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Developmental Universals and Their Implications for Parental Competence

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One of the most disturbing symptoms of modern Western society is the low priority given to the prevention of pathology and tragedy. When there is clear evidence of pathology, our society eventually comes around to investing resources in some remedial effort to deal with it. Unfortunately, such an effort is inevitably more costly and less effective than a preventive approach. Ultimately, the lack of concern for prevention decreases the quality of life and threatens survival itself.

It is my thesis that a society determined to guarantee its own survival and perpetually improve the quality of life for its people must give the highest priority to the prevention of pathology by generating and using whatever resources are required to meet the developmental needs of each new generation. Knowledge about human development is therefore a prerequisite to the effective use of resources to achieve those ends. These two elements, knowledge and resources, must be combined with a third essential factor to have a successful program. This factor is a structure or agency capable of carrying out the program. Since parents and families are in the most powerful position to influence each generation, they are the agencies that can apply human development knowledge to the greatest social advantage. Taken together they are the most logical point of leverage by which society can elevate the quality of life for its people. (For a full discussion of this thesis, see Daniel C. Jordan, 1978).

What might we expect if all parents could increase their competence by understanding the nature of universal development needs and applying their knowledge to meet them for all members of the family, particularly the very young ones? Such a massive preventive approach would surely bring about a transformation of society to the benefit of everyone.

But do we have enough knowledge about developmental processes at the present time to significantly improve the competence of parents and other social service institutions or agencies? How would such knowledge increase the effectiveness of parents? The purpose of this chapter is to suggest definitive answers to these questions and to provide the broad interpretive framework necessary to appreciate their full meaning.

Trying to understand the nature of human development is one of the most important undertakings of modern man.* It was also a concern of primitive man. Since the dawn of civilization man has wondered about his own nature and why he behaves the way he does. Before the birth of the scientific method, attempts to understand human nature depended primarily on philosophical speculation, religious tradition, and folklore. Today, these are insufficient for effective program planning. To them must be added the knowledge gained from careful empirical investigation.

Thus, behind every effective program is a significant empirical investigation. But this is only part of the study. Behind every significant investigation there is an implicit or explicit theory. During the past fifteen years, my colleagues and I, at the Center for the Study of Human Potential at the University of Massachusetts, have engaged in an investigation of the nature of human beings and how they grow, learn and develop. We have integrated into this inquiry the construction of a comprehensive theory of human development that, in conjunction with empirical work, has resulted in the identification of several developmental universals which have rich implications for the formation of social policy. In particular, they have significance for the kinds of policies required to strengthen the family and increase the effectiveness of parents.

Up to the present time, no single unifying theory of human development has existed. This is not surprising, since the human organism is extraordinarily complex and human behavior is even more varied and changes over time and under varying circumstances. Mussen, Conger, and Kagan (1969) state:

There is no single comprehensive theory encompassing the vast body of accumulated data in the field of developmental psychology. A complete theory would have to include explanatory concepts accounting for the origins, as well as the mechanisms of development and change, of all aspects of psychological functioning—motor, cognitive, emotional, and social. It may be impossible to construct such an ideal theory; certainly no one has accomplished it yet [p. 16].

While the theory we have constructed may not turn out to be the "ideal" theory mentioned above, we believe it is a significant step in that direction and over time the theory can be tested, modified, retested, and continually refined. Such an undertaking is of extreme importance because in the absence of a comprehensive theory of development, the formation of social policies will be without a unifying framework. They will have no preventive effects because actions resulting from them will be at cross-purposes and undermine one another. Educational practices will be without a secure foundation, and any planning of programs designed to increase parental competence and strengthen the family will be fragmented and ineffective.

PHILOSOPHICAL AND THEORETICAL CONSIDERATIONS OF DEVELOPMENTAL UNIVERSALS

The great mathematician, logician, and philosopher, Alfred North Whitehead, stated in the opening section of his own philosophy of organism that it is the purpose of philosophy to create a scheme of thought within which every item of experience

*"Man" and "he" are used in the generic sense. "Humankind" and "it," "one," or other alternatives may be substituted.

can be interpreted. Since this is also the function of a good theory, we used his philosophy to test the comprehensiveness, logical consistency, and adequacy of our theory of development. While it is beyond the scope of this article to discuss organismic philosophy at any length, it is nonetheless important to explain several of its most general ideas, since without them it will be difficult to appreciate the comprehensive nature of the theory of human development we are proposing and the developmental universals that it sets forth.

