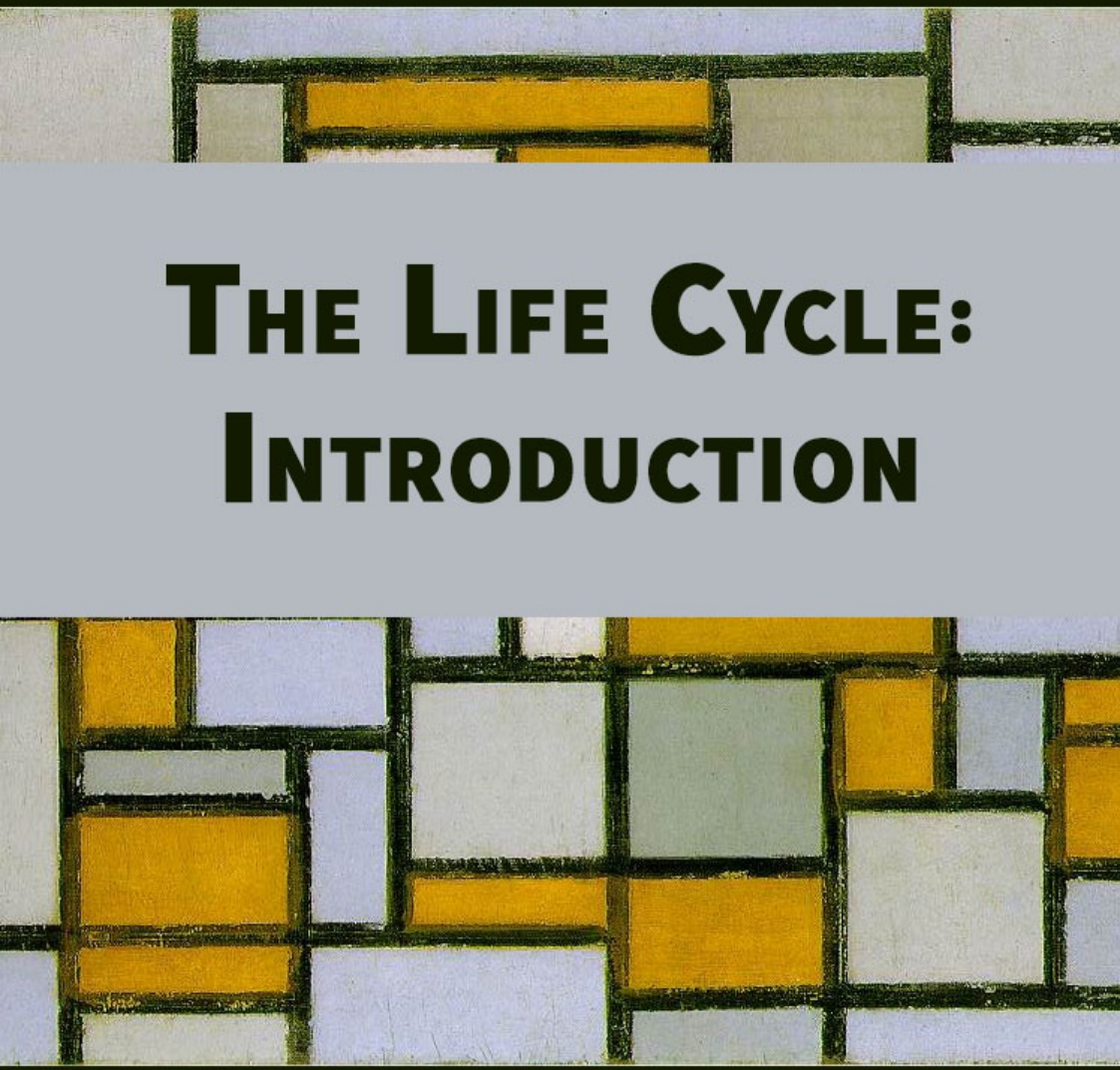
THEODORE LIDZ



The Life Cycle: Introduction

American Handbook of Psychiatry

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e-Book 2015 International Psychotherapy Institute

From *American Handbook of Psychiatry: Volume 1* edited by Silvano Arieti

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THE LIFE CYCLE: INTRODUCTION

