

The Inheritance of Life Events: A Synopsis of Time Will Tell

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Abstract: None available.

Full Text: Headnote What were your parents doing at this age? Time will tell. INTRODUCTION We read about the condition of outer space and about the dangerous "space junk" which is accumulating there-not only bits of dead stars but bits of dead satellites, and thousands of man-made rocket stages. And it is cold out there. I write after thirty years of observations of what I call Inner Space, and of the dangerous collections of undigested experiences within the lives of families. We read that "toxic wastes" which have been buried, or stored away out of sight, can always erupt and caused damage. We cannot get rid of them permanently; there is nowhere to dump them, forever, in the outside world. I write of eruptions of "toxic wastes," of neglected and undigested experiences in families, which erupt as repeat performances, at anniversary ages. Observations that show these eruptions affect us at the very same ages that they were "buried" in our parents' lives. Our children are affected too by our uncomprehended experiences, and at the same ages at which we dumped our muddles. Here are two examples of events "happening" when anniversary bells rang. 1. J. Robert Oppenheimer was aged eight when his brother Frank was born, in the second week in August, 1912. Their father, Julius Oppenheimer, was forty-one. When the "Father of the Bomb" (as J. Robert was called), reached forty-one, it was 1945, and in the second week in August, down went the bombs onto Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The first bomb was code-named "Fat man," the second one was "Little Boy," and the procedure was called "Baby is Born." Were they bombs? Or were they time-bombs? 2. Melanie Klein was a famous psychoanalyst, who lived from 1882 to 1960. In his play Mrs Klein, Nicholas Wright shows us the dramatic events in one day of the life of Mrs. Klein, as she prepares to leave London for Europe to attend the funeral of her son Hans. Mrs. Klein was aged fifty-two. When her mother was fifty-two, her son, Emanuel, Melanie's brother, had been found dead. I believe that by exploring our family histories, we find ourselves in our inner worlds where Family Time rules. Family photographs stir our memories, and help us talk and explore and learn more. "God offers to every mind its choice between truth and repose. Take which you please-you can never have both. Between these, as a pendulum, man oscillates." R.W. Emerson wrote this, in 1835. He also wrote, in an essay called "Love": "It is strange how painful is the actual world-the painful kingdom of time and place . . . With thought . . . is immortal hilarity, the rose of joy." How little time we take, just for thinking. Do we know how to think for ourselves? CLOCK TIME AND FAMILY TIME We are all living in two sorts of time: Clock Time and Family Time. As children, we learn to tell the time by the clocks, but no one teaches us how to tell Family Time. We believe that we have time, but in a mysterious way, time has us! Clock Time is consciously-agreed-upon time, it is the time of the Outside World-the "real" world. We divide up our days and nights, our months and our years, and we know where we are in Clock Time. If we do not attend to Clock Time, we may be in trouble-late for appointments, jobs not done, and other people upset. Babies, of course, do not know what Clock Time is, nor do some old people, whom we call "demented." "Mad" people too, are often lost in Clock Time, and cannot say what day it is today. When we are dreaming we are all out of Clock Time. Family Time is the time which rules our Inside World-the world which we prefer to ignore. However, I believe that not attending to Family Time has far greater repercussions, and that Family Time is far more difficult to watch than in Clock Time. We take regular exercise for our physical health; the regular mental exercise required to keep ourselves oriented in Family Time means that we ask ourselves: "Did something significant happen to my parents, at my age, something which is influencing me now?" And "What was I doing at my child's age now?" We need to connect ourselves in ages with our parents, and with our children. Failing this, we find ourselves doing strange things,

falling ill, and involving other people in our personal Family Time. Being unwittingly tied in time to our parents makes life very complicated for us, and for our families. However, all becomes more manageable when we consider Family Time. When we begin to understand what has been going on, we can better equip ourselves for living, now and in the future. When we hearken with our hearts tuned, We can hear the lamentations, Through time's corridor resounding. (From Kol Nidre, on Yom Kippur Eve) MY TIME "Timor Mortis Conturbat Me." "The Fear of Death Disturbs Me" is the title of a poem by William Dunbar, written in about 1500. For as long as I can remember, I have felt convinced that time was the most powerful force in the world. As a child, I believed that I would very soon die; I felt that there was very little time for me. Each time I was ill, with a bad cold, or measles, or when I had a fall, I thought: "This is the end of me." I was always surprised to find myself going on living, but I continued to feel that I would not last long. I told no one about these feelings, and they did not stop me being active at school and at home. When I was ten years