In simple terms, a philosophy specifies assumptions or beliefs about life and creation, and the grounds justifying them. We studied the works of the great philosophers and thinkers, both past and present, to find out what they believed about the nature of man and the universe, and why they believed what they did. We found that most philosophers could be placed into one of two basic groups: those that believe man is no more than a machine, albeit a very complex one, and those that believe he is a soul or spiritual being "housed" in a body. Beliefs are important because they determine action. For instance, if you believe that man is a machine, you will treat him like one. If he gets sick, you will tend to think that he is ill because one of his parts has worn out or because he put the wrong fuel in his tank. If you regard children as machines, you will expect them to behave exactly as you want them to, for machines are not supposed to have minds of their own. You will tend to believe that you can manipulate and control them and that their feelings, intentions, and aspirations are illusions. This approach to medicine and child-rearing is largely based on a mechanistic view of life and creation. This view reached its peak in the work of the great physicist, Sir Isaac Newton. By the end of the eighteenth century, Newtonian mechanics dominated all scientific thought. When the human sciences such as psychology and sociology began to evolve, they borrowed heavily from the physical sciences. For this reason, many theories of human development reflect a mechanistic view of man.

Around the turn of the century, however, many physicists began to find that the philosophical view of the universe as mechanism had serious shortcomings and that as long as that philosophical outlook prevailed, it was impossible to generate new theories that would more adequately explain certain physical phenomena that could not be explained by Newtonian mechanics. In the Western world, we are now experiencing a shift away from the mechanistic view of man and the universe to an organismic one. The view of man as mechanism now seems no longer intellectually tenable.

Essentially, organismic philosophers regard the universe in dynamic rather than in static terms. They believe that everything is connected to everything else and that you cannot understand any one thing apart from the connections it has with everything around it. In other words, there is no way to understand the part until you see how it fits into the whole and a whole is more than the sum of its parts. (From this point of view, a family can be regarded as a whole, and no one member can be understood apart from his connections to that whole, which is far more than just the individual members or parts "added up.")

Because organismic philosophers are interested in process, time is an important variable. Time is irreversible because process is not reversible. Everything has a past, a present, and a future, all of which are interdependent. What takes place in the present not only becomes the past but influences the future. Thus, prevention is a better investment than remediation, for prevention means guiding the process of development in the right way the first time around. Organismic philosophers do not believe

that whatever changes occur in something are always caused by events external to it but that in fact every entity in the universe has some say over its own destiny. This is particularly true of the higher forms of life. (Human beings are largely self-determining; volition is a developmental reality.) Finally, because of the central role of process in their thinking—how something changes from a former condition to its present condition—these philosophers are interested in the nature of potentiality and how it is actualized. Whitehead proposed that the translation of potentiality into actuality is the fundamental process of the universe characterizing its ultimate reality and that this process is what is meant by creativity, the “universal of universals” (Whitehead, 1960). Mechanistic philosophy does not give an adequate explanation of creativity and therefore fails to account for the emergence of the new forms in the universe that are evident in evolution and human development.

For these and other reasons, we chose organismic philosophy as the interpretive framework within which to understand the nature of man. From this framework we generated the following propositions descriptive of the nature of man: that because we have no evidence to suggest limitations on man's ability to learn, we may assume that he is a creature of unlimited potential; that his ability to symbolize bestows upon him an extraordinary memory that connects past with present and endows him with a consciousness that creates awareness of the future and enables him to know that he knows and to know when he doesn't know; that when he knows he doesn't know he experiences a tension we call curiosity that motivates him to search and to learn; that because he is relatively free from instincts and dependent for so many years during the early part of his life, until he learns how to survive on his own, he has a capacity for love and trust that attracts the support he needs and inevitably makes him a social and moral being naturally equipped to assume, when his time comes, responsibility for socializing and caring for his own offspring; that his need to love and be loved and his awareness of knowing and not knowing make him yearn to find his place in the cosmos and set him on a search that gives rise to his art, religion, philosophy, and science; that his knowing and loving capacities, when used to create communities in service to man, are the most effective instruments of human and cultural evolution; and, finally, that he is a purposeful being whose perpetual becoming depends upon the formulation of ideals, plans, hypotheses that he consciously pursues. All of these qualities place man at the forefront of evolutionary forces and enable him to assume considerable control over them.