The psychodynamic understanding of the personality and its disorders rests heavily upon the study of the life cycle. The commonalities and similarities in the course of all lives make possible the generalizations and abstractions necessary for the scientific study of the personality. Although no two persons are identical and no life stories are the same, the basic themes are limited and it is the variations upon them that are infinite and inexhaustible. Behind their individual uniqueness all persons are born with physical endowments that are essentially alike and with similar biological needs that must be met. Like all living things, they go through a cycle of gestation, maturation, maturity, decline, and death. In common with all humans, each individual starts life totally dependent on others and remains immature and dependent for many years, during which he forms intense emotional ties to those who nurture him —bonds that must be loosened sufficiently to enable him to live without them and to form new meaningful relationships. He requires many years not only to mature sexually and physically but also to learn the adaptive techniques he needs to survive and guide his life; and he depends upon a society to provide his essential environment. He possesses the unique human capacities for language and tool bearing, and he depends upon verbal communication for collaboration with others, upon thought and foresight, and upon his ability to change his environment to meet his needs. Alone among animals he is aware of death and his position in his course from birth to death. Man's life is never

static, for the passage of time of itself changes his functioning. Each phase of the life cycle brings new potentialities and closes off old ones; the opportunity and challenge must be met and surmounted for the individual to be prepared for the next phase.

Phasic Nature of the Life Cycle

The development of the personality and the course of the life cycle proceed phasically, not at a steady pace. The child goes through periods of relative quiescence during which his progress seems slight and then undergoes marked changes as he enters a new phase that opens new potentialities, provides new areas to explore, and sets new tasks that require the acquisition of new skills and abilities to master. Thus, the ability to walk, which must await maturation of the infant's nervous system as well as sufficient practice, changes the limits of the child's world and his perspective of his surroundings, as well as his relationships with his parents. He quickly gains new opportunities to explore and learn, but he also requires more delimitation from those who take care of him. Similarly the hormonal shifts that precede and accompany the advent of puberty will move the child into a new phase of his life by rapidly altering his size and contours and by initiating unfamiliar sexual impulsions.

The phasic nature of the life cycle derives from several interrelated factors.

Physical Maturation

The acquisition of certain capacities must await the maturation of the organism. The infant cannot become a toddler until the pyramidal tracts in

the spinal cord that permit voluntary discrete movements of the lower limbs become functional around the tenth month. Even after maturation allows the acquisition of a new attribute, gaining the skill and knowledge to develop it can require considerable time and practice. Simple skills must be mastered adequately before they can be combined with others and incorporated into more complex activities.

In a related manner phasic shifts in the physiological balance of the organism initiate new phases in the life cycle. The metamorphosis of puberty that ushers in adolescence provokes changes without regard to prior developmental progress, and the menopause is likely to produce a basic reorientation in a woman's life.

Changes in the Individual's Cognitive Development and Decline

The child's cognitive development does not progress at an even pace. Qualitatively different capacities emerge in rather discrete stages and influence the child's capacity to assume responsibilities and direct his own life.

The Society

The roles the society establishes for persons of various ages set expectations that promote shifts in ways of living. The time of weaning and

bowel training, for example, are markedly influenced by societal norms. Becoming a married person or a parent involves socially set expectations such as rescinding areas of independence to care for and consider the needs of a spouse or a child. Yet for a society to remain viable, the roles and expectations it establishes must be compatible with a person's abilities and needs at each phase of life. A child is moved into the role of schoolchild, with its many demands and privileges, at the age of five or six partly because primary socialization is usually completed and partly because his cognitive capacities have reached the stage of "concrete operations."

The Passage of Time

Not only does the individual move into age- appropriate roles, but time brings changes in physical makeup that require changes in attitudes, as when a person reaches middle life and realizes his life is approaching a climax, or when diminished abilities lead to retirement.

The Epigenetic Principle

The epigenetic principle maintains that the critical tasks of each developmental phase must be met and surmounted at the proper time and in the proper sequence to assure healthy personality development. The principle was adopted by psychoanalysis from embryology. The birth of a normal infant depends upon each organ's arising out of its fetal anlage in the proper sequence, with each development depending upon the proper unfolding of the preceding phase. Personality development is, however, not as rigidly set as embryonic maturation, and even though development is impeded when a developmental phase is not properly mastered, compensations are possible and deficiencies can sometimes be turned into strengths. It is clear that a child who does not gain adequate autonomy from his mother prior to going to school will have difficulties in attending school, learning, and relating to peers, but failures are usually partial and not productive of an irremediable anomaly as in the embryo.