old, our beloved nanny left us. Also, at school, a girl in my class (whom I did not like) fainted onto the floor. I had never seen anyone unconscious. I thought she was dead. A man teacher carried her away, still unconscious. At home, it was impossible to discuss my feelings about either of these events; feelings were never mentioned in our home. I think I dislocated myself from them quite early in my life. After these things happened, I began to have trouble going to school. I would get ready, but I could not go. "Are you sick?" I was asked. "Do you have a headache, or a sick tummy?" It was hard to answer clearly, because I was not sure that I did not have a headache, or a sick tummy. Before long, as I did not improve, I was taken to the doctor, then to several doctors, who peered into all orifices, felt me all over, and tested my urine. They found nothing abnormal. My father asked me if I felt frightened of something, but I did not even know what I felt. I just could not get to school, and I spent the school hours reading, at home. There were lots of books about, as both my parents read widely, and I had access to all their books. My father would sometimes say: "I think you are ready for these books now," and he introduced me to many authors, mainly English, and others in translation; he was my tutor in literature. My father also arranged for me to have school lessons by correspondence, and I enjoyed receiving a packet of lessons each week. I finished the work in a few days, and then went on with my own reading. When the time came for examinations to enter high school there was no way of avoiding writing the exams, with other children, in a classroom of a local school. Although I managed to do this, I remember feeling almost paralysed by fear (of what?-I had no idea). I escaped to the toilet frequently, just to get out of the big room. An invigilator accompanied me and of course, I soon had to return to the classroom. I passed the exams with 51%, to the mortification of my brilliant parents. Worse was to come. There were no lessons by correspondence for high school, so I was fitted out with school uniforms, text books, etc. and expected, as if by magic, to get going. The first year was awful. For several months I got to school on two or three days each week; then everyone gave up. I stayed at home, mostly alone, as my mother was out a great deal, and I read more books. Physically I was quite well and I played after school with other children. I had no idea why I was so different from them. Then gradually, and inexplicably, something began to change. I restarted at high school in the following year, my attendance improved month by month, and I enjoyed the company of other children, and the lessons in the big classrooms, and the sporting activities. The feeling of death hanging over me had begun to leave me! I did well in exams,-to my surprise, as I did not feel that I was working hard. I looked forward to learning more. For the first time in my life I felt I had a future. This change happened when I was aged fourteen, and my mother was fifty, and I had no idea of what caused it for another forty years! Many, many years later, when she was in her nineties and I was my fifties, my mother told me about her fiftieth birthday. Her father (my grandfather) had come to see her and to wish her a happy birthday. He had said: "Well, my girl, you are half way to the century. I wonder if you will get there?" She told me that after he departed she sat down "hard", and that she realised, for the first time in her life, that she would one day die! This was exactly when, for the first time in my life, when I was fourteen, I had felt that I would very likely live-and I was able to resume school. I felt I was released, into life. It is hard for me to describe my mother, except as enormously powerful. We never seemed related in any way that was meaningful and helpful to me. She seemed

incapable of knowing me. At about this time I began to suffer from migraine headaches. Once again, I was taken for medical examination, and once again no one seemed interested to explore, or to understand what the headaches were about. I felt there were brick walls around me, and that I was an enigma to myself and to everyone else. I decided I would try to become a doctor, and to discover more about these matters, -as well as about my earlier troubled state. Many years after this, when I had become a doctor, I searched for, and found, our old nanny. We were so happy to see one another again-we laughed and cried with joy. She told me, inter alia, that I had almost died, of gastroenteritis, when I was fifteen months old, not long after she had come to live with us, "You was sick," she said, "your Mum and me worked hard to pull you through." Our nanny's name was Elsie, and she had travelled to Australia on a migrant ship from Birmingham, in England. She had asked for work, as a live-in domestic help, in a family where there were children. She was herself the eldest of a large family, and she loved being with us. She also loved the Australian sunshine, and I remember her at the washing-line, singing ("sing-ging" was the way she pronounced it) with the joy of it. She enjoyed cooking, and housework, and sewing, and I remember lots of good times with her, helping her with cooking, drying dishes, cleaning silver, and sewing. Elsie was about the same age as my parents. She would come too, when my father took the whole family out driving, and exploring the countryside. The car was