions described by Bridges because it attributes the emotion to the stimulus and assumes Erikson's model of basic mistrust that seeks to control what is around. Bridges helps us to understand that emotion does not arise from stimulus, because the significance of the stimulus depends on the cognitive, social, and experiential development that the child has had. Without discovering the complexity of that process, the reason for a behaviour cannot be known. Emotional regulation proposal is contradicted by what Rogers indicated: a child will only recognise as his own what an adult accepts. And it also ignores what is shown by the social reference that the child projects on the object (in this case, the same person of the child) the meaning of the adult. Besides, attachment theory contradicts emotional regulation because the child will not develop a secure attachment since he or she is the cause of the mother's discomfort.

Another approach, which we will call "emotional integration," follows the line of Erikson's basic trust and the theory of attachment and the complexity of the emotional world shown by Bridges, and Roger's proposal of self-acceptance and what is indicated by the Social Reference. In this line, emotions are the condensation or crystallisation of a vital state at a specific moment in one person. The child lives in confidence and is astonished by the emotional and unknown reality lived, but does not feel the need to control them, because they do not perceive the world as hostile. The unknown world is not harmful, so I do not need to protect myself from that. And in an emotional experience, the new world to be known is

oneself. In emotional integration, the approach to the emotional reality is much more respectful because it allows to ask oneself: what is all that happens in me? And why does it happen?

Threat does not awake desire of knowing but desire of controlling. Reality is known when we approach it from an amazement, astonishment, or wonder disposition, not from a control disposition. Wonder approach can know and respect the reality as it is, without trying to manipulate it because the encounter is worthy. This way all the nuances of the emotion are discovered and also the causes for that.

It is not advisable to propose reconciliation between the "emotion regulation" and "emotional integration" because, philosophically speaking, these positions are described as "contrary non contradictory" (Altarejos, 2004). They are "contrary" because those who bet on one reject the other. And they are "not contradictory" because they both develop human proactivity, but from very different frames.

We think that, if we bear in mind the theory of attachment and social reference, together with the healthy dynamic of trust that Erikson indicated, along with the need to believe in the acceptance of the emotional reality that Rogers showed and complexity of emotional development that Bridges showed, we discover that the most coherent proposal of emotional education is emotional integration, since it takes place in the climate of acceptance and awe and appreciation and intensification of social relationships as the child needs. In this case, control is not sought, but rather the acceptance of the complexity of interpersonal relationships.

That is, just as the child needs the mother to introduce the outside world, the same should be assumed in relation to the inner world. In such a case, with the behaviour of the mother before the emotions of the child, the mother is telling the child what his emotional reality is. The emotional world of the child appears as something unknown by the child himself, but if the mother accepts the emotional reality of the child in an environment that safeguards the interpersonal relationship, then the child can approach his own emotional reality with ease, in a dynamic of amazement, to get to know its interior and grow in self-knowledge.

But if the main caregiver reacts to the emotional situation of the child as if it were something tragic (which is usually shown when adults try to avoid problems), he will perceive his own emotional situation as something negative and disruptive that will have to be controlled to eliminate, which prevents self-knowledge and the acceptance of one's own reality.

UpToYou's proposal

This proposal is in line with emotional integration and generates the suitable dispositions. UpToYou (www.uptoyoueducacion.com) is an educative program that understands that the emotions are information on the convenience of all the elements of the complexity in a concrete person at a certain time.

This program understands that emotional education consists of helping the person to consider their given emotional situation as a starting point for personal

growth within the paradigm of personal integration. As an educative program, it has its own way of understanding what education means (Orón Semper, 2018).

In a schematic way, UpToYou points out that feelings are, in the first place, result or effect, because who lives as one lives (vital state) and does what one does and how one does it (event), then, one feels what feels (feelings). The cited authors' research discovers a complex game of social interactions in the emotional experience. In outline, it would be as follows:

$$\text{Life status (1) + Event (2) = Feeling (3)}$$

This formula is a simplification because the reality is that the event is not understood apart from the vital situation (life status). But feelings are not only results but also generate a trend. But the trend is subsidiary to the interpretation of feeling. For instance, if I understand frustration as something bad, it will promote one trend, but if I understand frustration as a normative experience of life, it will promote another trend.