Progression, Fixation, Regression

Every life contains a series of developmental crises that arise from the need to meet the new challenges that are inherent in the life cycle. The individual gains new strength and self-sufficiency through surmounting these crises. Similarities exist in the ways in which different people meet similar developmental problems, and there is likely to be something repetitive about the ways in which the same person surmounts certain crises in his life.

Often there is a pause or delay before the child finds the confidence to attempt to face the strange needs of a new phase in his life. The need for emotional security sets limits on the pace of development. He is often prey to opposing motivations. There is an impetus toward expansion and mastery of new skills and situations and the child wishes to emulate parental figures, become more grown up, and achieve greater independence; but the new situations and demands bring insecurity, failures create frustrations, and greater independence requires renunciation of the comforts of dependency. The anxieties that are aroused can lead the child to seek the security of known ways and to renounce temporarily further forward movement, or even to fall back upon increased dependency.

A child requires guidance and support to progress properly. At times he may need to be checked from the unrestrained use of new capacities as when he begins to walk or when he first matures sexually, but at other times he may

need support or even some prodding to move forward as when he is reluctant to leave the familiar and protected home to attend school. Developmental hazards exist on both sides; too much support may leave the child overly dependent and fearful of venturing forward; too little can leave the child struggling to keep afloat.

The failure to cope with and master the essential tasks of a developmental phase leaves the child unprepared to move forward into the next phase. The child gives up, or more commonly he moves ahead in some areas and remains stuck in others. He squanders energy in coping with old problems instead of moving on. A child who has never felt adequately secure at home continues to seek maternal protection and affection when his peers are secure with one another. Such arrests are termed *fixations.* Movement backward to an earlier developmental phase in which the child felt secure is termed *regression.* Paradoxically regression is a normal aspect of the developmental process, for every child will regress at times in order to regain security or to reestablish his equilibrium after feeling defeated. The small child tends to progress securely when he feels that he can find parental protection at the center of his expanding world should he need it.

Even though fixations and regressions are important means of maintaining or regaining emotional security, they create insecurities in turn if they are not simply temporary expediencies. The child remains improperly

prepared to meet the developmental challenges of the next phase of the life cycle and is unable to accept the opportunities afforded him. Even though the child is pulled in two directions, the motivations to move forward are normally more powerful. He is carried onward by his growth, by impulsions for the stimulation of new experiences, by his drives, by needs for the affection and approval of his parents, by desire to go along with his peers, by the yearning of his body for another, by the needs of survival, by the roles provided by society, by the desire for progeny, and by other such influences.

The Divisions of the Life Cycle

The life cycle has been divided into stages or phases somewhat differently by various students of the developmental process; some of the differences reflect differing purposes in making these divisions, and others reflect differing theoretical orientations and conceptualizations of human development. However, despite differences in theory and terminology, there is considerable overlap in where the dividing lines are placed. The description and study of the salient features of these stages have evolved largely from four rather different approaches to understanding the phasic emergence of essential attributes of the personality: those of Freud, Sullivan, Erikson, and Piaget. As the contributions of Freud and Sullivan are described in detail in other chapters, only Erikson's and Piaget's approaches will be discussed here.

Erikson's Phases of Psychosocial Development

Adhering to a more classical psychoanalytic framework than Sullivan, Erikson superimposed an epigenesis of psychosocial development upon the psychosexual phases. He designated what he considered to be the critical psychosocial task of each phase that the individual must surmount in order to be properly prepared to meet the opportunities and tasks of the next stage. He also went beyond the traditional psychosexual phases that end with the "genital phase." In particular, he emphasized the critical moment of late adolescence, when the personality must gel and a person achieve an ego

identity. He then continued to consider the developmental problems of adult life. He has formulated eight stages of psychosocial development, focusing upon the specific developmental tasks of each stage and examining how differing societies help the individual to cope by providing essential care, promoting independence, offering roles, and by having institutionalized ways of assuring survival, proper socialization, and emotional stability. Meeting and surmounting the developmental task of a period leads to the acquisition of a fundamental trait essential for further stable development, whereas failure leads to an enduring deficiency.