There will no doubt be many among those who determine social policy, administer parent-effectiveness training programs, or work as community and educational planners, who may object to this conception of man and assert that it has no real place in a scheme for practical action to strengthen families and increase parental effectiveness. But since this conception of man is reflected in the noblest visions and passions that have animated philosophy, religion, art, and sciences throughout history, it seems reasonable that any view of man that ignores these expressions of his highest aspirations will, in fact, be out of touch with the reality of man. I submit that any program that is supposed to serve man and is out of touch with this reality will certainly be rendered ineffective in the long run if not right from its beginning. It is simply not possible to be practical in service to man and at the same time ignore his distinctive characteristics and ultimate concerns—value and emotion, purpose and intention, consciousness, faith and trust, beauty and art, aspiration and love, meaning and knowledge, morality and self-sacrifice, and his cosmic yearning to find out how he fits into the universe.

These distinctive characteristics of man have to be developed. They each represent complex potentialities that become actualized through maturation and learning. A theory is needed to explain how their actualization takes place. From these philosophical perspectives on the nature of man, we deductively derived a comprehensive theory of human development that accounts for every developmental needs at any point in the life cycle, whether biological, psychological, sociological, technological, moral, aesthetic, religious, or philosophical. The theory is useful and practical because it enables anyone who understands it to generate ways to identify and meet basic developmental needs of human beings in any setting at any age level.

In accordance with organismic philosophy, our theory defines development as the translation of potentiality into actuality. Since we have already affirmed the infinitude of man's potentialities, it would be impossible to make a list of them. It is possible, however, to classify them, and once types of potentialities are clarified, it is possible to discover what promotes the actualization of each type. The theory also explains the nature and treatment of two major social pathologies—crime and mental illness—and all the varieties of their expression that come in the wake of the suppression of human potential.

From this statement of philosophy and theory, we can now suggest a broad definition of parental effectiveness. *To be an effective parent is to promote the actualization of one's children's potentialities at an optimum rate in positive directions.* As we shall see, in order to do this, parents must promote the actualization of each other's potentialities. In the case of single-parent families, children must be able to see their parent interacting with at least one other adult such that the interaction draws out the potentialities of both. There is no substitute for this kind of modeling as one of the most effective means of promoting the actualization of a child's potentialities.

One of the main purposes of the theory of human development is to make the general definition of parental effectiveness more specific. The theory helps answer such critical questions as: What are the potentialities to be developed? How do parents facilitate the actualization of these potentialities? How can they do so at an optimum rate? What is meant by “positive directions?”

Every child begins with the union of a sperm from his father and an egg from his mother. Each parent contributes twenty-three chromosomes that contain the basic genetic blueprint that guides the development of the fertilized egg into a little human being inside the womb. After the child is born, he gradually turns into an adult over a fifteen- to seventeen-year period of time. Whatever qualities this adult has must have existed as potentialities in the sperm and the egg, which constituted his beginning. Development refers to the sum total of the changes that take place from the point of conception on. Each change represents a potentiality being actualized. But as everyone knows there are millions upon millions of changes, far too numerous to list and describe in detail. No parent would be able to memorize the names of so many changes, let alone the sequence of their occurrence. We have therefore found it more useful to think of development in terms of basic patterns of change associated with the actualization of fundamental types of human potentialities.

Of course, parents cannot do anything about altering the genetic endowment of their offspring to achieve a predetermined developmental objective, but they can learn to understand the basic nature of human potentialities—the developmental universals—with which all children are endowed and learn how they can promote their actualization at an optimum rate. According to the theory of human development briefly outlined above, there are several kinds of potentialities. Each one of

them constitutes a developmental universal. To be effective, parents need to know what they are and how to promote their actualization.

