

# Orthogenetic Theory

## THE ORTHOGENETIC PRINCIPLE

"Wherever development occurs, it proceeds from a state of relative globality and lack of differentiation to a state of increasing differentiation, articulation, and hierarchic integration."

## THE THREE STAGES OF DEVELOPMENT

### 1. GLOBALITY

Undifferentiated State

- Whole dominates over parts
- Diffuse, syncretic quality
- Rigid, inflexible responses

#### Example:

Newborn's whole-body reaction to stimulus; undifferentiated

### 2. DIFFERENTIATION

Specialized Parts Emerge

- Parts become distinct
- Functions specialize
- Increasing articulation

#### Example:

Reaching separates from whole-body movement

### 3. INTEGRATION

Hierarchic Coordination

- Parts work together
- Flexible organization
- Higher-order unity

#### Example:

Coordinated reaching and grasping objects skillfully

## MICROGENESIS: Development in Moments

The same orthogenetic pattern occurs in seconds or milliseconds during perception and cognition. When recognizing a face or reading a word, we move from:

**vague global impression → differentiation of specific features → integrated recognition**

Same principle at different time scales.

## APPLICATIONS

**Motor:** Global reflexes → Specific movements → Coordinated skills

**Emotional:** Undifferentiated excitement → Distinct emotions → Emotional regulation

## LIMITATIONS

- × Not all development follows this pattern
- × Cultural comparisons were ethnocentric
- × Difficult to measure and operationalize
- × Assumes directionality and progress