As the infant is almost completely dependent upon others to satisfy his vital needs and to keep him comfortable, the basic psychosocial task of the oral phase concerns the achievement of a basic trust in others and also in the self, with failures leading to varying degrees of basic mistrust; the "basic" conveys that the trust is not conscious but blends into the total personality and forms an inherent component of it. The emphasis of the anal phase or the second year of life is upon the attainment of muscular control in general rather than upon bowel control in particular. In learning self-control during this phase, the child properly gains a lasting sense of autonomy; on the other hand, failure to achieve self-control often leads to a pervasive sense of doubt and shame. The resolution of the oedipal conflict during the phallic phase leads to a heightening of conscience; it is the time, too, when the child needs to develop the prerequisites for either masculine or feminine initiative or

become prey to a deep and lasting sense of guilt. In the latency period the child starts school where he finds that gaining admiration, approval, and affection depends upon achievement, and now he must acquire a capacity for industry or become subject to a pervasive sense of inferiority. Then, instead of emphasizing the relationship between genital sexuality and emotional maturity, Erikson focuses upon the need to attain an ego synthesis by the end of adolescence that affords a sense of ego identity, "the accrued confidence that one's ability to maintain an inner sameness and continuity is matched by the sameness and continuity of one's meaning for others. If this cannot be attained the person is subject to identity diffusion. Then, after the young adult has achieved a sense of identity, he can move to relate to another with true intimacy and have the concomitant capacity to distantiate the self from persons or forces whose essence is dangerous to his own; failure to gain the capacity for intimacy almost inevitably leads to self-absorption. The next phase of adult life has as its critical issue the interest in producing members of the next generation and guiding and laying foundations for it; that is, a capacity for generativity, with stagnation as the negative outcome of the phase. The final phase of the life cycle concerns the achievement of mature dignity and integrity through maturely accepting "one's own and only life cycle" and taking responsibility for how it has turned out, whereas despair involves the feeling that this one chance has been wasted and, in essence, has been worthless.

The specific dichotomies that Erikson has utilized to characterize the critical issues of each developmental phase sharpen his emphasis upon the need to cope with tasks rather than simply to pass through a phase without suffering traumata that cause fixations. Still, the critical issues selected neglect other developmental tasks and personality attributes that would seem just as significant.

Piaget and the Epigenesis of Cognitive Development

The theory that we have been considering is not explicitly concerned with the person's linguistic and cognitive development, even though these capacities are essential to what is uniquely human in personality development. Fortunately Piaget, because of his interest in epistemology, sought to uncover the psychological foundations of knowing. The development of intellectual functioning, including language, reasoning, conceptualizing, and categorizing, have been examined, and concomitant studies of the child's moral development have also provided new insights. Cognitive development is conceptualized in strictly epigenetic terms. Piaget and his co-workers have traced the ever increasing scope of the child's abilities through the constant process of adaptation of the existing state of the organism to new experiences. The child cannot utilize experiences that his cognitive schema are not yet ready to assimilate. The foundations for experiencing emerge step by step through the expansion and reorganization

of prior capacities as they take in new experiences, thus becoming prepared to react to and utilize more complex experiences. The process is a very active one in which the organism is, so to speak, ever reaching out to incorporate new experiences within the limits permitted by its organization at that moment in its development. Piaget's observations are of great importance to any conceptualization of the life cycle because they provide guides to how the child and adolescent regard the world and can think about it at each stage of development.

Piaget has divided cognitive development into four major periods, each of which is subdivided into various stages and substages. The *sensorimotor* period lasts from birth through the first eighteen to twenty-four months and is essentially concerned with the child's preverbal development. The child's ways of interacting with the world are traced step by step from the neonate's reflex movements through the time when the child uses internalized visual and motoric symbols to invent very simple means of solving problems. In the *preoperational* period, which lasts until about the time the child enters school, the child becomes capable of using symbols and language. He will not yet have the ability to adapt what he says to the needs of the listener, to note contradictions, or to construct a chain of reasoning. During this period he moves beyond his static ways of thinking as he gains experience and as words begin to symbolize categories. The period of *concrete operations* approximates the "latency" period, lasting from about the start of schooling to

the onset of puberty. The child now possesses a coherent cognitive system with which he can understand his world and into which he can fit new experiences in a rather ordered fashion. He can carry out simple classifications, but he is not yet capable of abstract conceptualizations. The period of *formal operations* starts in early adolescence when the youth becomes capable of thinking in propositions, using hypotheses, and carrying out operations that are abstracted from concrete examples. Formal operations may require considerable formal education, for only exceptional persons appear to reach this stage on their own.