The pedagogical proposal of the program has two steps: first, to help people to walk a "backwards" path, that is to say, to start from the feeling (3) to get to know the vital state (life status -1) and second, to promote people to face their vital state and make a decision about how to live while promoting personal growth and what is understood as to increase personal relationships with others. We call these two moments: "knowing the information" and "maximising the trend" (Orón Semper, 2015). The first moment ends when all the causes of a specific feeling are known and people learn the intrinsic logic of feeling and inner complexity. The second moment ends when people make a decision to do a global-personal act (Orón Semper, 2017) facing the issue of identity that entails personal growth.

This process is really an endless process, as it introduces the young person into a spiral of growth, because after global-personal acts, a new life status (1') will emerge and with new events (2') and other feelings (3') will show up and the process begins again. This is how the person is introduced to unrestricted growth.

Now, although the dynamic is always the same, it is not done in the same way in different moments of life since the capacities and dispositions of the person are different. Let's focus on seeing how UpToYou understands the proposal for the first years of life.

While the model of regulation applied to young children seeks to acquire specific behaviours, the integration model seeks to educate in appropriate inner dispositions that promote growth. The problem is the difficulty of characterising what growth means.

While acquiring a specific behaviour can be clearly characterised as an objective, and it can be evaluated if it has been reached or not, we find that growth cannot be categorised as an objective since it is not identifiable as a particular purpose. For characterising growth, let us see how different philosophers and psychologists understand it. The philosopher Leonardo Polo (2007) pointed out that growth is unrestricted and not in any particular direction, but in that which

allows the human being to reach what he is called to be, which is recognised in the development of his personal transcendentals (co-existence personal, personal freedom, personal knowledge, and personal love). In addition, he also shows a dynamic of accepting what is received to deliver it. It means welcoming what we are and delivering ourselves to others. Wang Yangming (Frisina, 2002), neocunfuncionist of the fifteenth century, proposes that the growth is played in winning in harmony between everything created uniting sky and earth. Whitehead (Frisina, 2002), mathematician and philosopher, proposes to understand growth as maximising experience that is fundamentally relational. Carl Rogers (2000) points out that the starting point of the reception is followed by the response to the call to be what one is called to be. Victor Frankl (1991) emphasises the call to the meaning of life and personal devotion. Erikson (1959, 1997) discovers in personal identity the theme that accompanies and invigorates all of life. Kohlberg (Kohlberg and Mayer, 1972) picks Piaget's indication that a stage is superior to the previous one because it allows for a better resolution of complexity; Kohlberg applies it to the moral realm, and says that moral development makes it possible to better solve social conflict, and it facilitates reconciliation and social growth. In all of these authors, growth cannot be identified by a point, but as an improvement of interpersonal relationships being creative in complex situations. But it does not mean that all development is growth. For example, a type of development that divides the personal life into sectors is not a growth.

The regulatory model applied to the small child would be as follows:

- **Point of arrival defined.** There is a starting point characterised by an emotional situation and with a disruptive behaviour, and the point of arrival is determined by emotional situation with an associated defined behaviour (routine).
- **The regulator changes to the regulated while it remains stable.** The caregivers act so that the child changes and reaches the preset behaviour by regulators, but caregivers do not undergo any change.
- **Problem vision.** The starting point is seen as a problem that needs to be fixed. Seeing it as a problem implies that action steps are detection, definition of the point of arrival, and action.
- **Process with end.** Once the problem is over and a new emotional situation is reached, the intervention stops until a new disruption.

The integrative model applied to the small child is explained as follows:

- **There are references, but no point of arrival.** The starting point is not a problem but a personal state and a normal life situation. There is not specific point of arrival, but the aim is to develop the appropriate dispositions about oneself and interaction skills with the mother through play.

