

## Short response No. 4

### Children, entertainment and violence

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We do not have a lot of memory moments in our brain from our childhood. But there are some that we like to recall or they just come in our mind time by time. One of my favorites is about when being abt 5 years old we liked to have played the game, which was popular in Bulgaria – “partizani and apashi”<sup>1</sup>. Within the years I have been referring to this fragment in my memory to understand my independence and the “maleness” in myself. I really liked this game, because I lived in a small village with a crossing river and very narrow valley, surrounded by mountains. So, the partizani with wooden guns early in the morning went to the forest on the one side of the river, and the apashi – on the

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<sup>1</sup> Partizani were named the fighters against the so-called fascism and capitalism in Bulgaria (1941-1944), who live in smaller or big groups in the mountains and time by time attacked the smaller or bigger places. The word “apashi” does not have a precise translation in English. They should be the ones who tried to catch the partizani.

other. I still psychologically have the feeling of the fear from my childhood in my mind “What would happen?” but do not have any memory about any fighting. Probably both groups never found each other.

It was about 1965, so just before and at the beginning of the first TV programs in Bulgaria. Then, there was no TV influence, but we watched at that time many Russian films about the Second World War and it was a tradition at least one a week my grandfather or grandmother to have brought me to watch a movie. I think they were only Russian films that I obviously accepted as Bulgarians, since I thought “konets” (The end”) was a Bulgarian word. At that time I even lived with my grandparents in one and the same apartment together with the family of Ivan Okovski, who was the film operator there.

The game of “partizani” and apashi” was only one of many that we played there. And I don’t think it was a bad game – it was more like an interaction with the nature and I even now think that probably instead playing the game at certain moment had switched to have been gathering forest flowers like wild violets. I had such a wonderful childhood, that one of the reasons not to have my own children today was that I have never made my life later to be able to provide my eventual children with the childhood I had. I still believe that intensively interacting with the nature is the best childhood. I also I think that if my brain time by time demonstrates smartness if any, the main reason is that the first 6 years my food did not come by stores like Walmart and Albertson’s but from our own garden and our one farm – always fresh and healthy. My grandmother and grandfather were dedicated to me to have felt healthy and happy as a child.

So, from my perspectives, it is not just a question of direct influence of the violence entertainment on the children. The negative influence today of the violence entertainment is a result of the general multiscale cultural environment, which in many cases is not very healthy for the children. In this environment the violence entertainment additionally overwhelms the children with direct or indirect negative emotions. The reproduction of what we have seen is a complex process and we even never know when certain experience will influence our current social practices.

To demonstrate the complexity of the problem I will turn to the following question: Do we have violence in our everydayness? The answer is yes. Then the next question comes: Should we educate the children in violence? I believe so. However, the question that we still cannot answer is what is the best means to educate them in violence.

If you turn to the beginning of the human history, there are not many records of violence within the visual art. Nevertheless, the cave painting with hunting scenes that include killing of animals can be accepted as a record about violence. They have multilayered semantics, but for our topic we can point to the fact that they were seen by the children. We do not have any records that the prehistoric caves where the paintings were found were restricted for children. Then, the visual art educated the children in hunting even before their first hunting ride. The first humans were hunter-gatherers and they depended on hunting. So, enculturation in hunting, which is from our perspectives a form of violence, was necessary especially for males children who were expected to become the next generation of hunters in the smaller or bigger social groups, that we name in some cases bands.

However, during the Neolithic, the period of agricultural-stockbreeding societies in many regions in Europe, the anthropomorphic and zoomorphic figurines were very popular, especially in Southeast Europe. Most impressive in the anthropomorphic figurines are the presentations of quietness and balanced emotions. As the cave paintings, these figurines have multilayered semantics (Bailey 2005), but many of them were part of the household inventory in the everydayness of people. My understanding is that this quietness of the figurines was purposeful and functioned as an enculturational means for balancing of emotions in the household and educating the children in stable positive and non-aggressive emotions.

Education and enculturation in violence through non-violence is probably the most perspective method since according to the specialists, there is “causal connection between media violence and aggressive behavior in some children” (Cook et al. 2000). There is most recent research on the brain that confirms this statement and the extensive viewing of TV aggression “may result in a large number of aggressive scripts stored in long-term memory in the posterior cingulate, which facilitates rapid recall of aggressive scenes that serve as a guide for overt social behavior” (Murray et al. 2006). So, trying to answer the question What should be done to improve children’s television viewing? I see two sides: the side of the media industry and the side of parents, children and society. The violence increases the interest of children in TV but if such type of media has been viewing in families in which there are no violence behavior, most probably the children would not be interested if parents explain them and give them non-violence examples as contrasting the violence. If children live in families in which the

relationships include elements of violence, the TV may increase the side effect of the violence media entertainment.

To resolve the problem of the positive development of children and decreasing of the violence in our society, the media industry should work together with psychologists and social workers that may result in a compromise and even in some very positive results. Possibly good example for how violence had been used just to catch the attentions of the children but was followed by funny and really entertaining moments is the movie "Ghost ship". It looks to me this is a way to go, since the children see at the beginning a culmination and may watch the whole movie either involved in the funny side of the movie, or waiting for the violence culmination the movies started with.

The human society depends on the human self-awareness. The violence is not immanent for humans, but was a part of the human social practices from the beginning of the human history. So, the people keep in themselves and have been reproducing a huge historical capital of violence. To develop a non-violent society we need to embody humanity in any cell of the human society. If this objective becomes a goal of every person on this world, who knows: the violence may disappear not only from the children's TV entertainment viewing, but also from the whole human society.