A Comprehensive Orientation to the Phases of the Life Cycle[1]

It is not always feasible to sum up the various tasks of a developmental phase under a common rubric, nor is it always wise, for it can convey an oversimplification of a very complex process. Various aspects of the personality develop at differing tempos, and it is essential to study each developmental line separately. The interrelationships between the development of such essentials as cognitive abilities, ethical concepts, object relationships, self-concepts, and gender identity require continuing study. Still, dividing the life cycle into a series of rather natural phases permits the comparison of the various developmental lines, and how an individual's development may be globally or partially impeded, fixated, or regressed at a given phase in development.

Infancy

The period of infancy approximates the first fifteen months of life when the baby is almost completely dependent upon others to care for his essential needs, to provide a sense of security and the stimulation required for his proper emotional and cognitive development. The psychoanalytic term "oral phase" emphasizes that the infant's life centers upon taking in nutriment through sucking but also that his emotional well-being rests upon the assimilation of feelings of security from those who nurture him. If his

essential needs are filled and untoward tensions do not repeatedly arise within him, he will have established at the core of his being a basic trust in the world and those who inhabit it. It is upon this trust in others that confidence in himself and in his capacities to care for himself will later develop. Still, a great deal more than gaining a sense of basic trust and a satisfaction of oral needs must take place if the infant is to develop properly. These are a very long fifteen months during which the child undergoes a greater physical and developmental transformation than at any other time in life. So much occurs that we may doubt the wisdom of considering it as a single developmental period. Indeed, there are profound differences between the first and second halves of infancy. During the first half, particularly during the first four months, the baby's physical maturation is of dominant importance, and the care of the child's physical needs takes precedence. Relative neglect of socializing and affectional care can probably be neutralized by later efforts, but such needs cannot be neglected during the second half of infancy without producing permanent effects. With adequate security and proper stimulation from those who raise him, the child will complete most of his sensorimotor development to gain increasing control over his movements, to differentiate himself from his environment, and to experiment with ways of manipulating it. He learns to crawl, and as he begins to toddle and as his babbled jargon turns into words, he moves into a new phase of development.

The Toddler

As the baby begins to walk and talk, he enters the new phase in which the crucial problems involve the imbalance between his newfound motor skills and his meager mental capacities. He is impelled to use his new abilities to explore his surroundings, but limits must be set upon his activities for his own safety. Because of his limited verbal and intellectual capacities reasons cannot be explained to him, and the baby is only beginning to tolerate delays and frustrations. The delimitations and the increasing expectations for self-control almost inevitably lead to some conflict with the nurturing persons and can provoke stubbornness, negativism, withholding, and ambivalent feelings toward parental figures. The phase is critical to establishing a basic trust in the self and a sense of initiative. Too much delimitation and fostering a fear of exploration can stifle initiative and the development of self-confidence. Mothers who overestimate the toddler's capacities to conform and who cannot tolerate disorder can easily instill a pervasive sense of guilt or shame. The struggle over conformity often focuses upon bowel training and thereby can involve anal erotic fixations. During this period the child requires subtle guidance in the complex process of acquiring language and a trust in the utility of language. Now the child is also gaining a firm sense of being a boy or a girl, and after the age of three the child's gender identity cannot be reversed without leaving considerable sense of confusion. During this phase the child's life interdigitates so closely with his mother's that prolonged separation from her affects him profoundly, causing physiological

and depressive disturbances. When the child is about three years old, the period comes to a close; a reasonably good equilibrium has been established between his motor skills and his ability to comprehend and communicate verbally. If progress through the period has gone well, he is ready to gain a more definite autonomy from his mother and find his or her place as a boy or girl member of the family.

