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Goodness and Health: The Culture of Goodness

Abstract

If even simple everyday greetings that partially form the subconscious cultivation of goodness have favourable effect upon human beings, would not the conscious development of the culture of goodness holistically impact human health even more favourably? In the following paper, first the basic concepts are identified: goodness, health, and culture. Next, analysing authors such as Anton Trstenjak, the paper confirms the thesis that the conscious cultivation of goodness in thoughts, feelings, and relationships has a positive effect upon human health. The third part explores the two tools of Christian spirituality (contemplation; examen) by the means of which human beings may direct their thoughts and emotions towards goodness, and develop the culture of goodness which enables them to experience the fullness of life.

Keywords

goodness, health, culture, culture of goodness, Anton Trstenjak, contemplation, examen

Goodness and Health: Culture of Goodness

The greeting “Good morning! Good evening!” is present in all cultures of the world. Such greeting is not merely a part of etiquette, but rather reflects something far more general and important. It indicates the significance of goodness for human beings, our disposition and health. For that reason, the following thesis is put forward in this paper: if a simple everyday greeting which represents a part of unconscious cultivation of goodness in itself has a beneficial effect upon a human being and his disposition, then there is no doubt that conscious development of goodness must beneficially influence holistic human health.

In order to gain a deeper comprehension of the impact of goodness and culture upon health, we should first focus our attention upon the notions *goodness*, *health*, and *culture*, and clarify their respective meanings. In the second part, the works of Anton Trstenjak (1906–1996) who, as philosopher, anthropologist, psychologist and theologian was the first in Slovenia to emphasize the

impact of goodness, will be used to demonstrate the possibilities of the impact of goodness on health. Studies and authors confirming such impact will likewise be listed. The third part will explore the two tools of Roman Catholic spirituality (*contemplation* and *examen*) by means of which humans may lead their thoughts and emotions towards goodness, thus cultivating the culture of goodness that provides them with holistic health.

1. On Goodness, Health and Culture

On its application, the term *goodness* acquires a variety of shades of meaning. In metaphysics, goodness denotes the quality of what is concretely good. It particularly expresses the Good of being as Being. Like oneness and truth, goodness is a transcendentality. It was Plato and Aristotle who were the first to link the Being to the Good, while Christianity – assuming this path of thinking – identified the Good and goodness with God, the supreme Being and the supreme goodness itself (Peratoner, 2006, 1398). Thomas of Aquinas attributes goodness to the universe:

“The supreme Good, namely God, is the cause of goodness in all things.” (Summa contra Gentiles, I., III., cap. 17, n. 2)

Ontological goodness becomes comprehensible as one opens oneself to the appeal of the goodness radiated by all beings by the mere fact that they are and in as much as they are.

Goodness is one of the fundamental virtues. It is the nobility of the heart, its attitude towards people and the world, full of love and respect (Truhlar, 1974, 138). Goodness is equal to love (Trstenjak, 1988B, 67). Love as a special emotion reinforces the experiential side of goodness, while goodness is a value to which the emotion of love applies. Goodness connects, builds up the community into a whole with everybody, performs miracles, cures, pardons everything, hopes for everything, bears anything, is always grateful, rejoices in justice and truth, is loving and serving (Trstenjak, 1988A, 60–119). Goodness is a spiritual, God’s attribute. Whoever is good, “carries God’s goodness in his heart” (Trstenjak, 1988A, 83). Human goodness “is born neither out of blood nor out of the desire of the flesh, but of ‘God’ instead” (Trstenjak, 1988B, 67). In other words:

“Real human goodness is always simultaneously ethical goodness and ethical virtue, to wit, a moral emotional drive, supported and justified by spiritual motives. Should the former fail, the latter will immediately descend into malevolence.” (Trstenjak, 1988A, 67)

If one’s heart is allowed to be always filled with God’s goodness, a human being already anticipates such goodness which is “eternal life and its bliss” in this present transient life (Trstenjak, 1988A, 83). As a result, human being is truly happy and keeps repeating every day: “It is good to be Human.”

