

Václav Příhoda. *Ontogeneze lidské psychiky*, 4 vols. Praha: Státní Pedagogické Nakladatelství, 1963-74. Vol. I: *Vývoj člověka do patnácti let* (1963; 3rd printing 1971). 461 pp. Kčs 35.50; Vol. II: *Vývoj člověka od patnácti do třiceti let* (1967; 2nd printing 1974), 231 pp. Kčs 37,-; Vol. III: *Vývoj člověka od třiceti do čtyřicetipěti let* (1970), 307 pp. Kčs 35.50; Vol. IV: *Vývoj člověka v druhé polovině života* (1974), 495 pp. Kčs 47,-.

Ř/ě/ This is a remarkable piece of work in many ways. For one, it is a large treatise, totaling close to 1500 pages. This is an impressive but not the most important feature. To the reviewer, the central fact is that in these four volumes a single author has attempted to chart man's total life course, including the somatic changes. We think of Příhoda as an educational and, to a lesser extent, a child psychologist, the author, among other things, of *Výzkum dětského písma* (1941) and *Uvod do pedagogické psychologie* (1956). He had to do an enormous amount of reading and learning to be able to complete even the first volume. There are 377 references in Vol. I, 158 in Vol. II, 229 in Vol. III, 421 in Vol. IV—a total of close to 1200 references. The works cited are in Czech, English, French, German, and Russian, attesting to the author's linguistic skills. To gain effective access to the American literature, the author worked, on several occasions, for fairly prolonged periods in American libraries. The reader should be aware of the fact that much of the intellectual effort involved in the acquisition of the required information and its thoughtful transformation into a readable, easily flowing prose was made during that part of the author's life when most mortals retire not only from such strenuous exercise but from professional activities in general.

As we are informed in the Epilogue, the idea for a study of the psychological aspects of man's life cycle occurred to the author in 1923 when he took a course on "Mental Development" at the University of Wisconsin under Professor M. V. O'Shea. The course and the textbook covered only the earlier phases of man's life, including the postpubertal phase. He returned to the idea of a comprehensive "psychological ontogenetics" in 1947, but realized that he had to inform himself first about the ontogenesis of the simpler forms of behavior. His lectures at Charles University on the development of animal behavior appeared in the form of mimeographed lectures for students (*scripta*) in 1952, under the title, *Vývoj psychiky*. After several years of preparatory studies, he was ready to lecture on the psychological development of man. His lecture notes appeared, again as informal *scripta*, under the title, *Ontogeneze lidské psychiky* in three fascicles (Fasc. 1 [1956], 211 pp.; Fasc. 2 [1958], 227 pp.; Fasc. 3, 348 pp.). The first volume of the definitive text appeared in 1963, and the Epilogue to the fourth volume was completed "in Prague on 17 February 1972."

The author notes that, in spite of the large size of the treatise, he was able to incorporate only a part of the available research material, which included biographies and autobiographies, interviews, and observations of behavior made in different countries and cultures, as well as his own observations during the course of his long life (1889-1979). He is fully aware of the large effects of the sex differences in psychological development and of the role of ethnic origin, urban versus rural environment ("metropolis versus a mountain hamlet"), schooling, and occupational activities, as well as physique and health. In spite of the acknowledged and important effects of the environment, Příhoda does not disregard the role of the germinal makeup of each individual (the complex of genes) in "programming" ontogenesis, from conception through birth to the timing of the milestone of postnatal development and the cessation of life.

Ř/ The treatise is introduced by the consideration of "developmental laws," general (discussed in the framework of dialectical materialism), and specific (biopsychological), and it ends with a large chapter entitled "The mystery of death," a term used by G. Stanley Hall (*Senescence: The last half of the life*, 1922), who was among the first to deal with thanatopsychology, the psychology of death. To Příhoda, the issue of death is a "psychological question," and his focus is on the beliefs and the varying attitudes toward

death: "In their intellectual and emotional relations to death, a physician or a director of a funeral home differs from a peasant, a practicing Catholic from an atheist, an altruist from an egocentric" (IV, 458).

A distinctive component of the "thanatocomplex" is the fear of dying and of death, with anxiety passing at times into acute fear and horror, in contrast to resigned acceptance on the part of others or the heroism of a *kamikaze* pilot ready to "die beautifully and for a good cause." Responses of the survivors are considered sympathetically by the author. In Příhoda's formulation, to a sensitive individual the loss of a dearly loved person is one of the bitterest experiences of one's life, and the emotional suffering is associated, typically, with marked physical (disturbances of digestion, weakness, vertigo) and psychological changes (increase in introversion, disturbances in memory). The acute sorrow (*zármutek*) passes into sadness (*smutek*). This was once institutionalized and marked, in Europe, by the wearing of a black veil and black dress, or at least a black band on a man's sleeve. Contemporary civilization has less and less place for a dignified departure from this world, with most people dying in a hospital rather than in their homes. In large cities, the activities of a crematorium resemble a "factory, operating on a conveyor belt system" (IV, 468).

The body of the text of the treatise deals, in detail, with the successive phases of the total human life cycle, from the prenatal period through maturity to early old age (sixty to seventy-five years), and the final period of *senectus molesta*, the advanced, troublesome senescence terminated by death. The narrative is supplemented by a substantial amount of tabular material (52 tables in Vol. I, 34 in Vol. II, 59 in Vol. III, 114 in Vol. IV).

Perhaps the most controversial aspect of the work is the periodization of man's life in terms of fifteen-year segments, bringing the story to the age of forty-five in Vol. III, to the age of sixty in the first part, and to seventy-five and beyond in the second part of the closing volume. For the period between forty-five and sixty years, Příhoda was forced to invent a new term, *interaevium* (an "interstitial" period between vigorous maturity and old age).

In European countries in which retirement begins at sixty, it may make good sense to view this milestone as the beginning of senescence. In the United States, where a new law places obligatory retirement for many occupational groups at seventy, it does not make good sense. What this reviewer is arguing for is a "functional," not a mechanical, chronological periodization of man's (and woman's) life cycle. The world-wide trend toward earlier physical maturation and a delayed onset of senescence underscores the serious limitations of any purely chronological approach and a fixed periodization.

For some periods of life, especially for childhood, a fifteen-year period is too long and heterogeneous, and Příhoda himself (IV, 12) stresses that "childhood" consists of no less than seven distinct developmental phases (embryonal, fetal, neonatal, infant, toddler, preschool—the "second childhood" in Příhoda's terminology—and prepubertal). The onset of puberty exhibits substantial inter-individual differences, and this is true of all biologically determined stages (e.g., menopause), as contrasted with socially and legally determined milestones in the cycle of human life, referring specifically to the forty-fifth year as the beginning of *interaevium* (one could speak of late maturity, in contrast to early and middle maturity), Příhoda acknowledges (IV, 66) that this dating is "schematic, statistical, with a large dispersion." This only further underscores the questionable value of "firm" dates and of standard units of time (fifteen years in the treatise), in spite of the apparent simplicity and "orderliness" of such an approach.

These considerations should not obscure the fundamental fact that Příhoda's four-volume treatise represents a significant achievement, not readily matched—if matched at all—in the world literature: A thoughtful, well-documented fruit of close to a quarter of a century of sustained, disciplined, inspired and inspiring labor in the vineyard of the sciences of human development, with a focus on human behavior.

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