

## LOVE AND HATE IN EVERYDAY LIVES

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There is a book, written by my old teacher and mentor, Selma Kramer, named “The Birth of Hatred”. The name is intriguing because it directs our thoughts to aspects of us we generally prefer to ignore. On Sundays between ten and noon we prefer to direct our minds to nobler, more sublime aspects and aspirations: how to be good, compassionate, generous. How to listen to our neighbors, to serve and to be of help.

We can find a plethora of role models here – the Western world saints, the Eastern world sages and monks, Mother Theresa, the likely-to-be-canonized pope Paul John II, to name some. But, oddly, we get very little help regarding our so called base – but, oh so energetically alive “evil” and demonic sides of us. Name calling – that’s all we get. We are sinners, tainted by at least seven sins, all claimed deadly . We must repent , and strive to get rid of our baseness. We must endeavor to live better, feel better, love better. But what to do when we may wake up, in the middle of the night, with the acute awareness that we are full of hating feelings of our neighbor X or our close relative Y , let alone our spouse or children or ourselves?

So, I decided to read the book carefully and to tell you of some of its central points. I also looked elsewhere: on studies in ethology and child development. I hoped to find clues to how to understand the hating feelings in us, how to live with them, how to tame them so that our view of ourselves would remain intact as civilized, thoughtful and caring persons.

We are more comfortable in acknowledging hate as it finds expression in wars, in prejudice, in crime and other sociopolitical events. Maybe even to-day the temptation is there – to skip to these less personal aspects of hate. But let us not. Let us stay with the topic – love and hate in everyday lives.

In my studies in Helsinki we were expected to pass an exam in Latin. One of my instructors was also a poet and had translated Ovid and other Roman poets to fluid Finnish lines. Thus I learned, in proper cadence, the following poem:

Odi et amo. Quare it faciam fortasse requires.

Nescio sed fieri, senti et excrucior.

In less fluid Anglo-American lines it says:

I hate and I love. You may ask why I do so.

I truly do not know

Yet that is what I feel, and I am tormented.

The poem shows how already early in our Western civilization poets and other people wrestled with this uniquely human dilemma: that we simultaneously love and hate the same person. In my field the dilemma and the problem is called ambivalence.

Ambivalence is a developmental accomplishment, a result of complex learning, assimilation, identification. When very small, our simplistic world, including our

emotional world, is that of either / or. Love – whatever in those early days it may be – is equated with being satiated and gratified in our basic needs. Hate – whatever it is – is equated with disappointments, unbearable frustrations, neglect. These feeling complexes are, in the beginning, connected with a similarly two-dimensional view of the outer world, which is either good or bad, loving or hating. It takes a long and complicated process of development before children manage to experience the opposite feelings of love and hate as co-existing.

Some of you have heard me describe my experiences with Lisa, a seven-year-old schizophrenic girl.

How she gradually left her psychotic, yet protective shell and dared to acknowledge my presence and her own longings for closeness with me, her therapist. She used her own, made-up language to express these longings, leaving me with the difficult task to decode the hidden messages. Or else her well-developed four-letter word vocabulary camouflaged her feelings and longings. In several important sessions, Lisa kept circulating around me, like an airplane trying to find its base. When she finally dared to crawl into my lap, she did so cursing fiercely. Or she would whisper in my ear, “Piss-poop-fuck-ass”, with her voice vibrating with affection and tenderness.

When she thus became more comfortable with her affectionate longings, she could start to express the opposite feelings – rage, and destructiveness and hate – with more directness. In one dramatic session she blindly lashed at me to hit and hurt. I quickly suggested that she use a substitute object and pretend it was me. She chose a monkey puppet and started to mutilate it limb by limb and to tear its eyes from its sockets. This outburst terrified her, as became apparent in subsequent sessions. Fleeing from the puppet and me, she crouched under my table, trembling with anxiety, at times attacking me. My comments echoed her frightened and bewildered feelings. Her desire to kill and destroy me felt real, yet she also liked me. She was frightened that I would punish her and no longer care for her. Gradually Lisa was able to integrate my messages and, on her own, conclude, “One can love and hate the same person at the same time”.

I am introducing Lisa’s story because it demonstrates vividly the either/or quality of our early emotional life . For Lisa, expressing feelings of love came first and separately from her expressing her feelings of destructiveness and hate in relation to me. Her story also demonstrates how she recognized and learned to live with ambivalence.

Lisa’s story raises important questions: How to understand the link between love and hate? Are love and hate expressions of two innate and separate drives? Or does human aggression result from disappointed, deprived, or frustrated love? In other words, might aggression and hate NOT be innate? Are human beings intrinsically good and loving?