Vladimir Truhlar claims that goodness originates in God who is the absolute goodness:

“Human’s goodness is a share – and in a person with an open experiential bottom, it is also an experiential share – in the goodness of the absolute, God. This goodness laid the world into the hands of man to build it according to the will of the ‘good’ God.” (Truhlar, 1974, 138)

In Truhlar’s opinion, human beings are capable of truly experiencing and recognizing such goodness, and are capable of consciously and freely accepting the same into their life and activities.

According to the definition of the World Health Organization, *health* is

“... an integral and dynamic system capable to adapt to all environmental effects and to enable an individual and a community to perform biological, social and professional functions as well as to prevent disease, disability and premature death.” (Wikipedia, 2015; World Health Organization, 2006)

Thus, health is a dynamic equilibrium of physical, emotional, spiritual, personal and social elements (Gerjolj, 2014, 26). Health allows for continuing performance of functions and adaptation to environment (Vodičar, 2006, 300). In short, health may be defined as

“... a state of complete physical, emotional, social and spiritual well-being.” (Jurčić, 2007, 30)

This means: a body is healthy when it functions well, which, however, to a great extent depends upon the health of the nervous system. An emotionally healthy individual is capable of handling his/her emotions correctly and reasonably, and knows how to express them in a controlled and moderate manner. Human being's health at the social level is evident from the capacity to establish mature and responsible interpersonal relationships (Gerjolj, 2014, 31–33). The most important criterion of spiritual health is nevertheless human being's desire and capacity to sincerely and unselfishly love human beings and God. This means that human beings live goodness in all dimensions of their life, and decides in its favour always and everywhere (Jurčić, 2007, 30).

Culture became, at the end of the twentieth century, a synonym for the mode of human life (Lonergan, 1972, 301).

“Culture permeates man's life, feelings, imagination, thinking, and functioning as an individual, a community, a society and a nation. Everything is affected by culture. Yet at the same time a human being is ‘a creator and an active culture carrier’.” (Trstenjak, 1975, 9)

This presupposes everything that he/she lives, feels, thinks, speaks and does. This fact is likewise pointed out by Rožič (2015), as well as Gallagher who maintains that it is of key importance to gain

“... the insight that there is an on-going two-way exchange between structures of our lives and cultures in which we dwell. The mode of our living or acting determines the mode of our thinking and feeling. And vice versa, what we think and feel greatly enhances our belief in chances to change this world or absence of any such changes.” (Gallagher, 2003, 23)

The term culture stems from the Latin verb *colere* with the original meaning of cultivating, growing, nurturing a field. Thus, the Latin word ‘cultura’ at first meant agriculture, since that was the activity which people pursued for the most part. Later on, the word also began to be used in a figurative sense for the “inner formation of human being himself, namely for subjective or spiritual culture as distinct from objective or material culture” (Trstenjak, 1975, 15). The latter meaning of culture is underlined by Gallagher (2003, 22) who defines it as “a set of views, values and lifestyles”. In that sense it could be said that human beings develop culture or culture of goodness while consciously shaping themselves in the light of goodness and nurturing the same in their relations with other people and the entire world.

2. Impact of Goodness on Culture

In Slovenia, it was Anton Trstenjak who, as the first and only author, wrote directly about the effect of goodness on health. In his book *It is Good to be Human* he exposes that “goodness heals; it is the inner healer, providing in-

ner peace, curing sick souls, gratifying and making them happy” (Trstenjak, 1988A, 108). For Trstenjak, forgiveness is “the core of inner recovery, although at the same time it is also one of the most difficult things” (Trstenjak, 1988A, 111). Failure to nurture goodness may lead to a path of disease, since lack of goodness “becomes an adversary of health” (Trstenjak, 1988A, 108).

“Until love has forgiven everything, the body and the entire personality of man suffer from withering.” (Trstenjak, 1988A, 109)

All thoughts and emotions against goodness “degrade human being’s spiritual and physical health and represent a cancer of personality” (Trstenjak, 1988A, 110). It is only goodness which “sets human hearts at rest” (Trstenjak, 1995, 98).

Trstenjak speaks about the impact of goodness on health in a holistic sense. Physical health is not of decisive importance for such impact. Human being should first expand his ideas of his physical life, and change his attitude towards life and death. Thus he will cut loose from the “fear of death and existential terror, so characteristic for the modern society” (Trstenjak, 1992, 102). The decisive discovery is that physical recovery is not the main concern in this case; instead it is a question of a change of one’s mindset.