The Oedipal or Preschool Child

Some time around the age of two and a half or three, the child ceases to be a baby and becomes a preschool child and begins to go through a period of decisive transition. The infant and toddler had required a close and erotized relationship with his mother, but now the erotic aspects of the relationship must be frustrated to enable the child to gain a more realistic and less egocentric grasp of his place in his mother's life. The transition depends partly upon his mother's ability gradually to frustrate her child's attachment to her, but also upon other changes that are taking place. This phase is critical to the eventual achievement of autonomy. At the end of it he will have completed the tasks of primary socialization, accepted his place as a child member of the family, and be prepared to invest his energies and attention in schooling and in activities with peer groups. Early in this developmental phase the boy experiences his father as an intruder into his relationship with his mother, develops hostile feelings toward his father, and fears reciprocal

hostility from him. He properly regains an emotional equilibrium by rescinding his primacy with his mother and seeking instead to become a man like his father, a person capable of gaining the love of his mother. The girl, in giving up her basic attachment to her mother, usually finds a new primary love object within the family in her father and forms a close attachment that will be rescinded about the time of puberty. The child is now gaining the experience as well as the cognitive tools he needs for improved reality testing, and an important aspect of the period is the differentiation of fantasy from reality. He also properly gains a trust in the utility and validity of verbal communication as a help in solving problems and in collaborating with others. His ego function, his ability to guide himself, thus progresses considerably and is further strengthened as he internalizes parental directives. By the age of five or six the child will have gained considerable organization of his personality, and the major lines of his future development will have been laid down—his ways of relating to others and reacting emotionally, having been patterned within his family setting. The resolution of the oedipal situation terminates early childhood, and the precise manner in which the oedipal situation or "family romance" is worked through sets a pattern that will be relived in later interpersonal relationships. During these few years the child has taken a giant step toward becoming an independent and self- sufficient person even though he has done so through appreciating the long road ahead before he can attain adult prerogatives.

The Juvenile

The equilibrium the child gained within his family is disrupted as he goes off to school, where he will be judged by his achievements rather than by ascription, and as he spends increasing amounts of his time with his neighborhood peer group, where he must also find his place on his own. As Erikson has noted, unless the child now gains a sense of industry, he can develop pervasive feelings of inferiority and inadequacy. The trait of industry is encompassed, on the one side, by the danger of habitual compulsive striving to excel competitively and, on the other, by defeatist trends with unwillingness to face meaningful challenges. Other traits also have their roots in this time of life. A sense of belonging develops, the feeling that one is an accepted integral part of the group as contrasted with the feeling of being an outsider; it is a sense that not only concerns social ease as contrasted with social anxiety, but ultimately affects the person's identification with the society in which he lives and his commitment to its values and ethics, as contrasted with a deep- seated feeling of alienation. It is now that a sense of responsibility begins to develop, which involves the willingness to live up to the expectations that one arouses in others. The child's self-concept begins to crystallize in reaction to the way his teachers and peers relate to him. At about the time the child enters school, there is a notable shift in his cognitive processes as he moves into Piaget's stage of concrete operations; and his moral judgment matures from a morality of constraint that is based upon

adult edicts to a morality of cooperation. Although psychoanalytic theory considers this time of life as the latency period, it is apparent that these early school years are critical to the child's socialization and the development of many personality characteristics as he begins to move beyond the shelter of the home into the broader world of the schoolroom and his peer groups.

Adolescence

Adolescence may be properly defined as the period between pubescence and physical maturity, but in considering personality development we are interested primarily in the transition from childhood to the attainment of adult prerogatives, responsibilities, and integration. Adolescence involves the discrepancy between sexual maturation and the physical, emotional, and social unpreparedness for commitment to intimacy and the responsibilities of parenthood. Usually it involves an inner struggle to overcome dependency upon parents, which is reflected in an outer struggle to assert independence from parental authority. The adolescent goes through the difficult process of gaining freedom from the earlier repressive ban upon sexual expression while redirecting his choice of love objects outside of the family circle. During these years his cognitive capacities change, and he enters Piaget's stage of formal operations; he becomes capable of using propositional logic, can think about concepts abstracted from reality, and is able to utilize hypothetical-deductive thinking. Ethical or moral capacities

also develop as the adolescent becomes interested in ideas, ideals, and ideologies, and his behavior is apt to be directed by the values of the social system rather than simply by interpersonal relationships and the values stemming from them. At the start of adolescence the individual is still a child at play, dependent on his parents and with an amorphous future; at the end he becomes responsible for himself, the direction his life will take is fairly well settled, and his personality has gelled into a workable integrate. As Erikson has properly emphasized, the primary task of adolescence concerns the attainment of an ego identity, but usually, particularly for a girl, the attainment of an ego identity also requires the gaining of a capacity for intimacy.

