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Child Development Monograph 2

CHILD DEVELOPMENT: A 21st CENTURY VIEW THROUGH C-CTHERAPY®

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DEDICATED to the memory of Professor Bronislaw Malinowski, Department of Anthropology, London School of Economics and Professor A.L. Kroeber, Department of Anthropology, University of California, Berkeley.

This paper uncovers three facets of the emotional, illogical system of the child's mental development, a) the acquisition process of functioning mentality, b) culture, c) parenting style. It refutes Freud's metaphysical theories that sexuality drives all human behaviour. As well, it puts the lie to the notion that parents are the sole influence in their child's mental development. In fact, the child's mental conditioning and thus the child's behaviour is a product of his parents, their predecessors, his culture, and his time in history.

I. POINTS OF IDEOLOGY

The child's mental development results from his cultural surroundings. Without immersion in a cultural milieu, the child has no traits, attitudes or thoughts. The child's psychology -- his functioning mentality* (*see glossary below) -- is not like an appendage -- an arm or a leg -- with which the child is born. Instead, the child's functioning mentality develops from those components the child mentally absorbs from the culture surrounding him -- his behavioural atmosphere. The child is born without an operant functioning mentality and acquires that functioning mentality in the process of growing older.

There is little or no fact tying psychoanalytic theory and human developmental processes. Freud maintains, for instance, that "...the relations between a small child and its mother, above all in the act of suckling, are essentially sexual". (Malinowski, p. 211). Psychoanalysis turns out to be a cultural specific technique of medical treatment, not a unified explanation of human behaviour universals and psychological development.

Freud attributed the origins of psychology and culture to an equivalent of the BIG BANG theory of the Universe

(Malinowski, p. 151). The premise is that the universe was created by one event -- a big explosion. Similarity, Freudian theories presume that a human catches his psychology or his culture as he catches an air-borne disease. In actual fact, contemporary behaviour results from centuries of accumulated human development (Malinowski, p. 162).

II. POINTS REFUTING FREUD'S WHIMSY

A. Basic Instinct is Survival, Not Sexuality as Freud Claimed

Survival is the first human behavioural instinct demonstrated by the human child. As Professor Malinowski notes: "Physiologically there exists a passionate instinctive interest of the mother in the child, and a craving of the suckling for the maternal organism, for the warmth of her body, the support of her arms and, above all, the milk and contact of her breast...the baby would be satisfied with the body of any lactant woman. But soon the child also distinguishes, and his attachment becomes as exclusive and individual as that of the mother. Thus, birth establishes a link for life between mother and child" (Malinowski, p. 29). The child's allegiance, therefore, focuses upon an emotional placement with the parent. No bonding is necessary. The survival instinct takes care of this phenomenon, automatically.

The survival instinct drives the child's behaviour. The child, tied instinctively to the mother, senses her emotional state: for instance, tense mother, no milk; relaxed mother, milk. The child senses and responds to the parental atmosphere, whatever it may be. Another example is, if a mother or father approaches diaper changing in a matter-of-fact manner and without emotional tension, the child is subjected to a matter-of-fact atmosphere and responds accordingly. If, however, diaper changing is fraught with frustration by the parent, the child sensing distress responds to that parental atmosphere with distress.

The child's ability to sense the emotional atmosphere is profound. Indeed, the infant is already a learner in his environment. Gary Marcus, a New York University psychologist maintains that his research is a message to parents on "just how powerful a learner an infant really is". He has said that his research indicates "that infants are constantly looking around the world trying to find...all kinds of patterns that describe that world" (Recer, 1999).

B. The Human Need To Be Liked And Its Link to Survival

We humans do not like people being angry with us. If people are angry with us, we assume, they don't like us. If they don't like us, they are against us. If against us, they threaten our survival. Take for instance, the following illustration:

Five year old Matthew ran into his house from the street where he was playing with the neighborhood children. He locked himself inside the closet. He was hiding. His mother asked him through the door, "What's wrong?" "Nothing!" he said. "Don't lie, tell the truth and you won't get into trouble", she said. "I bumped into Billy, he fell down...I didn't mean to...it was an accident. The big man came to get me," Matthew said, as he emerged from the closet, whimpering. When Matthew's mother talked to "the big man", she learned that he had come outside because he had seen his daughter running into the street and he wanted to discipline her. He knew nothing about Matthew's collision with his son. Matthew ran home for safety because, in his view, the big man was about to exterminate him.

