

Erik Homburger Erikson

(1902-1994)

"It is human to have a long childhood; it is civilized to have an even longer childhood. Long childhood makes a technical and mental virtuoso out of man, but it also leaves a life-long residue of emotional immaturity in him".

Introduction

I. Books:

- A. Childhood & Society (1950)
- B. Identity: Youth & Crisis (1968)
- C. Vital Involvement in Old Age (1986)

II. Major Influences

A. Rise of Ego Psychology - In early 1930s, primarily in US. Believe that ego exists from birth and that behaviour is not totally defensive. Places more emphasis on the external world (depression, wars, etc.)

B. Ethos - the influence of culture. When invited to study Sioux Indians on a reservation, Erikson became aware of the massive influence of culture on behaviour.

C. Epigenetic Principle (prefix "epi" --> "upon"). The course of development is genetically programmed and is determined by the interaction of biological (body), psychological (mind), and cultural (ethos) influences.

III. Two major themes

- A. The world gets bigger.
- B. Failure is cumulative.

Core of Personality

I. Core Tendency. Similar to Freud, but with a definite emphasis on some proportion of functioning that is not determined by the attempt to avoid conflict between the individual and society.

II. Core Characteristics. Similar to Freud, except that the ego is considered to be partially innate and there is less emphasis on all behaviour being defensive.

Development (Psychosocial Stages)

Erikson downplays biological sexuality in favour of the psychosocial features of the conflict between child and parents. Development extends throughout the life-span and is divided into periods or stages. The amount of conflict in each stage determines whether the positive or negative pole is learned.

I. Infancy: first year (similar to oral stage)

A. Ego Crisis: Trust vs. Mistrust. Crisis here does not mean overwhelming stress, but the medical usage meaning a turning point. Major problem is dependency. Is the adult to be trusted?

B. Significant Task: Mutual affirmation of mother and child - a big emphasis on visual contact. Trust gives capacity for faith.

C. Basic Strength: Hope. A basic confidence in the future. In concentration camps, "Going Moslem" meant loss of hope and resulted in death.

D. Ritualization: Numinous. Ritualizations are recurring patterns of behaviour characteristic of a particular society (kissing, hugging, shaking hands, etc.). The word numinous means "profound emotional experience". The first ritualization is the greeting of the mother - the touch, smile, and eye-to-eye contact which assures "separateness transcended, yet distinctiveness confirmed".

E. Ritualism: Idolism (idolatry). Ritualisms are exaggerated, rigid, inappropriate ritualizations. Idolism is a distortion of the numinous reverence into adulation which gives an illusory image of perfection.

F. Maldevelopment: Withdrawal. Maldevelopment is a basic weaknesses resulting from poor resolution of the ego crisis. Withdrawal is "detaching" from others, similar to the problems of schizophrenia.

G. Significant Relations: Maternal parent

II. Early Childhood: 2-->3, similar to anal stage; terrible twos where the child learns that terrible word "No"

A. Ego Crisis: Autonomy vs. Shame & Doubt

B. Significant Task: Differentiate right and wrong & to establish psychosocial independence. Primitive independence comes by saying "No".

C. Strength: Will, courage - the ability to exercise both freedom of choice and self-restraint.

D. Ritualization: Judicious - forms basis of legal system (Many lawyers are "anal" types).

E. Ritualism: Legalism - being more concerned with the letter of the law rather than the spirit of the law.

F. Maldevelopment: Compulsion

G. Significant Relations: Parents

III. Play Age: 3 --> 5, similar to phallic stage. Here children make up stories (with dolls, soldiers) and play them out. Play to a child is like a blueprint to an adult - a trial universe. Also, children begin to use the next most terrible word to parents: "Why?"

A. Ego Crisis: Initiative vs. Guilt

B. Significant Task: Role experimentation

C. Strength: Purpose (hopefully, to identify with proper role models (For me, Roy Rogers, John Wayne - today-??))

D. Ritualization: Authenticity (Dramatic in 1982) - assume culturally accepted roles.

E. Ritualism: Impersonation - trying to be something that you are not.

F. Maldevelopment: Inhibition

G. Significant Relations: Basic family

IV. School Age: 6 --> 11, similar to latency stage. Here, children go to school and become more social. Also, they are evaluated (grades) and work is emphasized.

A. Ego Crisis: Industry vs. Inferiority

B. Significant Task: Skill learning

C. Strength: Competence (craftsmanship). At this age, children know who is good at everything.

D. Ritualization: Formality. There are appropriate ways of doing things (above being simply right or wrong).

E. Ritualism: Formalism (perfectionism)

F. Maldevelopment: Inertia

G. Significant Relations: School, neighbourhood

V. Adolescence: 12 --> 18. Up to this stage, development mostly depends upon what is done to you. From here on out, development depends primarily upon what you do. This is the stage when you are neither a child nor an adult. It extends as society gets more complex.

A. Ego Crisis: Identity vs. Role confusion. In the search for identity, many adolescents go into a period of withdrawing from responsibilities which Erikson called a "moratorium"

B. Significant Task: Establish philosophy of life. Adolescents think in terms of ideals. Problem is that they don't have much experience.

C. Strength: Fidelity & devotion (to friends & causes)

D. Ritualization: Ideology. Adolescents tend to substitute ideals for experience. Ideals are different from reality because they are conflict free.

E. Ritualism: Totalism. Extremely rigid, unbending set of ideal - cults, or merely totally dropping out.

F. Maldevelopment: Repudiation - by indifference or defiance.

G. Significant Relations: Peer groups

VI. Young Adulthood: 18 --> 35 - start a family

A. Ego Crisis: Intimacy vs. Isolation

B. Significant Task: Establish mutually satisfying relationships - primarily marriage & friends.

C. Strength: Love (another) and Affiliation (others).

D. Ritualization: Affiliation - "I'm OK, You're OK"

E. Ritualism: elitism - status symbols, "Yuppies"

F. Maldevelopment: Exclusivity - world begins to shrink

G. Significant Relations: Marital partner, friends.

VII. Middle Adulthood: 35 --> 55. Work is now crucial. Spend most of life preparing for this stage, end of life recovering from it. When you "are in charge".

A. Ego Crisis: Generativity vs. Stagnation - If a feeling of stagnation appears the stage is set for a "Midlife Crisis".

B. Significant Task: Perpetuate culture. Parents transmit values of culture through family (tame kids) and work (establish stable environment).

C. Strength: Care (others) & Production (work)

D. Ritualization: Generationalism

E. Ritualism: Authoritism

F. Maldevelopment: Rejection - don't care for specific groups.

G. Significant Relations: Workplace - community & family

VIII. Late Adulthood: 65 --> death

A. Ego Crisis: Ego Integrity vs. despair. One major question on the final exam: "Was the trip worth it?"

B. Significant Task: Completion of life

C. Strength: Wisdom. Wisdom is a detached concern for the whole of life (the world is now really large). With wisdom, can accept death as the completion of life.

D. Ritualization: Integralism (philosophical). Grandchildren listen to grandparents tell stories.

E. Ritualism: Sapientism (dogmatism). When you know all the answers (go back to adolescence).

F. Maldevelopment: Disdain - a feeling that the trip was not worth it (to think of oneself as unworthy).

G. Significant Relations: Mankind ("My-kind").

Periphery of Personality

Erikson is not explicit but presumably assumes character types comprised of combinations of the sets of traits related to the eight stages of development. Whenever a fixation occurs, it is likely to jeopardize sound development in subsequent stages as well - "failure is cumulative".