The lengthy period of adolescence can usefully be divided into three subphases. Early adolescence includes the reorientation required by the prepubertal spurt of growth as well as the physical changes and altered impulsions and feelings that come with puberty. Midadolescence, which is likely to begin twelve to eighteen months after pubescence, is an expansive period. It includes movement toward the opposite sex, which leads to a realignment of intimate friendships. Characteristically it is a time of revolt and conformity, revolt from parental standards and authority and conformity to peer group standards and loyalties. Late adolescence is usually a time when delimitation is required as the young person seeks to find and define his own identity and when cravings for intimacy with a specific individual

become important.

Youth

Keniston has suggested that we are currently experiencing the emergence of a new developmental phase among some young people, which he suggests we designate as "youth." It may seem strange to insert a new phase in the life cycle, but the course of the life cycle varies with the social and cultural setting. Aries has pointed out that during the Middle Ages childhood stopped at the age of six or seven. Adolescence may not have been a major developmental stage until secondary school education became common early in this century. Among many preliterate peoples the child becomes an adult shortly after puberty by means of initiation ceremonies. Currently the inability to depend upon traditional ways of adapting in a rapidly changing world has created new developmental problems for some highly educated youths.

Youth includes the period that usually has been included as part of late adolescence and early adult life. It concerns the tensions between the self and society, with a reluctance, or a refusal, to accept either conventional societal standards or a conventional role in society—the "social contract" cannot be accepted if it conflicts with a personal morality based upon higher principles. Critical to this stage of life may be the new awareness of how greatly a

person's traits and potentialities depend upon the social environment in which he has been raised as well as upon the ethical standards he embraces. The period is marked by a struggle against acceptance of a conventional way of life and sometimes by a reluctance to accept commitment to a single way of life that will make one an adult. The dangers quite clearly lie in the extremes of alienation—alienation from society, instead of reasonable acceptance of it, or alienation from the self with a pathological self-absorption and withdrawal from considerations of reality.

The Young Adult

The young adult is at the height of his physical and mental vigor, and his energies and interests can now be directed beyond his own growth and development. He has become reasonably independent of his natal family, and having overcome blocks to intimacy with a member of the opposite sex, he is ready to establish a new interdependence with another person and to find his place in the social system. Now commitments are made, and if a person cannot make them he will lack the opportunity of being meaningful to others and having others become meaningful to him. Occupational choice and marital choice, if not made previously, are critical issues, and both will greatly influence the further course of his life cycle. Choice of an occupation determines much of the physical and social environment in which a person will live; it selects out traits that are utilized and emphasized; it provides

social roles and patterns for living; and by determining the sort of persons with whom one spends much of his life, it markedly influences values and ethical standards. The choice of a spouse constitutes the major decision that can complement or alter the personality makeup before the production of a new generation. In marrying, one gains a partner who shares, supplements, and supports and upon whom one can rely because the well-being of each partner is bound up with the fate of the other. Marriage also helps individual integration by providing a way of life for which there are traditional directives and a place in the social system. Marital adjustment provides a major test of personality integration and organization, for it requires the malleability to interdigitate one's drive satisfaction, way of life, and ethical standards with a person raised in another family. Marriage not only tests the success of the earlier oedipal transition but also many other facets of the developmental process.

Parenthood

The position of parenthood in the life cycle is not fixed, but for most it comes after commitment to marriage and when the process of self-creation is more or less completed. Spouses are transformed into parents and their marriage into a family. The birth of the first child often alters their life patterns and perspectives more than had their marriage. The person who becomes a parent usually gains a new sense of achievement and completion

by the act of creativity. Women, in particular, now feel fulfilled, for to many their biological purpose seems to require completion through conceiving, bearing, and nurturing children and strong cultural directives had added moment to such desires. The woman's creativity as a mother becomes a central matter that provides meaning and balance to her life; and for many years her child or children will be a prime focus in her life. The birth of a child also brings increased self-esteem and sense of responsibility to the father. Parenthood often provides a severe test of the integration of a parent's personality and capacities to accept responsibility for dependents. The child forms and will long continue to form a bond between the parents, a source of shared interest and identification, but he can also be a divisive influence, and in each marriage may in different proportions and ways be a unifying and separating force. For those who have achieved the necessary capacities, the new responsibilities are offset by the fulfillment that comes with experiencing the other side of the parent-child relationship; the self-realization that derives from being needed and loved by a child to whom the parent is so very important; and the constant renewal that comes with the changes in the offspring.