Matthew associated anger with a threat to his existence. Matthew's view of his world is the view from which he operates. If he senses a threat, that threat exists to him. That which passes as an ordinary event for the parent is interpreted as a survival issue by the child. The child is unaware that his view is but one of 5.6 billion impressions

of the world held by its human population.

C. The Issue of Belonging and Its Link To Survival

We, as children, gravitate towards the group for survival. The first group we must fit into is the family. By fitting into the family we are like the others and belong to them. Belonging is synonymous with survival, we all need to belong. We don't like being left out of what everyone around us is experiencing. At times, we even feel cheated if we cannot participate in "happenings" with our brothers and sisters; even if, ordinarily, we would choose not to participate. From this belonging, we gain a sense of security.

In short, a child cannot have a sense of being disliked and, simultaneously, gain a sense of security. The need to belong carries on into adulthood. We, at the Center, witness those early survival variables operating in the adult. One example is Helen, age 43 in session with a C-CTherapy® clinician.

Helen: I'm going along with what my family wants me to do, out of fear. I'm afraid that if I don't put on a good show, they won't like me. C-CTherapist: So what if they don't like you? Helen: If I don't put on a good show, they will think I don't care about them. They'll get mad at me. C-CTherapist: How will you know?

Helen: Because I'll have a feeling. This is how my family has reacted before. I know that I don't have to obey them. But, I guess my realization of this fact hasn't sunk in.

To this grown woman, belonging to her family of origin remained important because fitting-in and belonging create a mental climate of tranquility. That survival need to belong does not cease with childhood. Even though Helen has left childhood, the ingredients of her early conditioning stay with her. Functionally, she does what is necessary to belong -- she puts on a good show. Her compulsion to put on a good show has accumulated from years of mental conditioning. Intellectually, she knows that she does not need to obey. Nevertheless, she continues to seek the approval of her family.

Helen's early conditioning manifested in adulthood is a sophisticated response, masking its childhood origin. Like Helen, survival instinct for all adults -- the need to be liked and belong to a group -- remains integral to one's mental style throughout life.

III. THE CHILD'S FUNCTIONING MENTALITY* IS INFLUENCED, NOT CREATED BY PARENTING

GIVEN: Children require parenting if they are to survive.

"Man has to teach his children manual skills and knowledge in arts and crafts; language and the traditions of moral culture; the manners and customs which make up social organization", according to Professor Malinowski (1955 pp. 191-192) who studied diverse cultures of native communities in Melanesia.

Not only does the parent protect and sustain the child with food and shelter, but also the parent trains the child in the rules of the society - socialization. Table manners and eating habits are a good example because they vary from culture to culture. Parents teach cultural etiquette by showing and correcting their offspring, for instance, chopsticks in East Asia, fingers in the Middle East, knives and forks in Europe. In this way the child can behave appropriately within his cultural traditions.

It is a fiction that a child is born with a perspective which allows him to make useful choices. Useful choices only occur through parental conditioning of the child. For instance, the child learns from the parent to look both ways when crossing traffic, to stand away from the open flames of fire, to take care when cutting anything with a sharp knife. Parenting helps the child to mentally organize the child's impressions about everything the child sees.

GIVEN: Children mentally absorb from their human culture.

The child's process of maturation, however, is greater than the input of his parents. His conditioning -- individual assemblage of mental items -- establishes his mental uniqueness. The child by virtue of being alive is taking in impressions, attitudes, mannerisms not only of his parents, but also of his extended family and his culture. "Babies rapidly glean and process information about the world long before they can tell us what they know", according to Harlene Hayne a researcher who presented her findings to the 1997 Society of Neuroscience conference in New Orleans (McConaughy, 1997). The child is absorbing from his total environment, a phenomenon which his parents cannot legislate. The child absorbs the emotional, illogical behaviour to which he is a witness. Within each culture, modes of operation determine right and wrong behaviour. The child learns to distinguish the difference between right and wrong behaviour because his parents tell him so.