Sigmund Freud took the position – and many psychoanalysts and psychologists after him – that there are two basic drives. Most importantly, he claimed, these two are always and normally intermixed. He says, “It is indeed foreign to our intelligence as well as to our feelings thus to couple love and hate; but Nature, by making use of this pair of opposites, contrives to keep love ever vigilant and fresh, so as to guard it against the hate which

lurks behind it.”

Freud called these basic drives aggressive and sexual. This latter is also known as libido. As a drive “libido” refers to the psychic and emotional energy associated with the drive. This drive manifests itself in our need for love and for forming affectionate bonds of attachment with others.

In the same vein, aggressive drive is an innate disposition, and rage, hatred, anger, contempt and disgust serve to express particular aspects of this drive. “Hate” – as I use it now – is a generic reference to a variety of emotions that evolve from the aggressive drive. Similarly, “love” refers to a variety of emotions expressed in affection, tenderness, yearnings for closeness.

It is not only Freud and other psychoanalysts and psychologists who stress the role of two innate tendencies in development. Several ethologists, foremost Konrad Lorenz, have provided detailed and reliable observations, which identify the existence and interplay of the innate tendencies between aggressive urges and the urge to form and preserve bonds of attachment within a species. Lorenz noted that fighting between the members of the same species was characteristic of some species but not of others. Importantly for our purposes, he demonstrated that there are no species that have the bond of attachment and do not also have aggression between its members. He further identified biological mechanisms for inhibiting and redirecting aggression . For example, there are ritual forms of courtship and greeting among members in which the characteristic motor patterns of aggression have undergone a transformation in the service of love.

The messages from ethologists stress two things. First, the aggressive drive and the bond of attachment co-exist in many species, suggesting links between aggression and love. Second, ethologists direct us to look for mechanisms for redirecting and modulating drives, both those expressing love and those expressing hate, away from possibly destructive forms of discharge.

Thus both Freud, together with other analysts and psychologists, and Lorenz, together with other ethologists, emphasize that both love and hate have motivational forces as instinctual drives. The special admixture of these forces cannot be explained by behaviorists who stress the role of the environment as the sole determinant of human behavior. Neither can the admixture be viewed solely as a moral conflict, between right and wrong. Morality, at best, serves as a compass to redirect the forces of our innate drives.

The view of innate dispositions for love and hate sheds new light on many developmental crises and human behavior. For example, the fighting which we see among child and parents is not only a moral conflict. We have to take into account the long biological roots in fighting and its modification to alternative modes of expression. I shall now outline some typical scenes in the life of a developing child, to revisit them as expressions of the basic feelings of love and hate.

We all know the large upsurge of assertiveness, autonomy, and efforts to do things oneself among toddlers from ten months on. When these strivings are thwarted, the toddler often shows fierce fighting and hostility. We tend to view the scene as an interpersonal conflict – a battle of wills between child and mother (caregiver). But in addition, from the toddler's point of view, the view of mother is mixed with sharp feelings of anger, even rage, toward the beloved mother.

A Philadelphia research group provides many illustrations of the conflict. They made detailed, longitudinal observations of normal, average mothers and their normal babies from birth on. One set of observations describes the exchanges between an ordinary mother and her well-developed daughter. The mother did not want the child to go into the hall, or reach for cups of coffee or ashtrays, or other children's toys. The child complained angrily, face flushed, muscles tense – all clear expressions of hostile feelings. But gradually the child's protestations ceased and gave way to immobility. Other observations supported the interpretation that the immobility was a compromise between her rageful feelings and loving feelings toward her mother. Thus the compromise had a thwarting effect on her development as it paralyzed her efforts to integrate feelings of love and hate.

At a somewhat later age, from ten to fourteen months on, toddlers are internally propelled to explore everything, and mothers are propelled to put a stop on explorations they feel are dangerous. The toddlers' protestations and rageful reactions are familiar to us all, and, again, we tend to view them as interpersonal conflicts, as continuations of earlier battles of wills between mother and child. When the child obeys we tend to interpret the compliance as stemming from fear of loss of mother's love and of her anger. But observations show that the obedience may also be a way of coping with feelings of rage at mother. And the main fear of the rage is that it may destroy the most valued thing – the beloved mother. As we recall, Lisa demonstrated the same fear with me.

Somewhere between the ages 3 and 5 another kind of scenario takes place: the child wishes to own and possess one parent – mother for sons, father for daughters – and wish to do away with the other, rivalrous parent. We adults may be bemused by this childish display. Rarely do we think of the drama of deep passions of love and hate that churn in the child's mind. - Another crisis is in adolescence where love, rebellion, rage, hatred and other feelings find painfully familiar expressions.

We tend to ignore the emotional map of children, in particular those areas which mark deep anger, aggressive rage, and hatred. But by doing so, are we giving enough help to children so that they would learn to live with both love and hate?