full, with three grown-ups, and all of us children, and the dog on the running-board. After nine years with us, Elsie left us to return to England and see her family, and to see the Coronation of George VI and his Queen. We saw her off at the wharf. We all threw streamers, but of course they broke as the ship drew away. She wrote to us, and she sent birthday presents, but she did not come back again to live with us. In retrospect, I realise that I felt joyful when I was doing things with Elsie. It was when I was alone and still, that the feeling of despair enveloped me. I had no capacity to reflect about what was happening, to join things together and make sense of them. I knew that when I was making something, I felt better, and I would often do this; I remember making a dolls' house, with furniture, and leather sandals, a tree house, a trolley. Once I was able to return to school, after I was 14, schoolwork, and sport, were things I could do, and studying offered a route to becoming a doctor. Then, I thought, I may be able to look into my hidden mysteries. My "repeat performance" in my adult life was a severe, painful, but thankfully brief illness, a meningoencephalitis, caused by a virus. I lost ten pounds weight in one week of illness, felt very weak indeed, and spent three weeks resting and recovering. I remember sitting on a beach, watching the waves coming in to the shore, and wondering "Why now?" "Why did I get this illness now?" I had plenty of time to wonder. I was aware of the rhythm of the waves. I thought of Byron's Childe Harold "Roll on, thou deep and dark blue Ocean, roll! Ten thousand fleets sweep over thee in vain; Man marks the earth with ruin-his control stops with the shore." We cannot still the rhythms of nature. As an experienced surfer, I watched the waves, -the rollers that carry you safely in to the beach, and the dumpers that throw you to the bottom, and leave you struggling to get to the surface for air. Quite suddenly I realised that I had had my illness exactly at the age, to the very month, that my mother was, when she gave birth to my younger brother! This thought seemed most important to me, and I realized that if it were a meaningful correlation, I was at the mercy of time-related forces, of which I had been quite unaware. I wonder now in these times of concern about the disposal of toxic waste in the world, about my own illness in terms of an eruption of "toxic waste," i.e. of unverballed feelings from my internal environment, where they had lain un-treated for many years. I have been told quite recently of an occasion when my older brothers pushed me, as a baby in the pram, fast down a long hill. The pram flew on ahead of them, hit a bump and threw me out. They were frightened they had killed me. I have no memory of that event, but I wonder now about the origins of my terror and of my headaches. I may well have felt "thrown out" at eighteen months, when my young brother was born. "I tell you, hopeless grief is passionless" (Elizabeth Barrett Browning, 'Grief'). However, this time I had had not only an illness but an eruption of curiosity, which had not found an answer which explained my illness but a correlation which led me to explore further. The outcome of this life event of mine was that I trained as a psychiatrist. I went on to have a personal analysis in London, and a training in psychoanalytic psychotherapy. Over this period, I repeatedly observed people behaving in ways

which were certainly not dictated by their conscious minds, or conscious wishes,-and these were not people in lunatic asylums. My undergraduate medical education had not mentioned unconscious mental activity, and it was an enormous relief to me to have discovered a profession whose members both respect the human mind and explore the unconscious motivations of our behavior. During my training in psychiatry, and particularly in child psychiatry, I discovered, in the psychoanalytic literature, what I had been seeking. I read Winnicott, Bowlby, Balint, and soon Bion, and discovered the journals. I remember particularly, reading Elliott Jaques' "Death and the Mid-Life Crisis," and realising that the mid-life crisis which had set me on my journey was not uncommon. At that time I did not realise what I now know,-that our mid-life crises are aged-linked with our parent's life events: they are predictable! I had told no one of my realization of time-linking with my mother. Thinking it to be my personal madness, I kept it a secret, especially as my wide searches of scientific literature revealed no reports of it. Anniversaries, yes, but no transgenerational linkages. How could such a thing be happening? How could people get mixed up together? One day, fourteen years after my own meningitis, I was visiting a sick friend, who said to me, thoughtfully,-"Why do you think this has happened to me now?" Here was my own question to myself, asked by another person! I told him of my experience and of my idea, and he calculated that he was now exactly at the age at which his father was, when the next child after him was born. I was amazed, and relieved. I thought "it isn't only me, then." My friend had transient stroke, while still quite a young man. As we talked, we realized that we both had had migraine attacks as teenagers, and I wondered if this time-linking could be a characteristic of migraine sufferers. At that time my work took me to a hospital for people with neurological diseases. In particular, in this hospital were people being