In so doing, he acquires the habit common to all human beings, the habit of judging other people's behaviour. The habit of judging human behaviour alerts the child to differences between people. The child will move through life noticing differences all of which reinforce his developing mental habits. In conjunction with the parents' attempt to instill right behaviour, other sources contribute; for instance, children's T.V., schools, clubs, etc.

Adults are puzzled by why American children are confused. There is no mystery here. The child lives the bad manners, the "rule of the jungle" behaviour at school and how he feels unsafe unless he is joined by his gang on the playgrounds, or if alone, carries a gun or a knife. Meanwhile, children's T.V. programs are rife with American morality and codes of behaviour. For instance, "do unto others as you would have them do unto you", "love thy neighbour", "respect diversity", and so on.

Even conflicting impressions between what the child sees and is taught becomes incorporated into the child's functioning mentality. This amalgamation of conflicting impressions, attitudes and mannerisms combine to form the grown child's reactive system. The child's reactive system expresses his unique style of anger, disgust, tension, fear, rather than a stereotypical, collective response. In this way, the mental response of each human differs from the next.

In addition to judging behaviour, the child absorbs other elements from his family and culture. Examples include analyzing why people behave as they behave, inadvertent use of adult speech such as "motha-fucka" employed by a two year old. Here are a few other examples noted at the Center:

- 1.) Marcel identifies his own dramatic style as being copied from his mother and grandmother.
- 2.) Sonja figures herself and others into and out of corners; she identifies copying father.
- 3.) Henry copied mother watching people. He watched mother watching people. Now Henry watches people.

IV. THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE VOLITIONAL* AND NON-VOLITIONAL* PATTERN OF THE CHILD

The child must build a functioning mentality in order to become an adult. This mental development conforms to a precise mental growth process. One's functioning mentality, consequently, is not one vague and obscure mass of mental activity. In fact, it is a formed configuration of two divisions: a.) logic and reason characterize the volitional* and, b.) illogical, emotional elements characterize the non-volitional* division. The non-volitional division is the source of emotion, commonly called "feelings". Together, these divisions constitute one's unique mentality. The following example will clarify.

In the grocery store, Johnny, age 6, grabs a candy bar off the shelf. Mother tells him to put it back. She explains that candy in the afternoon will spoil his dinner. Johnny begins to cry. Again she explains why he can't have his treat. He clutches the bar. She pries his fingers open. He screams. Mother, now exasperated, insists that he "Stop it"! Johnny continues crying. Mother yells, "Control yourself". Her demand, however, doesn't stop Johnny from whimpering.

Initially, Mother is operating from logic and reason, her volitional pattern. But when Johnny does not obey, Mother loses her self-control. Her non-volitional pattern takes over. "Shut-up or I'll give you something to cry about", she says to Johnny. Mother's outburst represents her non-volitional pattern talking. Activation of Mother's non-volitional system, however, is not an intentional decision on her part.

Johnny is coming from a different mental place than his mother. He is operating from his non-volitional division which is illogical and emotional. His behaviour is an unintentional, reflexive action. To him survival is at stake. He must get what he wants.

Johnny displays one division of functioning mentality. Mother displays both divisions because, as an adult, her functioning mentality has fully developed. Johnny's functioning mentality has not. His process of developing both divisions began shortly after birth and will continue into adulthood. Mother's initial response, explaining why Johnny can't have candy before dinner, falls on deaf ears. Johnny is a behavioural bandit bent on getting his own way. Consequently, Mother becomes exasperated, her own illogical, emotional non-volitional division comes into play and mentally drives her behaviour. It is easy to see that contrary to current theories which focus on understanding why we are upset, do not answer the needs of the reactive system.

We are illustrating four elements: a.) Mother assumes that Johnny is operating from logic and reason. She appeals to his common sense -- which he doesn't possess -- but she meets competition from Johnny's illogical, emotional division of functioning mentality. It is from Johnny's developing non-volitional division and its preoccupation with survival that his non-compliance or disobedience originates. This illogical, emotional division (the non-volitional system) is stronger than that of logic and reason (the volitional system).

b.) Johnny is absorbing from Mother both her reasoning approach (volitional) and her emotional outburst (non-volitional).

c.) Johnny has heard over and over Mother's admonition to "behave right!" d) The young child is bent upon getting his own way until years of conditioning modulate his "bandit" behaviour.