THE ROLE OF PARENTS IN ACTUALIZING BIOLOGICAL POTENTIALITIES

Since the basic structural design of each human being is contained in the genetic code, the first task of a parent is to insure the fullest translation of the genetic code into a living, spirited, human being. To do this, specific building materials are needed, particularly during the nine months of gestation and in the formative years of the child after birth. These building materials come initially from the nutrients carried by the sperm and the egg that fuse to form the conceptus. Secondly, the nutrients come from the food that the mother eats. Finally, the building continues with nutrients from the food that the child consumes after birth. Nutrition therefore plays a critical role in the actualization of biological potentialities—the translation of the genetic code into the bones, hair, nails, vessels, nerves, muscles, organs, and bodily fluids that make up the living physical body of the child. If the genetic blueprint calls for certain nutrients and they are unavailable, or not available in adequate quantities at the time required, the physical development of the child can be impaired. During certain periods, particularly during the pre-natal months and during the months right after birth, nutritional deficiency may result in irreversible damage. If the proper ingredients are not in the child's diet his growth can be impaired, or he may get sick, develop learning disability, become the victim of chronic ailments, and have any number of other physical problems.

There are factors other than nutrition that also have a direct bearing on the actualization of biological potentialities. For instance, every child needs rest. He needs protection from extreme temperatures. Pure water to drink and clean air to breathe are essential. Finally, accidents can retard growth or cause permanent damage to the physical body or lead to chronic problems, handicaps, or death. A properly nourished and cared for child will have fewer diseases and accidents, but when children do become sick or have serious accidents they need medical attention.

Thus, to be competent and effective parents requires that potential parents insure that they themselves are in the best health, looking after themselves nutritionally, before conception, and that the mother in particular will eat properly during the gestation period. They will provide the best food possible and help the child to develop eating habits that will insure the best of health. Effective parents will also provide adequate shelter, make certain that the child sleeps sufficiently, drinks pure water, has clean air to breathe, is supervised so that accidents are prevented, and provide medical attention when sickness or accidents occur. Unfortunately, many parents do not see the importance of their own physical health in the promotion of the actualization of their children's potentialities. This is particularly true in the case of pregnant women who do not realize that they place their unborn babies at risk by an inadequate diet, smoking, drinking, taking drugs, and not getting enough fresh air, rest, and exercise.

In other words, the effective parent is one who insures the actualization of biological potentialities by preventing unnecessary physical ailments, diseases, handicaps, and accidents through proper nutrition and medical care when necessary. Nutritional needs and the physical requirements of rest and shelter are the most ba-

sic developmental universals. If these are neglected or ignored, the actualization of psychological potentialities, to which we now turn our attention, will be impaired.

THE ROLE OF PARENTS IN ACTUALIZING PSYCHOLOGICAL POTENTIALITIES

Just as nutrition is the key factor in the actualization of biological potentialities, learning is the means by which psychological potentialities are developed. Thus, it is necessary for parents to understand these potentialities and acquire a basic knowledge of the nature of learning.

Our theory identifies five basic universal dimensions of psychological development, each one of which will be fostered by parents if they are to be considered effective:

1. perceptual
2. psychomotor
3. cognitive
4. affective
5. volitional

Perceptual development depends on learning how to process and interpret information that comes into the child's mind through the senses. Experience has shown that vision, hearing, and the sense of touch are the predominant means by which children learn about and understand their world. In part, developing perceptually comes about through maturation, but developing efficiency or acuity in perception also depends on learning. It is therefore important that parents provide the right kinds of stimulation to promote the development of perceptual abilities. The primary means of doing this is to create for the child a rich environment that contains many different kinds of sounds, different textures, wide varieties of shapes, colors, and variations in light and shadow, as well as many opportunities for manipulating objects.

Psychomotor development refers to gaining control over the voluntary muscles so that the child can handle his own body with efficiency and poise. Proper psychomotor development has an influence on other kinds of development and it should therefore be given a high priority by parents. Again, much of psychomotor development occurs naturally through maturation, but the refinements come about through learning. Children need opportunities for strengthening their muscles through climbing, jumping, swimming, running, and playing games that require coordination. Sitting passively watching television for long hours is not a good idea for young children since they should be up and moving about. Each day the child wakes up in the morning with several hundred thousand new muscle cells that need exercising.