investigated for multiple sclerosis,-after having their first episodes of the illness. I had permission to talk with them and they were glad to have someone to talk to, and relieved that I had not come to take more blood, or do more tests. I jotted down family dates as they talked, and at home in the evenings I organized my information. Although I was able to talk with only seven of these people, I saw that they were all time-tied with their same-sex parent, in terms ages when their attacks of illness occurred! A memory of my childhood came clearly into my mind: of Grandmother teaching me to tell the time. When I was quite young, before I started at primary school, I used to sit often on the big bed where Grandmother lay, talking with her. She had a bad heart, and varicose veins in her legs, and she had time to teach me. She used to move the hands of an old mechanical clock as I learned how time was "told." When Grandmother died, I was not told what had happened. She just disappeared. I did not see her ever again: we children were not taken to funerals. I calculated recently that she died in the year after my mother turned fifty and I turned fourteen. This gives me a warm feeling that she hung on long enough to see me started again in life. MORE QUESTIONS One night I woke suddenly at 2 a.m., with both an observation and a question. The observation was that I had, up to that time, being investigating time-linking of illnesses. The question was: Are great discoveries made too, when we reach the ages that our parents were, when we were born, and at ages of the births of their next children? Do we repeat creatively, as well as destructively?" I soon began reading the biographies of other famous people, and discovering more time-links across generations. Here, briefly, are several examples of creative anniversaries. Michael Faraday is said to have "discovered and subdued the world of electricity" late in 1831, when he was in his forty first year. His father, James Faraday, was forty one when Michael's next sibling, sister Margaret, was born (in 1802). (Kendall, 1995, Appleyard, 1931) What a creative anniversary! Cesar Franck was born, the younger of his parent's two children, when his father was aged twenty six. When Cesar was twenty six, he married, his own son was born, and he went on to compose great music for organ, piano, and orchestra. Joseph Lister is famous for having discovered the germ theory of disease. Aged forty-two, he published his paper "Antiseptics" in "The Lancet" (December 1869). Surgical mortality fell from 45% to 15% once surgeons began to use antiseptics. Suture material, usually catgut, was sterilised, and antiseptic principles based on the germ theory of disease were embraced by surgeons, once Lister's "germ theory" became known. Joseph Lister was forty-two in 1869. His father was forty-two in 1828 when William Henry, the child after Joseph was born. Father Lister died in 1869, as Joseph reached forty two

(Fisher, 1977). Some children are attended to, when the next baby arrives, as described by Elizabeth Barrett Browning in *Sonnets from the Portuguese*: Betwixt me and the dreadful outer brink Of obvious death, where I, who thought to sink, Was caught up into love, and taught the whole Of a new rhythm. I think that when this happens to us in infancy, our adult anniversaries are more likely to be of loving, creative events. I soon realized that this mid-life crisis, this major change which occurred at the same-sex parent's age when the next child was born, was obvious in four out of every five biographies I read. Often, in the Contents, there would be a Chapter called "A Change of Direction," "A New Beginning," or something similar. The authors had recognized the changes, but not the significance of the ages at which they "happened." Of course I was wondering: what shall I do with this awareness? Early one morning, when I was driving to work in London, the weather was very bad, and the wipers were pushing wads of sleet off the car's windscreen. Traffic was heavy, and I felt anxious that an accident was imminent. My car was in good repair, and the weather conditions had been similar for several days. I had not felt anxious before, so I said to myself: "This is a time to set my hypothesis of time-linking with my parents." I set to work and discovered that I was exactly at their ages, (they were born 6 weeks apart, in the same year), when they were involved in a car smash! I was astounded at this realisation, but at least I no longer felt that I would have an accident!-and incidentally, I probably drove better from then onwards, as I felt less anxious. I was, however, able then to remember the day of their accident, with all its turmoil, and anxiety, which went on for weeks afterwards. No feelings were ever spoken, of course. It was after this episode that I made a full review of my own life changes, and I checked my ages at those times against the events in my parents' lives. I had made major changes at the ages they were when all their children were born-even when these events occurred before I was born! I felt incredulous. How on earth could such a thing be happening! Other questions suggested themselves to me and I sought possible answers: Question 1. Is the unknown too painful to contemplate? I went on exploring, and as I found these age-linked life events commonly occurring across generations, both in my reading and in my talking with other people, I began to point this out, and to talk about it. To my astonishment, very