Spiritual health is of utmost significance. Every human must possess “his/her inner healer” (Trstenjak, 1992, 101) which is the voice of goodness, leading primarily towards spiritual health. When human being is healthy in spirit, his/her body is likewise in better condition and finds it easier to bear the body’s afflictions. After the spiritual domain of human being is regulated and healed, the body and its area are likewise improved. Spiritual health, which also includes other dimensions of health, is primarily a state of inner peace. As pointed out by Trstenjak:

“If our objective is a change of body, we are already forgetting that the main target is actually inner peace which is sought for in vain in whatever part of the body. To wit, the issue of healing and the healer finally concerns our attitude towards death. There is no physician and no medicine which could prevent death. At best, we may only postpone it. The main issue here is to heal ourselves and others by eliminating fear of death and looking at it from a different angle.” (Trstenjak, 1992, 102)

First of all, spiritual health is achieved by means of a change in the perception of the world. This is the fruit of a miracle of goodness taking place when human “gains the sight” (Trstenjak, 1988A, 100) or penetrates the truth, i.e. suddenly sees the world in a different light, namely in the light of goodness. Humans begin to see everything in a true light through goodness. Trstenjak is convinced that any human being can alter his perception of the world through his/her thoughts (Trstenjak, 1988A, 100–101). The thoughts which people harbour determine and change their notions and feelings. When they begin to consciously harbour thoughts of goodness, they gradually achieve peace in themselves, and with God. They become capable of forgiveness and follow the path of recovery.

Trstenjak confirms his claims concerning the impact of goodness upon holistic health with a number of examples from his professional work and experiences of others. He maintains in a most self-confident manner:

“Life offers enough confirmations in that respect.” (Trstenjak, 1988A, 108; Trstenjak, 1992, 105)

In his book *Human to Himself*, Trstenjak lists clinical tests that “confirmed the effects of mental disorders upon physical health” (Trstenjak, 1984, 137). Among others there are the findings of Maltz who, by citing numerous au-

thors, finds that the “lack of trust and distinct pessimism prolong wound healing by at least 40 percent” (Trstenjak, 1984, 137). In his opinion, “trust, merriment and faith in life have an effect on life and health similar to that of the use of a special (specific) medicine (serum vaccine)” (Trstenjak, 1984, 137). Thoughts and emotions, imagination and stance thereby act as non-specific remedies.

Healthcare entails a special branch called psychosomatics (Greek *psyche* = *soul*; Greek *soma* = *body*), that is physical and mental healthcare. Psychosomatics addresses the interconnection between the body and the mentality, in particular the mental causes of physical diseases. If their findings are taken into consideration, it is easy to discover how in certain circumstances everyone affects his/her own health as well and serves as his/her own doctor.

“Namely, all clinical phenomena and disorders which arise out of basically mental causes are concerned here: imagination, fear, nervous tension and agitation, negativity and similar. In case of any of these clinical disorders, whether their symptoms are mental or physical, such disorders may be dismissed by the patient according to the same cause-effect principle, just as he/she caused them him/herself, only that his/her former inappropriate behaviour must be reoriented away from ‘disease’.” (Trstenjak, 1984, 131)

The analysis of Trstenjak’s works thus confirms the thesis that nurturing goodness has positive effects upon holistic health. This is likewise confirmed by some other published studies. Sheldon Cohen and Sarah D. Pressman (2005; 2006) explored the influence of positive emotions such as happiness, joy, excitement, enthusiasm, and contentment on health. By analysing a wide range of studies, they established that positive feelings definitely influence health in a good way. People nurturing such emotions develop fewer conditions, bear pain more easily, live longer and heal faster. Nevertheless, the lack of positive feelings does not necessarily mean strong negative impact such as that caused by anger, fear and depression.

In their copious study, Sonja Lyubomirsky, Laura King, and Ed Diener (2005) confirmed the usefulness of nurturing positive emotions for mental and physical health. Similar applies to Bethany E. Kok, Kimberly A. Coffey, Michael A. Cohn, et al. (2013). Their study further shows how strongly physical health of humans is influenced by positive social experiences. A considerable number of studies were likewise devoted to the impact of spirituality upon therapy (Puchalski, 2001), and patients in palliative care (McClement, Chochinov, 2010).