Cognitive development means learning how to think and reason. Although thinking and reasoning depend largely upon language development, they have their roots in both perceptual and psychomotor development. Parents can stimulate cognitive development by providing experiences that enable a child to develop a variety of thought patterns such as seriation, classification, induction, and deduction, by involving them in speaking and listening, constantly showing them how things are related, and by giving explanations for everything. Parents who make opportunities for the children to solve problems, ask many questions, listen to answers and so forth, and who encourage their children to pose questions are promoting the actualization

of cognitive potentialities. If a proper foundation of cognitive development is laid during the first few years of life, children will find that learning to think and reason in school will be greatly facilitated.

Affective development refers to the progressive organization of emotions and feelings by associating them appropriately with given environments, events, and ideas. For instance, fear appropriately associated with the right things makes a child properly cautious and serves a protective function. On the other hand, if a child associates fear inappropriately with certain places or things, such as bed or nutritious food, emotional development can be impaired. In essence, ensuring the proper emotional development of a child means associating the pleasing or hope-related emotions with those things he needs to do in order to continue growing and developing while associating the painful or fear-related emotions with those things that are likely to impair development. Parents can help their children grow emotionally by being reasonably consistent in rewarding and punishing them. The primary emphasis should be on rewarding them rather than on punishment because rewards indicate what the child should do, thereby providing a clear indication of appropriate action, whereas punishment by itself only indicates what he should not do. Rewards pave the way for action; punishment primarily inhibits action. A child is best guided if he knows what to do as well as what not to do. In other words, both reward and punishment are needed in order to promote the actualization of affective potentialities. However, a note of caution is warranted. Excessive rewarding leads to spoiling and excessive punishment leads to withdrawal and emotional disturbance. Both extremes should be avoided.

By *volitional development* we mean the emerging capacity to make choices about what to do, focusing attention on whatever is required to accomplish self-selected goals. In other words, volitional development is at the heart of gaining independence and self-reliance. Parents can facilitate volitional development by encouraging children to make decisions. Children, in their turn, have a natural inclination to become independent. They like to do things "all by themselves." While volitional development requires careful supervision, the child should have ample periods of time during which there is little or no interference except to ensure safety. If volitional capacity is impaired, lack of initiative, clinging dependency, and lack of self-confidence will result.

ROLE OF PARENTS IN HELPING THEIR CHILDREN TO BECOME COMPETENT LEARNERS

Because the actualization of five types of potentialities briefly discussed above are all largely dependent on learning, it is extremely useful for parents to understand as much as they can about the nature of learning and what promotes it.

We arrived at a very general definition of learning after analyzing all the basic learning theories developed by psychologists over the past seventy-five years. At first, our definition may seem difficult to grasp because it is necessarily general and abstract, but once understood, it has the virtue of enabling parents and teachers to generate many approaches to help the child when he is having difficulty learning. According to our theory of development, to learn is to *differentiate* experience (whether perceptual, psychomotor, cognitive, affective, or volitional) by breaking it down into contrastible elements, to *integrate* these elements into new patterns, and to

generalize the pattern to new situations. In other words, any time parents can help a child to experience, understand, or see the difference between things or ideas (differentiation), grasp new connections among these different things (integration), and apply the integration to similar situations (generalization), they will be facilitating learning. Just grasping the full implications of this one statement would enable parents to develop a highly effective child-rearing/teaching style that fosters the growth of learning competence in their children.

It follows from our theory of development and its definition of learning that if the child is having trouble learning, it will be because:

1. he suffers from biological impairments due to poor nutrition;
2. he does not grasp the difference between two things or two ideas (that is, is confused);
3. he can see that things are different, but cannot see how they are connected or integrated (that is, sees only the trees but not the forest);
4. he can't generalize or transfer his learning to similar situations (that is, can't see how turning a faucet generalizes to driving a screw);
5. or some combination of any or all of the above.

Parents can facilitate learning by providing their children with a rich environment in which they can manipulate objects and discuss their actions, so that they see differences and relationships, and are able to generalize something learned in one situation by applying it to a different but related one. Consolidation of learning experiences for most children requires a certain amount of repetition that they usually enjoy. On the other hand, the rate of learning will be slowed down if there is too much repetition and no new experiences that require differentiation, integration, and generalization. New experiences may come from new ways of interacting with old environments or the introduction of new things into the environment (such as new toys, games, or activities).