One significant reason is that we adults have great difficulty with our hate. For the most part, we are afraid of our hating feelings. There is the fear that they may take over and get out of control. We are condemning the feelings because they are "wrong", and because they are ugly. Having such feelings makes us ugly. We prefer not to acknowledge the fact that "we may wish for people we love some ill along with wishing them well. That even the purest love is less than pure" (Judith Viorst). No wonder, then, that we are

incapacitated in acknowledging our deeply negative feelings in , especially, our most intimate love relations.

Mothers, I think, more than fathers, are prisoners of our harsh sentencing of hate. Motherly love is expected to be unconditional , and an expression of perfection in matters of love. I truly believe that the idea of unconditional mother love is a myth, created for our inner needs. We seldom think that the myth may unnecessarily complicate the function and act of being a mother: the myth may make mothers feel inadequate and guilty. Mothers are, after all, also women, wives, and persons needy in their own right. They have their moments of needing quiet, cocooned in their own beings, isolated from their baby because, at times, they feel their baby's demands will suck them dry. Such moments heighten the conflict between motherly love and motherly hate.

We can find many other examples which show the mixture of motherly love and hate. One example is found in nursery rhymes and lullabies. A Finnish folklorist has compiled a collection of lullabies in which the thought of mother's doing away the baby is central. I, too, have contributed to such lullabies. When quite small, I made up a lullaby with the main line "aiti tuutii henki pois". Translated it says, "Mother rocks life away". – Last but not least, let us remember last Sunday's dialogue between Bob and Shirley called Mom 101.

The well-known British pediatrician-turned-analyst Donald Winnicott, with his uncanny understanding of babies and their mothers, states that all loving mothers also hate their baby. The idealized view of an unconditionally loving mother is, in his view, fostered by sentimentality, which serves no useful purpose. Actually, he considers sentimentality as harmful because it "contains a denial of hate". Such a denial will prevent the child from facing and learning to tolerate his own hate.

Fathers, too, have their special problems in living with their love and hate. Some writers , Selma Kramer among them, suggest that adolescence is a particularly troubled time for fathers. These middle-aged fathers may experience their son's competition for power as well as the son's increasing sexual prowess as threatening , even dangerous. Sons rekindle fathers' buried own strivings from their past to do away their own father; Now the very same strivings are cause for alarm, hatred and desire to do away the now stronger son.

The parental hostility toward children is by and large , taboo-like, an unrecognized area. At best, it is acknowledged in the pathological instances of abuse, physical and sexual. But it can be also present in more normal, generally accepted situations. In the book "Birth of Hatred" filicide is said to find expression in the push-and-pull of sociopolitical happenings: We are led to ask: do fathers send their sons to war out of their buried feelings of hatred toward their sons?

If we acknowledge that we carry a mixture of love and hate throughout our lives, it makes sense that these feelings co-exist in all our adult relationships as well. Marital bliss and harmony can be disrupted by bitter, bad feelings, our hate. The same happens in all

intimate relationships when intimate lovers and friends also turn to “intimate enemies” to quote Bach and Wyden. The realization that hate is present in all love is only reluctantly accepted. We are trained to accept only one side of our ingrained ambivalence – love. But we cannot escape from our hate and the many forms it takes. It can be transient as well as sustained. It can be a blip as well as a constant drumbeat of bitter anger and pain, to quote Judith Viorst’s apt description.

So, how do we learn to live in ways that include the awareness of both love and hate? How do we learn to modify them if their excesses are disruptive? It seems that we as educators and parents have a variety of techniques that aim at redirecting hate and aggression in children. My exchange with Lisa demonstrates a couple: to divert the wish to harm and hurt physically to a safe target via displacement, and to divert the motor discharge to verbal expression of thought and feeling. Play and the use of imagination are further mechanisms to redirect and modulate aggression and hostile impulses . Little league baseball and other sports provide another arena to modulate hostility and to strengthen bonds within team members.

Interestingly, we rarely think of ways to enhance our capacity to love. It may be that we instinctively understand this capacity, because it is embedded in the numerous patterns of mothering and in the great diversity of communications between child and mother. As adults, in our intimate relationships, we resort to our nonverbal learning of loving. But what about hate? We are peculiarly helpless and frightened with this side of the equation in our feelings. Two things we can do. First, remembering that we need not act on our feelings, that we can contain them via our thoughts and words, we can acknowledge our hate in our love. Second, realizing that we cannot do away our hating feelings we need to learn to accept and make peace with our “base” side. This learning may bring us the reassurance that we still are decent human beings, even in our own eyes.

I wish to quote the very wise statement by Leon Altman, a contemporary analyst. He says, “The need to discount hate might even be the root cause of our need to place so much emphasis on love, to ask so much of it..... Perhaps man could love more if he could also hate more cheerfully”.