Heinz Hilbrecht, a researcher of the activity of the brain, finds that regular meditation or contemplation improves the immune system with its impact on the brain. Brain activity after meditation is similar to the immune response of the body after a flu vaccination. Thus people who meditate may enhance their bodily immune system (Hilbrecht, 2010, 171).

All mentioned studies serve to confirm the positive impact of goodness in emotions and thoughts upon human health. Conscious cultivation of goodness, on the other hand, produces true miracles. This is proven by the experience of Jerry Jampolsky, who is also mentioned by Trstenjak (1988A, 84). He established an institution for physically disabled children, most of them incurable. Each of his associates was faced with a condition that his or her work must be performed without remuneration, merely out of love for the child, out of pure goodness. He had namely realized that only persistent goodness, full of love, which hopes against all hope to recover the child’s health.

A similar positive effect of conscious nurturing of goodness on people may be noted with certain great personalities permeated with goodness, such as Mother Theresa, Jean Vanier, Pedro Opeka, etc.

3. Conscious Cultivation (of the Culture) of Goodness

Human thoughts and emotions are closely linked. Each thought causes emotions as well. Everything that takes place in the brain also affects the body.

“Endocrine glands and the brain with the nervous system (central and autonomous which functions with the sympathetic and the parasympathetic one) affect, through a nervous-biological-chemical path, every fiber and cell of the body.” (Trstenjak 1984, 138–139)

All this is taking place without conscious control and is not subject to human being’s direct influence. We can influence such developments indirectly through our thoughts and emotions. And that is the path of salvation. Human beings should learn to control and orient their thoughts and emotions.

Emotions against goodness and various irritations result in “disorders in physical developments, e.g. excessive production of cholesterol, epinephrine and paranephrine (...), and thereby increased blood pressure, nervous heart, digestion disorders, as well as mental despondency and a number of infirmities” (Trstenjak, 1984, 139). Many people allow their mental and physical problems to completely absorb them and devote all their thoughts solely to such problems, instead of reorienting their thoughts into what is good and beautiful. However, it is exactly the encouraging thoughts permeated with goodness, consideration and sober outlook as well as good and convivial feelings that are the very medicines which may be of assistance.

Thus, thoughts and emotions have a great deal of influence upon emotional, social and mental health, thereby affecting the body too. Each and every human being who wants to live the holistically healthiest life as possible should keep that in mind. However, every person is free. He/She alone must decide what thoughts and emotions to nurture. If it is his/her desire to create increasingly better thoughts and emotions, then he/she alone should take the relevant decision and begin to develop them consciously (Prijetelj, 2011, 133). Still, that is not enough. In order to nurture goodness on a conscious level, in addition to taking a free decision, certain tools are required in permeating all of her thoughts, emotions and relationships with the culture of goodness.

In his works, Trstenjak does not specify the tools which could help to cultivate goodness. He nevertheless clearly stresses that we are capable of “thinking and desiring well” only within the power of divine goodness, namely within the power of God Himself, who is “absolute goodness” (Trstenjak, 1988A, 91). It is solely within His power that man can harbour “good thoughts and good feelings, without any trace of resentfulness, offendedness, gossipness or even vindictiveness to other people, to those close or distant and to the entire humankind” (1988A, 109). Thus, the required tools may be found in the field of religion and/or spirituality.

Spirituality in the broadest sense represents a way of life and searching for whatever might be of assistance to find the meaning of man’s life and to achieve its fullness. In short, spirituality is the basis of human life. It enables an authentic, free, in-depth, rich, trusting, respectful, transforming, positive, forgiving and constructive relationship. It fills up one’s life with goodness, love, merriment, peace, benevolence, etc. (Platovnjak, 2015, 9–10). In the

narrower sense, spirituality means life in relation to the Absolute within the spirit of a certain religion. Christian religion is thereby the concrete human life within the Spirit of God's goodness poured into the heart of everyone who believes in Jesus Christ and is united with him by baptism.

Every type of spirituality offers a number of different tools that may assist in cultivating goodness. In this paper, only two such tools may prove to be particularly helpful and are present in several spiritual traditions, particularly that of the Roman Catholic Church. Those are contemplation and examen. Each in its own way, these two tools enable human beings to set a course for goodness in a very specific way, and cultivate the same in their thoughts, emotions and relations. Thus likewise being of great assistance in developing the culture of goodness.