Eventually, children come to understand that learning tasks require them to differentiate, integrate, and generalize and as they become conscious of this requirement, they can analyze problems and direct and guide their own learning most effectively. When that occurs, they have learned how to learn. This is one of the greatest gifts parents can bestow upon their children, for it places them in charge of their own destiny and liberates them to become the best that they can become.

PARENTS' ROLE IN PROVIDING FOUNDATION IN LANGUAGE, MATH, AND THE ARTS

One of the chief characteristics that sets human beings apart from all other animals is the capacity for symbolization—the ability to allow one thing to stand for something else. This ability not only makes communication possible but bestows the gift of a practically infinite memory. It enables us to record events, ideas, and plans for future reference. It also appears that symbolization is a critical factor in consciousness itself. Our sense of the past, our awareness of the present, and our anticipation of the future all depend upon consciousness. A proper integration of these three types of awareness enables us to plan our lives sensibly, thereby avoiding certain pitfalls, and to improve the quality of our lives. Language, mathematics, and the arts are the basic symbol systems through which culture becomes cumulative and is

transmitted from one generation to the next. Thus, gaining a foundation in these symbol systems is a primary means of both cultural advancement and personal achievement. Symbolization is a critical developmental universal. If it is neglected, the general rate of the development of psychological potentiality will be slowed down.

I have already made reference to language development in connection with cognitive development. Given the central role of language in human development, no parents would be considered effective if they ignored this aspect of their children's development. Without adequate foundations in language, children enter school at a serious disadvantage that may plague them throughout their lives, but particularly during the school years. School failure is practically guaranteed for children whose facility with language is limited, especially if reading is never mastered and the capacity for oral or written expression remains undeveloped. There are many ways to promote language development, but two stand out as especially effective: (1) conversing freely and frequently with children, engaging them in discussions that describe events, deal with abstract ideas, and center around problem solving, and (2) reading to them from the very earliest ages and infusing within them a love of books and reading.

Children whose capacity for quantitative thinking is limited will also be at a disadvantage. Since everything that exists, exists in some amount, and because so much of the understanding of science depends upon mathematics, developing the foundations for quantitative thinking is extremely important. Again, the effective parent builds a foundation by exposing children to quantitative concepts and engaging them in activities that emphasize amounts, measurement, comparisons, and the cardinal and ordinal use of numbers.

Exposure to the arts—music, dance, theater, and mime, painting, and sculpture—is important because it develops the expressive and creative capacities of the child. The arts are a natural means through which language and mathematical abilities are also developed. Furthermore, the capacity to create and appreciate beauty is one of the most distinctive characteristics of man. Parents who rear their children devoid of experiences in the arts will be depriving them of one of the richest sources of meaning and pleasure in life. No civilization or society in which art was absent has ever existed. It is one of the cultural universals of all time and we should therefore not be surprised to find its counterpart as a developmental universal in children.

PARENTAL RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF HIGHER ORDER COMPETENCIES: TECHNOLOGICAL, MORAL, AND RELIGIOUS/PHILOSOPHICAL

Mankind's capacity to survive depends in large measure on understanding the physical environment and being able to modify it for productive purposes. One of the outstanding features of man throughout his long history has been the capacity to invent and use tools. Those who understand how things work and who are able to use tools are at an advantage compared to those who can't. We are in a technological age. Adaptability and employability in the future will more and more depend upon technological competence. Effective parents will therefore want their children to develop some measure of *technological competence*. This can be done by engaging children in activities that depend on learning how things work—understanding cause and

effect relationships. The average home is well equipped with materials and appliances suitable for such activities. They are the natural means for developing a demeanor of inquiry based on the scientific method. Without a grasp of these fundamentals, technological competence is not possible.