The combination of parenting and personal experience lays the foundation for Johnny's functioning mentality. According to the Center's research and that of others (Hayne 1997; Hayne, H., MacDonald, S., & Varr.; Gleitman, Lila and Aslin, Richard), the child constantly absorbs mental impressions. Johnny is absorbing impressions from parents, school, and American television. But, how these mental impressions will influence or impinge upon Johnny's behaviour in the future is unknown in the present. In short, the parent cannot forecast which mental impressions will have taken hold and which will have not. It is only in the future that the mental impressions which have taken hold emerge.

Johnny and Mother illustrate that each division of functioning mentality -- volitional and non-volitional -- produces a different mental response. Although the volitional system, itself, carries no emotion, it contributes to upset. Why? Mother creates frustration for herself because understanding Johnny's illogical behaviour will not eliminate her mental turmoil. That is, logic and reason do not possess the power to overcome the illogical, emotional system. In our example, mother got exasperated because her logical explanations did not get Johnny to obey. Her approach of logic and reason only perpetuated her frustration. Her preoccupation with logic and reason carries minimal impact.

It must be emphasized that the volitional division of functioning mentality is not a creator of mental upset. Logic and reason, in itself, carries no emotional force. The volitional division focuses upon rational understanding of behaviour codes. Right or wrong behavioural issues, such as, rules and penalties, manners and morals, values and beliefs fall under this category.

This habit of categorizing emotions into "good" or "bad" is common to Mother's culture. Mother demonstrates the moral demand: "You must control yourself in public!" Also, she is demonstrating her own conditioning acquired when she was a child and heard her own parents say "control yourself". This rule underlines her parental stance that there is an absolute right behaviour as well as an absolute wrong behaviour. For Mother, eating candy before dinner is against house rules and Johnny's getting mad that he can't have what he wants is in defiance of house rules. This push-and-pull between child and parent is the hallmark of the developing child in the family setting. This reality illustrates the volitional and non-volitional workings between parent and child.

V. PARENTING ILL SERVED BY LOGIC AND REASON

The parent's job is to control the child's natural inclination to demand his or her own way. In doing so, the parent is also getting the child to conform to the culture's rules. The parental job is to socialize and acculturate the child.

Currently parents in westernized countries use logic and reason to get their child to behave correctly. If Johnny understands why he should behave right, so goes their reasoning, the youngster will comply. If Johnny doesn't understand the first time, the parent repeats himself again and again, as if repetition will get Johnny to cooperate. For example, Mother explains logically why Johnny needs to get dressed in the morning, leaving enough time for breakfast before catching the school bus. Her admonition to hurry, hurry, falls on ears that hear, but sentiments that don't obey. This is another instance of the push-pull between parent and child. Repeating her command is part of her logic and reason approach. If she repeats enough, or shouts loudly enough, she supposes that Johnny will finally understand what she wants and comply. If this were the case, Johnny would dress promptly each morning and parenting would be easy.

But, Johnny is not coming from logic and reason. Johnny is bent on getting his own way. His survival instinct compels him to want what he wants, when and how he wants it. The child does not deliberate. The child is a total egotist. Until the child's behaviour is modulated by years of conditioning by his parents and the influence of his culture, he is unfit to be let out amongst other human beings.

In countries influenced by American psychology, the parent has been directed to seek parenting advice from the child. Parents have been told that children have innate wisdom. The parent need only listen to their child for the answer, advised Dr. Benjamin Spock, a well-known American pediatrician. He contended that the parent can learn from the child's innate wisdom.

The child does not come equipped with the wisdom of the culture. The child has no perspective to offer because the child is in the process of becoming a full-fledged human being. His perspective is at the very beginning of

mental development. In fact, the child can contribute nothing to the parental perspective. The challenge, then, is for the parent to decide what he or she is going to do, instead of looking for direction from the child. That is why, to cope with the child's self-centered behavior, the parent must decide who is in charge, the parent or the child.

Why Neither Repetition Nor Logic And Reason Work.

Parents suppose repetitious commands will control the child's spontaneous behaviour. The child's functioning mentality records the parental repetitions. The effect, however, unexpectedly sabotages the parental intent. Johnny acts as if he didn't hear the repetitious commands.