3.1 Contemplation

The history of humanity and spirituality entails a variety of notions of contemplation and its multifaceted forms. It is frequently defined using concepts such as beholding, gazing, observing attentively. It is of essential importance, however, that it is through Christian contemplation that human being searches for God who "is love" (1 Jn 4:8) in the history and in people, in events and in herself. A Christian contemplative is a person whose gaze is so refined as to recognize God's temple in human beings, namely the abode and goodness of the Holy Spirit, Jesus Christ and Father. Such a contemplative is an expert in the art of distinction of God's presence that is not merely related to the holy places or limited to the religious, but is instead widespread to everything (Bianchi, 2004, 112).

From the aspect of psychology, contemplation is a special psychological condition characterized by attentiveness and being open to awareness. For Gerald G. May, an expert in the field of behaviouristic psychology, contemplation is a "direct, immediate, open-eyed encounter with life as-it-is" (May, 1987, 28). When this type of encounter with reality is oriented towards the relationship with God, the psychological state of contemplation becomes a spiritual event of contemplative prayer. It is important to be aware of this difference.

The psychological state of contemplation results in three direct changes in the functioning of the brain:

- 1) Increased clarity and breadth of awareness;
- 2) More direct and incisive responsiveness to situations;
- 3) Greater self-knowledge. (May, 1987, 29)

The person who 'practices' the state of contemplation becomes less sensitive to various existential fears and acquires a lot of personal power. Nevertheless, if such a person desires to set him/herself on a course to goodness and love, in addition to contemplation he/she needs the gift of Spirit to act in his/her heart and to wake the longing for God. Therefore, it is necessary to possess a deep and personal faith, since it is only then possible for contemplation, in union with the Spirit, to transform human being to become increasingly permeated with goodness and love.

Contemplation as a psychological state is thereby something absolutely natural and can be learned and developed or taught to others. After achieving this state, it can be applied either to a good or bad end. A person may employ it for his own benefit only, as is the case with sportsmen or artists who are known to achieve maximum efficiency at that time. It can also be employed for evil

purposes, for example in practicing the ancient Japanese martial art of nin-jitsu, where contemplation was used as a central skill in training assassins. On the other hand, exercises in contemplation may be directed towards God and goodness, developing God's goodness in his/her heart (May, 1987).

Roman Catholic spirituality aspires to bring all human beings close to God, who is full of goodness, in order to fill them with goodness as well. This spirituality trains human beings to see God in all things and to find God's goodness in all dimensions and circumstances of life. Among the many great teachers of contemplation in history of Roman Catholic spirituality, the best renowned is St. Ignatius of Loyola. His method of contemplation (called 'Ignatian contemplation') spread among Christians by way of his Spiritual Exercises (= Exx) approved by the pope in 1541.

Ignatian contemplation allows for deeper gazing, savouring, and relishing things from the past and the future. First, one should vividly visualize or depict a thing, an event, a person or a meeting. In the next move, one should integrally and creatively focus upon the same with all his senses, savouring the presence of God and his all-pervading goodness. As stressed by St. Ignatius of Loyola, such inner savouring and relishing things serves to satiate one's inner hunger and bring satisfaction (Exx 2).

St. Ignatius prepares anyone who has passed four weeks of retreat with spiritual exercises for contemplative practice in daily life by using the exercise Contemplation to Gain Love (Exx 230–237). Such contemplation helps human beings to find God in all things and to become his co-speaker and co-worker. In other words, it enables human beings to perceive goodness in all things, to comprehensively respond to such goodness, to abandon oneself to it and to actualize it in his/her life.

Naturally, human being is unable to find God directly in all things in the same manner as he/she can meet the resurrected Jesus Christ in the imaginary contemplation of New Testament events (Exx 261–312). However, he/she is well capable of contemplating all of the creation and to behold, in the light of faith, the presence of God who creates and ceaselessly bestows gifts (Tomlinson, 2011, 74).

