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DISCUSSION PAPER

on

SESSION I

**BEHAVIOR AND LEARNING CONCEPTS:
THEORIES AND RESEARCH RESULTS**

by

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The Seventeenth International Conference on the Unity of the Sciences
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Committee II

Ethnocentrism vs. World Unity:

**Impacts on Socialization and
Education**

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Session 1: Behavior and Learning Concepts

I am pleased and honoured to start today's discussion with a
brief summary and assessment of the first three papers which deal
with <169>Behavior and Learning Concepts<170> within the overall
subject of our committee. There is a German proverb which warns

against comparing apples and pears. Thanks to the importance of early socialisation and anticipating negative reinforcement, I hope not to commit this mistake.

I shall start with Mr. Illyes' paper, go on to deal with the impact of socialisation as outlined by Mr. Flouris and Mr. Spiridakis and then continue with the model of personal development proposed by Mr. Thomas before concluding with some general remarks.

Mr. Illyes' paper is concerned with a typology of ethnic mentality as well as suggestions for a new educational approach to overcome ethnic conflict. The term <169>ethnic<170> seems to be used as co-terminus with <169>social,<170> for it is argued that the objects and meanings determining mentality have an ethnic character in so far as they are socially produced and used in the life of a group.

Mr. Illyes develops a typology of ethnic mentality in the form of a binary tree-diagram and distinguishes nine types according to four criteria: ethnic awareness, importance of ethnicity for the individual, preference for a single culture and tolerance. One problem with the typology is that not all types are of the same epistemological status, e.g. type nine logically entails types seven, five, three and one, whereas type three entails only type one. Secondly, it is not clear why the ~~X~~ particular sequence in

which types seven and nine follow from type five is the only one possible. They could equally well, or perhaps even better, follow from <169>multiculturalism<170> (type six).

Mentality is seen as consisting of attitudes and identity. According to Mr. Illyes ethnocentrism is a defensive attitude against the loss of ethnic identity through technocentrism and modernization. Those processes are also held responsible for a crisis of the ethnically determined core<197>identity of the individual. This identity is seen to have the functions of locating the self in the social world, of providing orientation through ideals and values and helping to maintain a feeling of continuity and sameness.

The author's main thesis is that currently ^{both} ~~but~~ a revival and a weakening of ethnic mentality can be observed, i.e. a trend towards greater ethnocentrism as well as one towards greater internationalism. Of the three sources of fluctuation between these two trends, one is seen as within the individual, and the other ~~two~~ are related to the organizational structure and the technology at the workplace. The author posits that the discrepancies between these spheres may be the main cause of fluctuation of ethnic awareness. In this context I would suggest that ethnocentrism and internationalism can both be seen as processes which challenge the nation state and may threaten its very existence. I would prefer to speak of <169>inter-ethnic

understanding at a global level<170> rather than international understanding, as the nation state is the entity which has to be transcended in the process of global education. That such a step from increased ethnic awareness to global understanding is possible is borne out by the recent unified protest in Berlin by ethnic minorities in the 'Third World' against the ecologically disastrous policies on international financial organisation in conjunction with national governments. For as the slogan puts it: <169>act locally, but think globally.<170>

This global thinking, or as Illyes calls it <169>the multicultural mentality,<170> can be shaped through education. According to him, education can be expected to do so by defining <169>good<170> and <169>bad<170> ethnicism. But as these terms are not explicated it is also not clear exactly how education is to bring about this change. Further it is hoped that education can overcome ethnic relativism by teaching absolute and permanent human values which are common to all cultures. The underlying assumption seems to be that in addition to ethnically bound and specific values which differentiate and define ethnic groups, there exists a set of universal values which are culturally determined and to which all ethnic groups subscribe to. No empirical evidence is given in support of either assumption.

Whereas Mr. Illyes proposes the teaching of the history of one's own ethnic culture, Mr. Flouris and Mr. Spriridakis advocate the

teaching of world history in order to develop a
<169>multicultural mentality<170> or in their words <169>a world
citizen.<170>

Their paper is mainly concerned with the institutional structure
and content of political socialisation as well as its historical
development in the context of the nation-state.

The theoretical framework is derived from socialisation theory as
well as from the psychological concept of the self, two paradigms
with contrary methodological assumptions as I hope to show later
on. A number of American studies on variables influencing the
socialisation-process form the empirical basis of the argument.
Unfortunately it ignores the theoretical limitations as well as
the differences in the methodological assumptions of the rather
diverse empirical material.

Three factors are postulated as influencing the political
socialisation of children<197>the nation state, the school and
general international trends. One would expect schools to play an
important role as political attitudes are formed between ages 3
and 13. The actual impact of the school is limited due to the
passive nature of the instructional situation and an inadequate
curriculum. Nevertheless, the authors analyse the structure and
content of the curriculum and of textbooks and examine at some
length factors such as teacher performance, classroom atmosphere

and school organization.

They argue that the gap between the world of the school and that of the socio-political reality is broadened further by the inflexible reactions of teachers and educational researchers who have to respond to political influences. Mr. Flouris and Spiridakis are critical of teachers for merely reproducing society rather than transforming it. In my opinion, this places conflicting demands on the educational system which is simultaneously expected to stabilise and to change society. It is required to socialise children in the present political structure with its existing values as well as to prepare them to meet the challenges of the future with new values. This is all the more difficult in so far as we do not even have consensus on the aim of socialisation let alone on a blueprint for the future. I fear that all these additional expectations will increase the already existing isolation of schools from their social environment.

