

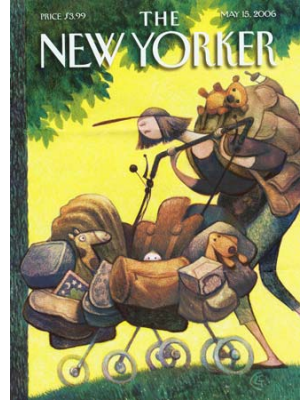
A Transpersonal Vision of Parenting

by

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Oh, the joys of being a parent. Love, marriage and the baby carriage. Not always in that order. Like so many things in life, if we really knew what it was going to take in terms of time, attention and money, many parents would play golf instead.

Don't get me wrong. Babies are one of life's greatest inventions. My question is: "What does it really mean to be a parent?" When I toss that question into the pond, three bubbles pop to the surface. Parenting fulfills the personal needs of the adult and/or the needs of the child and, of course, parenting serves life. Where do you fit, forty percent personal and sixty percent life, or eighty percent personal and twenty percent life?



Parenting and the larger field we call education are a continuum. Core values drive both. We want our children to be safe, to be socially fit, which means to fit in, to be secure, have meaningful skills, to be creative and get a good job. Our job as parents is to see that our children do just that. We dangle future happiness and success like a carrot on a stick.

Fitting in at home, school, the workplace, society in general, means conforming to beliefs and behaviors accepted by the culture. Deviating too far is threatening. Social security is challenged, and with it success, happiness and that good job.

It seems two forces are at play, two conflicting sets of core values. One set, more conservative and conventional, is summed up in the phrase, "my country, love it or leave it." If you don't like the privileges and responsibilities that living in this home, this neighborhood, this school, or society imply, then get out. Survival means belonging to the club. Personal development is measured in terms of fitting in.

The other set of core values is exemplified by the "human potential movement." Personal development is measured in terms of discovering and actualizing innate capacities. The meaning of life is measured by the spectrum of potentials developed throughout one's lifetime.

Well, say the conservatives, creativity and self actualization are just fine, but how are you going to pay the rent? The beat goes on and has for centuries.

Transpersonal Parenting

Joseph Chilton Pearce in his last two books, *Biology of Transcendence* and soon to be published *The Death of Religion and Re-birth of Spirit*, questions the assumption that "fitting in" furthers human development. He suggests that "fitting in" places severe constraints on evolution's great creative adventure. Belonging and conformity are poor substitutes for true development.

"Fitting in" serves culture. Culture is a human artifact, a set of beliefs and behaviors that endure for generations. The unfolding of human potential is not based on belief. Intelligence and creation are implicit in life itself. Joe calls this creative force *transcendence*.

Which camp are we in? Are we the handmaidens of culture or are we serving life's journey by the way we parent our children? Are our children really ours? Khalil Gibran in *The Prophet* offers that our children are not ours; they are the arrows of life flying into the future.

Your children are not your children. They are the sons and daughters of Life's longing for itself. They come through you but not from you, and though they are with you, yet they belong not to you. You may give them your love but not your thoughts. For they have their own thoughts. You may house their bodies but not their souls, for their souls dwell in the house of tomorrow, which you cannot visit, not even in your dreams. You may strive to be like them, but seek not to make them like you. For life goes not backward nor carries with yesterday.

Though describing children, the focus of Gibran's narrative is on adults, parents and educators. Are we "becoming as little children," growing, wondering, discovering, reaching, pushing boundaries every day, or are we repeating today what we did yesterday? In which camp do our core values, which imply our self-image, abide? Are we parenting life, which means every child, or are we insuring that "our child" fits in?

Have we, as parents and people who care for children, seen through the false hopes and false fears of our ethnic, national and cultural identity? Have we blossomed into a larger, global reality, that our children are not our children? Do we see that they are the sons and daughters of life longing for itself? And if so, how would this new reality impact the way we parent and educate children?

Emerging is a transpersonal model of parenting and education. The personal are the autobiographical images we have accepted about ourselves. The trans-personal is everything that is not bound by cultural images.

Transpersonal Parenting

Life is transpersonal. Self-images are cultural. In optimum states, play, the zone and flow, the limitations imposed by cultural categories disappear. In optimum states the personal is transcended and we experience, as a dynamic state of body and mind, for that moment, a transpersonal reality. In practical terms, the limitations and constraints imposed by our cultural self image disappear, freeing all the energy and attention that maintaining these images demands. This represents true freedom. In this state of true freedom the full spectrum of our transpersonal nature is active and accessible.

The personal images we justify and defend are very limited. Imagine living your life without the limitations imposed by that image. Is this what Jesus meant when he said, "unless you become again as a little child, you can't enter the kingdom?"

Culture needs and uses self-images. If you did not have a self-image would you use comparison to judge yourself? If you did not have an image to justify and defend would you feel embarrassment? True development needs no shame to learn and to grow. Embarrassment, public humiliation and shame are used by culture to control behavior, your behavior and the behavior of your children.

The next frontier in parenting and education begins by seeing the web that culture weaves and how self images are used to limit and constrain true development. Seeing this clearly, deeply, is the first step in spiritual practice that puts an end to the false hopes and false fears perpetuated by these images. In the light of this true freedom, like a prisoner stepping from a dark prison cell, the world and our true transcendent nature look very different.

Great idea, getting rid of self-images. Easier said than done. Images of self spread like viruses. Those caught in them tend to catch others in them as well, especially children. When the self image is active, cultural values of fitting in dominate. When the self image is not active transpersonal values take center stage.

Every moment we stand at a tipping point. Is our precious energy and attention being absorbed by image maintenance, which really means cultural maintenance, or are life's precious resources being invested in learning and performance?

Are we serving life or are we serving our personal identity and the culture that created it? How we answer that question, moment by moment, impacts the choices we make as parents, and that affects the future of humanity right now.

Transpersonal Parenting

Indeed children are the future, but we, the children's mentors, cast their fate by the way we live our lives. Are we the handmaidens of culture or are we boundless creative intelligence dancing? One is contained and restrained by cultural images, the other moves like the wind, free to access and develop their full potential each moment.

Seeing through the image, its use and abuse, opens the door. Only when adults transcend the false hopes and fears associated with their self image will children grow free from the constraints that have chained humanity for thousands of years.

This requires an evolutionary insight, a penetrating vision into the structure of the brain and its remarkable capacity to create images. It is quite natural for the brain to create images. The great error has been for this image-making capacity to narcissistically begin creating images of itself, and attributing to these images supreme importance.

Having spread like a virus for thousands of years, the collective hallucinations created by the misuse of the image-making capacity of the brain now threatens life on the planet. Adults caught in this delusion infect children by mirroring false images rather than our true transpersonal nature.

Great teachers have pointed this out for centuries. Because of their teachings we are at a tipping point. Knowledge about the brain and its unique ability to create images creates what Joseph Chilton Perce calls a *Crack in the Cosmic Egg*. Another crack is formed by the exponential increase in information and image-based technologies flooding the globe. Together the relative nature of images, including the image we create about ourselves, is being seen for it has always been, just an image, useful, like a fine tool, but a tool and nothing more.

We, by the energy and attention we give to seeing through the false hope and false fears attributed to our personal image, create the environment for a new brain and state of consciousness to unfold, in our homes, neighborhoods and schools, and from there spread around the world. Children are the future. You hold the mirror in which they discover who they really are. When they look in that mirror of your relationship, what will they see?