The above view of both the world and human beings is based on the teachings of the Holy Scriptures where it is pointed out that all that exists and lives is good. In the Genesis (1:1–2:3) it is said on creation that God perceives everything he has created as good (Gen 1:10.18.21.25). After He has also created man in His image (Gen 1:26) and scrutinized everything He has made, He said that it was "very good" (Gen 1:31). The Wisdom Books likewise frequently stress that "everything" has been created good and that the world came to being out of complete God's freedom and love. "In all creation there is nothing you don't love; otherwise, you would not have created everything" (Wis 11:24).

The entire creation together with human beings and their mission appointed to them by God is very good because it arose from God's goodness. Creation is a gift to human beings and a heritage intended for them and entrusted to them. Moreover, the Church has very often defended "goodness of creation, including the material world" (Denzinger, Schönmetzer, 1965, 286, 455–463; 800; 1333; 3002).

St. Ignatius is aware that two things are essential for love:

- 1) love must "assert itself not as much in words as in actions" (Exx 230);
- 2) love lies "in mutual bestowment of both" (Exx 231).

St. Ignatius divided the contemplation to attain love into four steps, so that whoever enters it could comprehend God's goodness as deeply as possible,

and answer it in the most comprehensive way. On the basis of awareness what is essential for love, and on the basis of his request for the mercy of inner cognition of bestowment, a contemplative is invited to first remember the received goods of creation, redemption and special gifts. Then he/she ‘observes’ in the spirit how God with his goodness resides in things and in himself/herself, how God bestows he/she exists, feels, and discovers knowledge, how God turns him/her into His temple. Then he/she contemplates and considers how God endeavours and strives for his/her in all that is created in the world. Finally, a contemplate beholds how all the goods and all the gifts are granted from above, from God: just like rays from the sun and water from its source. While beholding and savouring all this, he/she gradually increasingly comprehends what immense gifts have actually been bestowed upon his/her. Everything that the contemplative is, what he/she owns and what is bestowed upon him/her, represents a gift. This appeals to his/her inner self and encourages him/her to wish to become a gift himself/herself, thus becoming similar to the Giver. Therefore, a contemplate makes himself/herself available to God and desires to cooperate with Him in daily life (Exx 234–237).

The more human being contemplates goodness and beauty of it all, the more this penetrates into him/her senses, thoughts, and imagination, and enriches him/her entire being with the fullness of life. Therefore, he/she cannot remain unchanged, and is himself/herself increasingly filled with goodness, like God who is bestowing Himself through everything. A contemplate is increasingly oriented towards goodness with all him/her being. He/she begins to experience the culture of goodness, and act on its behalf.

Christian contemplation is thus capable of transforming human heart, and co-shape the culture of goodness which is of such utmost importance for man’s holistic health.

3.2 *Examen*

Examen is an old form of day-to-day raising of awareness of everything that takes place in one’s life. It is the time of paying close attention to one’s inner life, and the time of self-observation. It was as early as in the Old Greek culture that examen was already practiced. For Socrates, life without examen was valueless (Aschenbrenner, 1980, 283–284). In the time of Church fathers, the stoic mode of examen was complemented by adding awareness-raising of the relationship with God. Human being does not focus into himself/herself, but opens a dialogue with God in whom he/she lives, moves and exists (Act 17:28). In the Middle Ages, examen was included in spiritual exercises in the lives of monks. It increasingly grew into an examination of conscience and was a part of the preparation for confession. With *devotio moderna* and St. Ignatius of Loyola, examen became one of the most significant parts of spiritual exercises. St. Ignatius of Loyola incorporated it in his booklet of Spiritual Exercises (Exx 43). The items of examen revive the ancient practice *memoria Dei* (remembrance of God) which is a prerequisite for person’s submission to the acts of God inside himself/herself, and for maximum cooperation with Him (Jaeger, 1961, 1789–1838).

The purpose of examen is the growth of human’s personal and absorbed relationship with God and, within Him, with others and with all of creation. It is primarily intended as a tool to help human beings to discern and/or open their eyes to the presence of God, i.e. to Love or Goodness, and not to moral assessment as to what was good and what was bad. In other words, examen

teaches us to behold everything in the light of goodness, and to permeate our feelings, imagination, thoughts, relations and actions with goodness. For this reason, practicing this exercise is suitable both for believers and non-believers.

