

Coming of Age

In an earlier entry we commented on certain features of the life stage called adolescence, which we see as the classic period of youth, carrying the teen through explosive developmental and learning years, to the threshold of manhood or womanhood. It has never escaped attention that this development fraught period is of unique relevance to the entire life tenor of the individual.

Scholarly and medical attention to this period in human development has widened in the past century and a half, and has in particular turned to the relatively new science of Anthropology for reinforcements provided by research in other cultures than those of Western Europe and America. Margaret Mead, a field work oriented American anthropologist working in Samoa (South Pacific), published the influential *Coming of Age in Samoa* in 1928. This field text cut right into the issues pressing American culture at the time and throughout the century: the Greening versus the Constricted in American culture, The Management of Sexuality in a culture whose roots were Anglo-Saxon and Protestant, while its futurity seemed destined for a dangerously unformulated New World.

The yield of Mead's research, to simplify, was to show culturally alert Americans how a distant culture effectuated harmonious intra-gender relations, how successful another culture could prove to be, in its ease with sexual matters, and how adjusting culture to nature can in general promote effective patterns of governance.