While competence in this area is important, it has to be recognized that our great technological advancements have had many deleterious side effects: energy wastage; pollution of air, land, and water supplies; ruthless depletion of natural resources; production of weapons capable of destroying mankind; and the marketing of large numbers of products that impair health. It is therefore clear that technology must be controlled by moral principles, otherwise technology will control us and dehumanize our lives. At the foundation of *moral competence* is a commitment to protect the right of every human being to a life filled with opportunities for the actualization of his own potentialities. This commitment inevitably entails controlling and directing technology so that it not only does not threaten survival, but rather is used to improve the quality of life for everyone. In addition, moral competence determines the way one individual relates to all others. In this age, when the planet has shrunk to the size of one country—a global village, as some have said—it is essential that children grow up sensing the oneness of mankind; committed to justice, and free from those prejudices that underlie discrimination on the basis of language, race, creed, national origin, sex, or economic status. In other words, in this day and age, parents cannot be effective if they do not lay the foundations for the establishment of world peace in the character of their children.

Because of consciousness, man has an acute awareness that he is distinct and separate from all other entities in the universe. This has impelled him to wonder how he is related to all other things, including the unfathomable mysteries underlying creation. His curiosity about the splendors of the universe and the ultimate unknowns confronting him have given rise to religious beliefs or philosophical orientations to life. It appears that no adult is fully mature if he has avoided coming to grips with such ultimate concerns and issues. At the heart of these concerns is the capacity to trust or to have faith. Children who grow up devoid of the capacity to trust or to have faith in others and in themselves will be afraid to approach any unknown. They are likely to be maladjusted, disturbed in their relationships with others, and will probably discover that they are their own worst enemy. Effective parents will therefore make efforts to lay a firm foundation for trust and faith that will enable their children to deal with the ultimate issues and concerns. This may take the form of a particular religious orientation or some philosophical view of life and its significance. Having developed such an orientation or view that is free from superstition is what we mean by *religious or philosophical competence*. The sanctions of moral convictions that, in turn, can control technology and make it serve mankind are derived from such a religious or philosophical overview.

Each of these higher-order competencies rests on a related set of values and each set of values is organized around an ideal. Technological competence rests on material values organized around the ideals of scientific inquiry. Moral competence is determined by social values organized around the ideals of justice, human rights, cooperation, and service. Religious or philosophical competence depends on spiritual values ordered by the ideal of reverence for life and its relationship to ultimate unknowns in the universe—a relationship that must be taken on faith. When these material, social, and spiritual values are integrated, they define the Self—the character of the self-actualizing child and the maturing adult.

The importance of the parents' role in assisting children to form positive values and attitudes of these three types is so great that it is almost impossible to overestimate it; what humanity values determines the social priorities that have the heaviest claim on resources. If these priorities do not reflect a high regard for the developmental universals we have outlined, the social order will be suppressive of human potential and will eventually be weakened to the point of collapse—even if the collapse is preceded by a show of totalitarian strength on the part of the ruling few. If, on the other hand, what parents value draw out the potentialities of their children, they will very likely adopt and further refine the values of their parents.

As children mature, it is essential that they see their parents performing more roles than just parental roles. After all, parents do other things than raising children and these other things have a bearing on how effective they are as parents. Parents are also neighbors, inhabitants of a city, town, or civil jurisdiction, citizens of a state or country, and most importantly, members of the family of man—a family of remarkable diversity spread over the face of the earth. The evolution of humanity is unthinkable apart from the progressive development of wider spheres of social and cultural unity through the effective coordination of human diversity. This principle is an evolutionary universal that is expressed in the developmental universals reflected in material, social, and spiritual values and their respective higher-order competencies: technological, moral, and philosophical/religious. The individual personalities of growing children must contain within them the seeds of values that foster trust and guarantee social security through an abiding commitment to human rights—rights that in turn guarantee the opportunity for everyone to develop his potentialities to the fullest. Such a commitment, unlikely to survive severe tests if it is not grounded in religious and philosophic sanctions, is a prerequisite to the actualization of potentialities in “positive directions.” Parents who transmit prejudices to their offspring are guiding the actualization of their potentialities in negative directions. The opposers of human rights espouse values that are not universalizable. Eventually they become the tragic victims of the values they model.

Civilization must have some basis in order, and that order ultimately inheres in the value systems shared by the individuals comprising it. Commitment to human rights is an indispensable element of social order and the ground of human rights is the provision of and protection of opportunities for the actualization of human potential for everyone. When these rights are guaranteed, goodwill flourishes and parents and families will be at peace because developmental universals are being universally met. If families and parents are at peace, the world will be at peace.