- **Everyone changes, the caregiver and the child.** In the growth of a system, all the elements change by the relations between them. There is no sectoral growth.
- **Growth vision.** The personal situation is not considered a problem. There is nothing to correct, but to help to grow. While problem mentality seeks to go back to recover the lost equilibrium, growth mentality is always going forward, trying to improve or intensify personal relationships by taking advantage of the past event.
- **Endless process.** The process never ends because growth is always open. New events will be the excuse for starting again and, even more, caregivers will create new events for improving relationships.

The educational activity that the mother or father performs to achieve this also follows the two indicated steps of "knowing the information" and "maximising the trend." The child knows himself by projecting on the mother's way of understanding the child. Therefore, if the mother does not condition the reception of the child to the emotional behaviour of the child, then the child will acquire a disposition of amazement of himself that opens the door to a more detailed knowledge in the future. On the other hand, the education of children is carried out through play, as indicated by great references (Montessori, 2013, Piaget, 1965, Piaget et al., 1982, Vygotsky, 1978) because we are not facing behaviours that need to be corrected, but capacities that need to be developed. And the game's main rule is how to use the object for playing. It is meant for the enjoyment of the experience of being together. As the child has not developed one's agency yet, the key point is how the caregiver will creatively use the event (2) to improve personal relationships with the child (enjoying the experience of being together). We are not saying to not pay attention to the event: the tantrum when the child lives the frustration because they want to play when it is time to eat. In our proposal, the caregiver creatively uses the child's frustration (normal experience that we live all days) as an excuse for enjoying the experience of being together. It allows the child to reach a good internal disposition about one's frustration, to learn how to eat, and to improve relationships.

But, if the mother focuses on the acquisition of routines by acquiring behaviours, the child will not appreciate an unconditional reception of his or her person and, instead of a disposition of amazement, he or she will acquire a disposition of fear and distrust of oneself, which will lead him to exert control over himself and with it a prevention for future growth.

UpToYou understands that the acquisitions of routines are an effect of the game, but the goal is the game in itself. If the caregiver considers as an objective what an effect is, the person will be blocked for growth. It is pedagogically decisive not to confuse the objective and the effect.

This academic journey ends up proposing a double alternative way: the "emotional integration" that starts from amazement and leads to know and acquire

adequate provisions for the growth, and the “emotional regulation” that starts from distrust and leads to the search for control and the acquisition of routines. We have also presented how UpToYou’s pedagogy understands these ideas at theoretical level.

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Work at the home

Purpose, function, and care

Antonio Argandoña

Introduction

In the home, we find a community of people (the family) who share a living space (the house) with an intention of continuity, serving a social purpose (Argandoña, 2018). The main element is undoubtedly the community of individuals, but keeping for each one their personal dignity and rights. This article attempts to explain work in the home as the action of the individuals who make up the home. It does not involve making a list of tasks which will change in time and space, will have numerous exceptions, and will end up being of little use, but rather it concerns finding a connecting thread that unifies these tasks. For this purpose, we will use the theory of human action in organisations, as developed by Pérez López (1991, 1993; cf. Argandoña, 2008a, 2008b, 2015b). In the following I will present individual human actions and shared actions, ending with the conclusions.

Individual human action

By "action" we understand any act carried out by a person in a rational, deliberate, and voluntary manner (Aquinas, 1990: 1–2, qq. 6–21).¹ These acts are very varied in the home; some are foundational, such as the decision to form a family, buy a house, or have a child. Others are occasional, such as painting a room, taking out a loan to pay for a child's education, or receiving a visit from relatives. The majority of these actions fill daily life: grocery shopping and preparing meals, accompanying an elderly person to the doctor's office and relaxing together, and many others that go unnoticed even though they may be very important: chatting about trivial matters, being pleased with the growth of children, caring about the health of a spouse, arguing and making up, expressing love between spouses, and many other things.

The concept of action is broader than the concept of work, although it includes both the voluntary work of members of the home and paid or unpaid work by other people (González and Iffland, 2014). Thus, we try to avoid the bias within the concept of work in the home introduced by neoclassical economic theory (Becker, 1981) or in some Marxist and feminist approaches, which take paid work as a reference when giving visibility and value to work of the home (Carrasco, 1998).