Examen consists of five steps: the step of gratitude, the step of request for the light of goodness, the step of review of the past day, the step of expressing thankfulness and repentance, the step of taking decision in favour of goodness. The first step is of fundamental value. We are invited to calm down and remember good things that happened over the day. Then we thank God for “the good received” (Exx 43). For St. Ignatius it is essential that in reflection human beings become aware not only of events, circumstances, relationships and experiences which formed the story of his/her day, but also of himself/herself before God who is love, goodness itself (1 Jn 4:8.16). It is of supreme significance for humans to deepen the awareness of how greatly they had been bestowed with God’s goodness, and how it is actively present in him/her, and in all that exists (Exx 230–237) (Louis, 1986, 68). Thus, step by step, we develop our capacity to detect goodness in all things, and that capacity is of basic value for Ignatian spirituality. Where there is goodness and love, there is also God (1 Jn 4).

St. Ignatius didn’t consider anything that was good, beautiful and real as incidental. Everything that helps humans to live and act is a gift of the attentive and bestowing God’s love. Such remembrance and expressions of gratitude are an antidote for discontent which is so often present in our consumer culture. In person who becomes aware that he/she has been infinitely bestowed upon, such awareness gives rise to gratitude, and, along with it, quiet contentment and joy.

In the second step of examen, person asks for more light in order to better get to know goodness with which he/she has been bestowed, and the source of goodness itself. For St. Ignatius, the fundamental sin is one’s blindness which prevents one from seeing its bestowment, and thus ingratitude (Fleming, 2008, 25–28). For that reason, St. Ignatius invites us to ask for grace, to recognize one’s own blindness, and to get rid of it (Exx 43). With such a request, humans admit that, apart from Jesus, they can do nothing (Jn 15:5). It is only with Jesus’s help that humans can be aware of the presence of God and his goodness, remember the good received and thank for the same, recognize one’s own sin of blindness and ingratitude, and renounce it.

In the third step, in the received light of the presence of God, we review the past day from hour to hour (Exx 43). This does not merely represent remembrance of what took place. It likewise does not concern moral assessment of our acts and events. Primarily it concerns raise awareness of how God and His goodness were present in our life and actions (Louis, 1986, 71–72). We are invited to focus upon the epiphany of goodness and lets us to be bestowed with it again.

When a human being becomes aware of everything that has been bestowed upon him/her, he/she also becomes aware of his/her inability to be continuously aware of all this and he/she becomes a gift for others. The fourth step invites us to repent this inability and to request the grace of conversion. It is only with the help of God and His free forgiveness that we may acquire the ability to respond to God’s goodness and to turn ourselves into a free goodness.

In the fifth step, we therefore once more take a decision in favour of goodness, and a decision to next day cooperate with such goodness. Even more

consciously, we simply give ourselves to goodness and repeatedly decides in its favour.

Such awareness gives rise to gratitude, and, along with it, quiet contentment and joy. Step by step, our eyes open up to goodness, making us benevolent. In that way we trigger the development of culture of goodness in his/her feelings, imagination, thoughts and actions, and are living it in all dimensions of our life and actions.

Conclusion

Even a simple everyday greeting such as “good morning” indicates our sub-conscious awareness that it is important to cultivate goodness. In the present paper, it was confirmed that conscious development of goodness in the area of feelings, thoughts, and relationships has a favourable effect upon human health; in particular, emotional, social, and spiritual health which is closely linked to physical health.

The following main conclusions have been arrived to:

- 1) Research studies and lifelong experience confirm that all human being’s emotions, thoughts and, relationships have at least indirect effect on him/her health. Since humans are free beings, they can take free decisions what emotions, things, and relationship to cultivate. If they repeatedly decide to cultivate goodness, this will have a positive impact on their holistic health.
- 2) Contemplation and examen as spiritual tools may be of great assistance in calibrating thoughts and emotions towards goodness and its cultivation. They help to continually rediscover goodness, and to nurture it in the midst of daily life and actions.
- 3) The relevant studies prove that psychological state of contemplation brings about positive changes in brain activity. From a theological standpoint, humans are unable to fully orient themselves towards goodness, and develop it merely with contemplation, without being connected to God who is the source of goodness and goodness itself.
- 4) Daily examen gradually opens human’s eyes to goodness, repeatedly bestowed upon him/her by way of creation and people, by God in which he/she believes or not. Such awareness results in rise to gratitude, and quiet contentment and joy. Examen enables us to simply give ourselves to goodness and decide in its favour repeatedly. Thus, human beings begin to develop and cultivate the culture of goodness in their emotions, thoughts, and relationships.
- 5) It is important that human beings are aware of how vitally they are being determined by the culture in which they abide and function. At the same time, they should be aware that such culture may be altered by them, if only they may alter it by themselves in the event that they consciously endeavour to cultivate a different culture. Whoever keeps taking decisions to cultivate the culture of goodness will continuously allow him/herself and others to live life in its fullness.