few people wanted to know! This still happens to me more often than not. I now realise that most people find these ideas quite overwhelming. To accept these facts, and to begin to think about them, feels like stepping off the planet, without a lifeline. I do realise that the observations are not an explanation of anything, and that the findings are of correlations not causes. To go on observing, and finding more correlations, raises ever more questions. Perhaps one problem is bearing the pain of not knowing all the answers. Question 2. How much do we know about our vulnerability? When the Medical College opened in Port Moresby, New Guinea, I heard a wise man on the radio say: We can teach so much, but still we go to our elders, and we ask: 'If six men walk through the jungle, and mosquitoes bite all six, why is it that one gets malaria, and the others do not?' Vulnerability remains a big question, but armed with awareness of where we are, vis-à-vis our parents' lifetimes, we can consider when we are at vulnerable times in our lives. When we have had accidents, or illnesses, or have made major decisions and changes, we can check retrospectively whether these were indeed in time with our parents' life events, i.e. whether we have had our events at the same ages that they had theirs. Question 3. When I had reached my mother's age when my young brother was born, I was the one who became ill. My mother remained well. Why? What is the nature of the link between parents and children? What determines which of them will experience the effects of eruption? Or are both affected sometimes? Question 4. How could transgenerational events be triggered? Could it be by telepathy? What is telepathy? At about this time, I read an article in a highly respected scientific journal, about DNA. As we are aware nowadays, DNA is present in the nuclei of all the cells in our bodies, and it is defined as "The repository of inherited characteristics." (Doubtless the "characteristics" referred to are physical ones.) Now I read that DNA is not immutable: "The apparent stability of DNA is in fact an illusion." Its structure is altered by severe changes in the internal physical conditions of our bodies (such as are caused by fevers, or lengthy exposure to cold), and it is repaired by DNA-repairing enzymes. We know that intense emotional states, too, are accompanied by biochemical changes, so I wonder about the physical transmission of "time-tagged" DNA-

damaged, repaired, but scarred DNA. DNA carries messages to our tissues, from within us. For example, there are no messages from outside us to our teeth, about when to erupt, and when to stop growing out of our gums. We are pre-set from within by our internal "clocks." Why then, could not our DNA have been inherited, scarred from our parents' events, and precipitate a disturbance "on time," when we reach the ages of our parents' disturbances? Particularly, this could account for our eruptions at the ages of our parents, of major events which happened before we ourselves were born. This could be the basis of mutations. Evolution could be thought of negatively, as well as positively. For example, we can inherit negative, and positive parental life events. In his autobiography, Bertrand Russell (Russell, 1967) wrote of becoming engaged to Alys (his first wife-to-be) when he was twenty one. He married when he was twenty two, as his father had done before him. After he had proposed to Alys in 1893 (p. 82), he came across a diary of his late father's and found that: "He had proposed to my mother at just the same age at which I proposed to Alys, that my grandmother had said almost exactly the same things to him as she had to me, and that he had recorded exactly the same reflections in his diary as I had recorded in mine. This gave me an uncanny feeling that I was not living my own life but my father's over again and tended to produce a superstitious belief in heredity." I continued my investigations personally, in my work and in my reading. I also began to write about my observations and conjectures. TESTING With advice from mathematicians, also embarked on a pilot study of Family Time. It was decided I would ask the next one hundred people I met, who were able to spare me fifteen minutes or so, to give me family dates. In the event, these people were from a variety of backgrounds, teachers, psychologists, cleaners, secretaries, doctors, welfare workers, and others. I would ask each person for the dates of birth of both parents, the dates of birth of all their parents' children, and the dates of birth of their own children. I would calculate the year when my interviewee reached the same-sex parent's age, when the next child was born. I would put this year-say, 1969-somewhere in a ten-year span-say, 1965 to 1975, varying where I put it in the 10-year span-and I would ask: "About the ten years 1965 to 1975, when you were aged 23 to 33, -was there one particular year in which a major change, of any sort, took place in your life?" Most people would begin thoughtfully: "What was I doing then? Oh yes, I remember, that was when ..." and so on. When people told me of more than one major change in the ten-year span, I would ask them to decide which was the most important change, in their own opinions. At the year that I predicted in my mental calculations, 84 out of 100 people interviewed reported a major change, of one of four types: 1. Birth of the first child-occasionally a stillbirth; 2. change of job or profession; 3. change of home, sometimes emigration; 4. onset of illness, sometimes a fatal one. If this had been a random occurrence, ten out of a hundred people would have had a major life change at the year I predicted; I found eighty-four, not ten. To this one must, of course, add that between the ages of 20 and 40 most of us make major changes to our lives. The hypothesis that events in families are age-linked across generations can sometimes be quite difficult to test, and I give two examples of such difficulties. 