The Middle Years

The passage over the crest of life is a particularly critical period. It is a time of stocktaking concerning the manner in which the person's one and

only life is passing—the gratifications attained from marriage and career, and an assessment of prospects for the future. The turn into middle life involves a state of mind rather than some specific bodily change or some clearly demarcated shift in life roles, although awareness of wear and tear on the body and increasing incidence of chronic illness, incapacitation, and death among peers influences the state of mind. The new phase starts with a persistent awareness that it will soon be too late to attempt to change one's course through life. For women in particular middle age may start when the children leave home, or at least no longer require a major share of her attention. Middle age for the woman contains the menopausal "change of life," but she is usually well into middle age when it occurs. A sense of integrity comes with the feeling that a life has been meaningful, that relationships with those who are significant are happy. A negative balance sheet can lead to changes in career or marital partners and frantic efforts for sexual gratification. Dignity, perhaps shaded by resignation, can ward off feelings of despair when life has not produced meaningful relationships or the prospect of achieving goals. As the person passes over the peak, he finds himself one of the older, responsible generation. Accepting responsibilities that one has achieved or has thrust upon one leads to further growth in contrast to stagnation. It is a time of fruition for some, but for others it is a time of regret and disillusion that often leads to resentments toward those who seem to have frustrated.

Old Age

Currently old age is somewhat arbitrarily considered to start at about the age of sixty- five, the time when most men retire from an active occupation. Many of the contemporary problems of the aged involve the difference between a desirable, unharried, and dignified closure of life and a hollow survival in which the person feels useless, unneeded, and burdensome. It is, or should be, a period of surcease from striving and a need to prove one's worth. A sense of equanimity requires the acceptance of failures as well as accomplishments. Sooner or later the aged person becomes increasingly dependent, and his contentment rests upon the reliability of those upon whom he must depend. In some respects there is a reversal of the attainments of adolescence: bodily strength and sexual desire decrease, secondary sexual characteristics and cognitive capacities wane, and concomitantly the pride and confidence derived from such attributes diminish.

It is useful to consider three phases of old age even though not all persons go through them. The elderly person is not greatly changed from middle life and considers himself capable of taking care of himself and his affairs. Eventually physical changes or alterations in life circumstances make him dependent upon others and he is considered *senescent.* The final phase, which many are spared, is *senility,* when the brain is no longer sufficiently

intact to serve its essential function as an organ of adaptation.

Death

Death is the end of the life cycle and an inevitable outcome that brings closure to every life story. Because man is aware of this eventuality from an early age, it profoundly influences how he lives his life. The desire for some type of continuity into the future is pervasive, but the ways of seeking some semblance of immortality are diverse. The finite character of life provides delimitation by directing the individual to specific objectives, by countering diffuse and unbridled strivings, and by bringing a desire to provide a proper ending to a life. Death lends incisiveness to the meaning of experiences, sharpening appreciation of the transitory and the beautiful. Above all, it heightens the preciousness of those one loves because of their mortality. To those who have obtained some wisdom in the process of reaching old age, death often assumes meaning as the proper outcome of life. It is nature's way of assuring much life and constant renewal. Times and customs change but the elderly tire of changing; it is time for others to take over, and the elderly person is willing to pass quietly from the scene.

Panphasic Influences

The developmental process is also profoundly affected by influences

that are not phasic. Children usually have the same parents throughout the first decades of their lives, and the parents' personalities and their ways of relating to each other as well as to the child pervade all phases of the child's early development. While a parent may relate more salubriously or deleteriously at a given phase of a child's development, many such influences are panphasic. The parental models for identification, as well as the intrafamiliar milieu and the socioeconomic setting in which the family exists, can affect the individual throughout all developmental stages. Some of these panphasic influences will be presented in The Family: The Developmental Setting.[2]

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Notes

[1] See T. Lidz, *The Person.*

[2] See the International Psychotherapy Institute's website freepyschotherapybooks.org to download this book