Thus, the attainment of world peace is only possible if people in their capacity as responsible and effective parents and community members are prepared to adopt and to educate their children in the universal ideals that can create a stable and progressive social order.

Parents cannot raise children without a community and a community at war with other communities is no place to model the values of human rights. Hence, parent effectiveness includes participation in community building. The great task here is to keep alive the vision of the developmental universals, for it will nudge the human species forward and enable us to invest our resources in helping each other, as parents and community members, to overcome every obstacle in the path of our individual and collective becoming.

SUMMARY

A working definition of parental competence must be clear, comprehensive, and universal. Without such a definition, parent education programs and the formation of social policies related to strengthening families will lack coherence and effectiveness. To achieve such a definition requires a philosophical perspective and theoretical treatment coupled with the findings of empirical research concerning human growth and development. In this chapter, we presented organismic or process philosophy as the most useful perspective, and a comprehensive theory of human development derived from it as a highly promising interpretive framework for understanding all of the issues concerning effective parenthood. The distinguishing feature of the theory is the identification of developmental universals—universal needs and developmental processes related to them that, if supported and facilitated, will ensure maximum actualization of human potential. From this theory, we generated a broad definition of parental effectiveness. *In essence, it means meeting the developmental needs of children in a timely manner so that the actualization of their potentialities is promoted at an optimum rate in positive directions.*

We specified two universal types of potentialities that effective parents would help to actualize: the biological and psychological; explained how their actualization has to be structured, thereby forming three universal types of values: material, social, and spiritual, on which three higher-order competencies rest: technological, moral, and religious or philosophical; discussed the role of ideals in the organization of value systems; and, showed how participating in building a community that recognizes the moral ideal of the oneness of the human species and operates on the principle of human rights is an indispensable element in parental effectiveness. Injustice, violence, and prejudice all suppress human potential and lead to costly social pathologies. Thus, effective parents are necessarily committed to human rights and to the building of communities based on them, for they are the guarantors that the developmental universals we have presented will not be suppressed, but encouraged and actively promoted.

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Part Two

Parenting in a Multicultural Society

Parenting styles are derived from the enculturation process. In our multicultural and class-stratified society, the experiences that compose enculturation vary widely for both the adult and child; this fact has been largely ignored throughout American history. Despite the richness and diversity on its ethnic enclaves, American society has been seen in terms of white, middle-class, Anglo-Saxon values and beliefs. This ethnocentrism is reflected both in the images of the family that dominate our national consciousness and in our social programs. Often this has resulted in a mistaken sense of embarrassment, guilt, and feelings of inadequacy on the part of members of minorities and the poor.

The second section of the anthology explores the family life of five minority groups. Some of the keen issues tackled in this section are the following: Have minority-group families dealt with the pressures of the larger society? What have been some of the results of the interface? What are the unique cultural values of the black American, Mexican-American, Puerto Rican-American, native-American, and Asian-American? What is the relationship between those subcultural values and those of the dominant society? Which values should prevail? Why? What are the policy implications for a multicultural society such as that of the United States?

In the first selection, James P. Comer discusses the adaptive behavior of black families necessitated by a social history of discrimination and exploitation. In response to the treatment they have received in a racist society, the black family is seen to have developed institutions (namely, the church) and coping skills that have enabled black parents to fulfill their basic responsibilities to their children and the society. Comer warns that any future family policy that is based on comparisons of the black family to the white family which does not take into account the diverse experiences of the two groups will ultimately confuse the issues and undermine supportive and restorative intervention.

In the second selection, Manuel Ramirez and Barbara G. Cox question the validity of the traditional conflict/replacement model of enculturation and suggest that a multicultural model may be better suited for American society. The conflict/replacement model implies that ethnic diversity creates problems for the dominant culture and the individual, and that only through assimilation (Americanization) can these difficulties be overcome. Ramirez and Cox feel that this model is both narrow and degrading, and instead, suggest a model based on the Mexican-American parenting experience in which biculturalism leads to multisocial identities, tolerance, and the personal and intellectual flexibility necessary to function successfully in a multicultural society.

The third selection by Bill J. Burgess explores the differences between child-rearing in native-American communities and the dominant society. The author describes