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Working Title: Raised to be strong-Learning to be weak

Abstract:

A child that is raised in modern Germany learns on multiple levels that ‘being strong’ is the ultimate tool for having success in life. Parents, siblings, friends, academic institutions, sports clubs and society at large consistently demand from them to be ‘perfect’, to be confident, and to be disciplined. They are trained not to show their emotions and to never share with other people when they go through hardship. In our careers, we learn that ‘being strong’ means that one has to be stronger than others. This nurtures a competitive culture and ‘winning’ becomes the ultimate goal.

These expectations ultimately build walls between people because they can never reveal their true face in front of the other. Instead, they consistently have to protect their humanness and bury their weaknesses deep in the ground to not be exposed to the judgement of the people around them.

Emmanuel Levinas challenges western egocentrism with the idea that power can sabotage itself and that weakness can have the power to command the attention and help from the powerful. Thereby, he helps the author to revisit her cultural indoctrinate and reveals that being weak and vulnerable with others opens another dimension of relating to oneself and the people around us. It forms honest, genuine and compassionate relationships. The author leans that being humble, vulnerable and kind is a sign of bravery and strength. Ultimately, being weak is the new strong and that moral excellence is kindness.

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