A new role is envisaged for the educational system in not only imparting information and knowledge but also helping in attitude formation, training in decision-making and critical-mindedness. If multicultural understanding and cross-cultural awareness are to be achieved, it is necessary that educational practises should focus on the development of the individual self. The authors emphasise the importance of self-esteem, self-expression, self-control and personal adjustment for interpersonal relationships

as well as a relationship to one's own feelings. Both are required for responsible action based on the awareness of the interests of others. As examples of positive efforts in this direction are cited the idea of the <169>laboratory schools<170> (Massialas/ Hurst), the concept of <169>dynamic education<170> (Mayer) and Weinberger's <169>new curriculum<170> with its orientation towards problem-solving, decision-making and autonomous learning.

Thomas's paper presents us with a description of the various dimensions of identity and morality and a model of personal development incorporating morality and ethnic identity. The dimensions are recommended for use in operational scales both for assessing and for creating awareness of the existing levels of morality and identity among students and teachers. The problem is, however, that the descriptive typology is also seen as forming a basis for a normative pattern of ideal answers despite the absence of a consensus about the nature of <169>ideal<170> identity and morality.

Basing himself on Kelly's idea of the self as an organisation of experiences accumulated during a lifetime, Thomas understands the self to be <169>a person's internally perceived identity.<170> Since moral values are part of the individual's identity, moral identity is seen as one type of identity just as religious or cognitive identity.

Mr. Thomas's general model of development includes a theory of learning based on an interaction between internal and external factors. He postulates that genetic endowment influences maturation and that development is the product of an interaction between learning and maturation. Thus in contrast to Illyes who sees ethnic mentality as determining personality, Thomas sees maturation as a necessary precondition for moral development. Environmental experiences are assumed to be cognitively processed through the structure of a perceptual mechanism which mediates between external stimuli and inner needs and abilities.

Learning consists of a comparison of these external stimuli with the content of long-term memory. Internally experienced physical and psycho-social needs are transformed into goals which direct attention towards the environment. Means to achieve these goals are identified through the perceptual mechanism. What is not considered, however, is that internal needs and perception not only influence the individual's relation to the environment but are themselves cultural products which are influenced by the environment.

There are two elements in Thomas's model which are crucial in explaining cultural homogeneity as well as individual difference: 1) the process of identification and 2) the role of what he calls <169>fabricators of the moral environment<170> in controlling the

consequences of moral decisions. In the process of identification, needs and cognitive elements relate internal experiences to external factors. Positive identification is thus established with those people and ideas which are either actually or potentially seen to fulfill needs. The environment offers models of moral values and behavior which in the cumulative process of identification are either rejected as not fulfilling needs or accepted and stored in long-term memory. I would caution against an overemphasis on the environment as otherwise it would be difficult to explain moral protest and resistance in authoritarian regimes exercising external as well as <169>internal<170> control. Thomas's model seems to me to be derived from and more easily applicable to democratic political systems.

Apart from the external impact of positive or negative reinforcement, ^TThomas posits that human beings have an innate capacity to reward or punish themselves, which he calls <169>conscience.<170> Individual variation in value-acceptance is also due to differences in the content of the conscience and not only the result of differing encounters with <169>moral fabricators<170> in the environment. Thus in order to change values, it would be necessary to influence not only the external environment but also the internal conscience.

I would like to conclude with a few general remarks on the

relationship of socialisation theory and development models as well as on the concepts of knowledge underlying the three papers.

Socialisation theory is able to identify variables influencing behaviour at a given point of time. Its prognostic value is limited as it sees the relationship of the individual with his environment as consisting in the internalisation of external standards. Developmental theory is capable of explaining changes over time but has difficulties in satisfactorily explaining and describing individual differences in the course of development. Although it takes environmental factors into consideration, it sees them as neither cultural nor historical products nor as being able to determine the nature and direction of development. Even an interactional model such as Thomas's accords a secondary role to external factors which are seen as only accelerating or slowing down a pre-given process of development. I would like to emphasise that the two theories are complementary and both are required to explain the origin, the sources and the nature of the individual's response to ethnic influences.

All the four authors assume that educational processes aim at knowledge. For the purpose of our discussion I would like to distinguish here between doxological and dialogical knowledge. The former is characterised by internal consistency and logical rigour and is able to generate new knowledge in diverse circumstances. It provides the learner with principles capable of

application in a variety of situations. Dialogical knowledge, on the other hand, is flexible, highly content-dependent and closer to the subjective experience of individuals.

I would suggest that all the three papers are primarily concerned with the building up of doxological structures of knowledge with their focus on the identification and implementation of universal values. Ethnic movements, on the other hand, oppose this universal trend towards rationalisation in modern life and are characterised by romanticism and scepticism against the rationality of technologically induced progress. They are marked by their emphasis on dialogical knowledge, not only in the sense of communication between different status groups but also especially in the form of inter-generational dialogue and consensus. As against this, educational systems imbedded in the nation-state are based on the rigid separation of age-groups especially the generations.

A tendency comparable to ethnicity is reflected in the social sciences in the search for qualitative methods, an interest in narrative structures and biographies, and the subjective interpretation and reconstruction of social-reality. I would like to suggest that these innovative processes are the result of a dissatisfaction with the objective, the universal, the rational. I am not sure if the papers with their epistemological striving for the doxological and universal would be able to provide us

with learning-models capable of generating the dialogical knowledge preferred by ethnic groups.