

So far as I can see, there are at least three stages, levels, or phases in human development—of the sort described by Jean Piaget, Erik Erikson, Lawrence Kohlberg, James Fowler, and others.

At the first stage, one simply lives more or less unproblematically as one has been socialized and acculturated to do without asking the question, Why? At the second stage, one recognizes the problem of living as one has been socialized and acculturated to do, and one asks the question, Why? only to answer it by still appealing simply to convention and tradition. Finally, at the third stage, one not only recognizes that living is problematic and asks the question, Why? but one also sees that and why the conventional or traditional answer is also problematic, and therefore seeks an answer justified not merely by consuetudinary criteria, but by the ultimate, or primal, criteria of common human experience and reason.

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