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Ivan Platovnjak

Dobrota i zdravlje: kultura dobrote

Sažetak

Ako čak i jednostavni svakodnevni pozdrav, kakav djelomično oblikuje podsvesnu kultivaciju dobrote, ima pozitivan utjecaj na ljudska bića, ne bi li svjesni razvoj kulture dobrote imao cjeloviti pozitivan utjecaj na ljudsko zdravlje? U radu se najprije određuju i izlažu tri temeljna koncepta: dobrota, zdravlje i kultura. Potom, analizirajući autore poput Antona Trstenjaka i drugih, rad potvrđuje tezu da svjesna kultivacija dobrote u mislima, osjećajima i odnosima ima pozitivan utjecaj na ljudsko zdravlje. Posljednji dio rada istražuje dva kršćanska duhovna alata (kontemplacija, ispit savjesti) putem kojih ljudska bića mogu svoje misli i osjećaje usmjeriti prema dobroti i razviti kulturu dobrote koja im omogućuje iskustvo punine života.

Ključne riječi

dobrota, zdravlje, kultura, kultura dobrote, Anton Trstenjak, kontemplacija, ispit savjesti

Ivan Platovnjak

Güte und Gesundheit: Kultur der Güte

Zusammenfassung

Wenn sogar ein einfacher alltäglicher Gruß, welcher eine unterbewusste Kultivierung der Güte teilweise formt, einen positiven Einfluss auf menschliche Wesen ausübt, hätte dann nicht die bewusste Förderung der Kultur der Güte einen ganzheitlichen positiven Einfluss auf die menschliche Gesundheit? In der Arbeit werden zunächst drei Grundkonzepte bestimmt und abgehandelt: Güte, Gesundheit und Kultur. Im Anschluss daran, indem sie die Autoren wie Anton Trstenjak und andere analysiert, bestätigt die Arbeit die These, dass die bewusste Kultivierung der Güte in Gedanken, Gefühlen und Beziehungen eine positive Auswirkung auf die menschliche Gesundheit hat. Der abschließende Teil des Aufsatzes erforscht zwei christliche spirituelle Werkzeuge (Kontemplation, Gewissensprüfung), wodurch menschliche Wesen ihre Gedanken und Gefühle auf die Güte hinlenken und eine Kultur der Güte entwickeln können, die ihnen eine Erfahrung der Fülle des Lebens ermöglicht.

Schlüsselwörter

Güte, Gesundheit, Kultur, Kultur der Güte, Anton Trstenjak, Kontemplation, Gewissensprüfung

Ivan Platovnjak

La bonté et la santé : la culture de la bonté

Résumé

Si même un simple bonjour quotidien, qui partiellement forme l'acte de cultiver la bonté, a une influence positive sur l'être humain, le développement conscient de la culture du bien ne devrait-il pas avoir une influence complète sur la santé humaine ? Premièrement, ce travail détermine et expose trois concepts fondamentaux : la bonté, la santé et la culture. Ensuite, analysant des auteurs tel Anton Trstenjak et d'autres, ce travail confirme la thèse selon laquelle cultiver la bonté de manière consciente dans nos pensées, sentiments et relations, a une influence positive sur la santé humaine. La dernière partie du travail analyse deux outils spirituels chrétiens (la contemplation, l'examen de conscience) au travers desquels les êtres humains peuvent diriger leurs pensées et leurs sentiments vers la bonté et développer une culture de la bonté qui leur permet le plein de l'expérience de la vie.

Mots-clés

bonté, santé, culture, culture du bien, Anton Trstenjak, contemplation, examen de conscience