Remember Johnny and the store. The little boy knows how he is supposed to behave. His mother has given him the information many times. Why doesn't he behave right -- the way his mother wants him to behave? What interferes with her parental directives?

Parents and small children operate, mentally, from different places. The child operates solely from survival instinct connected to his non-volitional system. The parent, on the other hand, is coming from his volitional system of logic and reason.

The parents' problem is that the child's survival system is more powerful, emotionally, than the parents' volitional system of rational understanding. The child fights parental demands. In fact, the child's non-volitional system cancels out parental logic and reason.

What Does Work In Parenting?

That the parent and child operate from different places establishes a push-pull atmosphere. Bridging the push-pull struggle begins with parental guidelines. The challenge to the parent, then, is to put to work the push-pull atmosphere. The parent must learn how to do this. An example follows:

Three grade school girls giggling uncontrollably in the shoe store run from display to display. Mother told each one, "If you can't control yourself, I will have to control you and we will leave the store." The girls quieted and waited for the clerk to bring out the shoes. They chose shoes over rough-housing.

Mother did not request obedience from the girls. Instead, Mother set the parameters for a trade-off -- rough-housing or shoes. In other words, the child will trade-off his own way for the parental rule depending on which consequence is more attractive.

In this instance, Mother remained in charge, matter-of-factly. She left the trade-off up to the girls. The parent cannot be invested in obedience from the child. Hoping for a desirable outcome only undermines the parental position because emotion is governing the parents' behaviour rather than parental guidelines.

If the child is willing to trade-off, that is go against the rules, then so be it. The parent must then carry out the penalty. If the girls had chosen rough-housing, Mother would have collected her purse and packages and, though inconvenient, walked out of the store.

Dinner hour is another time the push-pull struggle commonly occurs.

A child acts up at dinner, "Go to your room", the parent says. "I'll starve," the child says. "You know the rules," the parent must reply. "Head for your room," the parent says, matter-of-factly continuing with the meal.

The parent must implement the penalty as a routine activity. Trading-off volitional rules against non-volitional desire is a human inclination, one facing the child throughout life.

The trade-off will pose no problem if guidelines and penalties belong to the family structure, having been established with the birth of the first child. If, however, a chaotic family structure prevails, the child will grow to adolescence without personal discipline from which to govern himself. Instead, he will be run by his personal whim. The failure of programs for troubled adolescents prove that applying rules and penalties to an undisciplined, already belligerent teenager, will not produce a desirable result (MacNamara, pp 31-96).

Why Do Rules And Penalties Work?

All families grapple with the same human facts. First, the child's wish to get his own way is non-volitional. Second, the parents' attempt to understand the child's behavior is volitional. The two do not meet. The push-pull atmosphere is inherent in the family.

Conventional parenting convinces the child why he should eat his dinner, settle down in the shoe store or get dressed for school. Persuasion will not get the child to behave correctly. Convincing the child that the parents' decision is right clouds the parental rules. Rules are not open to negotiation, that is why they are rules. Otherwise, the child can discuss, object, or "yes but" the parent to death. The child outlasts the parent. Therefore, persuasion is not the avenue to follow, parental action is. The challenge for the parent is to break into Johnny's survival system, to train him in the rules of the family, community and culture.

Parents Develop Family Guidelines:

Parents create guidelines. These guidelines vary from family to family. One part of the parents' job is establishing and implementing the rules. We must emphasize that the parent need not ask for child approval of household rules. Guidelines do not transfer from one family to another. In other words, there are no standard guidelines.

Here's how to introduce the guidelines.

- a) Every family member must know the rules. Read the rules aloud and post them on the refrigerator or bulletin board.
- b) Everyone knows the penalties so there are no surprises when the rules are invoked.
- c) The parent must routinely and consistently implement the penalty, without guilt, ambivalence or exception. The alternative is family life governed by whim.

Rules and penalties take the mystery out of running the family; everyone knows what to expect -- no ambiguity exists. The consequences for an infraction of family rules are known to each member. Eventually, the child will be able to act as the moderator of his own conduct because the family guidelines will have become mentally instilled.

GIVEN: No Right Parenting Is Possible.

No human being, singly, has the power to create behaviour in another human being. Parenting people have no way of co-ordinating the acquisition process of the child's functioning mentality. Thus, no right parenting is possible.