1. I had given a colleague a copy of a paper I had written on the subject of the time phenomena, and we met some weeks later. She thanked me for the paper and said it did not apply to her life. Then, with some hesitation, she asked: 'What was the hypothesis, again?' When I repeated it, she said: 'In our family, there was my brother and myself,' When I asked 'No more children after you?,' she replied rather crossly, 'Oh yes, my young sister.' I said, 'Well, we'd be looking at what happened when you reached the age at which your mother had your young sister.' Without any change of expression, she replied seriously: That would be 1971. That was the year when I had a still-born baby.' I felt amazed. She had told me that the hypothesis did not apply to her life. 2. I met with an eminent academic, to whom I had sent a copy of an early paper of mine on this subject. He seemed quite cross, and I wondered if it was because this new idea did not fit into his way of thinking. Finally I asked him: "Have you tried it out, on yourself?" He had not done so, but was willing, and we wrote down data, and calculated that 1961 would have been the year. He told me: 'Nothing happened in that year.' 'Nothing at all?' I asked, and he thought a bit, and said-expressionlessly-'Our first child was born.' Gently I asked whether this would not have made some difference to his life-schedules changed, nappies about the house? 'Not really,' he said, and I was made to feel, briefly, that I was mad to suggest that

becoming a parent could be an important life event. I think it must be the power of our unconscious resistances that has kept our awareness of this time-linking with our parents and with our children out of our conscious-knowing for so long. Once we accept the idea, and once we check it, the data are there, 'staring us in the face.' Literature is full of references to transmission in time "even unto the third and fourth generations." It is this very powerful resistance, that can prove a difficulty in collecting reliable data for testing the hypothesis formally. For many people, however, consideration of the possible relevance to them and their families of these ideas proves helpful, even therapeutic. They begin to explore for themselves, and to discover themselves living in time with their parents. Only when we realise where we are in family time, do we begin to have the choice of moving more freely in our own life time. For me, checking where I am in my Family Time has become a sort of mental hygiene exercise. With my awareness of aged-linked anniversaries with my mother, I now have opportunities to think about them consciously: how I am feeling now, at this age, how she may have been feeling then, at this age. Working through, made possible for me by my own psychoanalysis, has become a welcome and helpful occupation. Only after this working through do I feel free to get on with my own lifetime, and to make new connections. At this stage of my investigations I was quite convinced that evidence is everywhere available (although persistently ignored) that many life events (those caused by hurricanes, earthquakes and the like being excluded) are: (i) repetitions of family events across the generations; (ii) precisely predictable in time; (iii) events shared by parents and children; (iv) manifested by mental, emotional and/or physical disturbances at the particular time; (v) of psychosomatic origin. The modus operandi of the phenomenon is a blurring of identity between parents and children, and the result is confusion as to who is whom. Repetitions may be joyous, creative events-or they may be sad, destructive events. The ages at the times of the repetitions are the same; the events are different. When two people are "mixed" up together, neither can think clearly. The only way for us to have a choice in making our own lives, is first to find ourselves within our families' lives. How can this be done? By getting to know our families and their histories, by spending time doing this. By consciously and feelingly thinking about their past experiences, with them, if they are alive and willing. With hard work, we can begin to know about our family's residues. Only then are we free to choose our own ways rather than repeat their patterns. When we bury what we feel is our madness, our unspeakable, unbearable passions and our terrors, we also lose our sense of on-going time. Physically, we live on, but in someone else's life time. Laurens van der Post, in his book *Jung and the Story of Our Time*, quotes Jung: The hell of the mad is that not only has time ceased to exist for them, but some memory of what it and its seasons once meant to them remains to remind them of the fact that it is no longer there." TIME AND THE MID-LIFE CRISIS "No power so effectively robs the mind of all its powers of acting and reasoning as fear." Edmund Burke, *On the Sublime and Beautiful* Both positive and negative events may be re-produced. The latter may seem to be more prevalent, perhaps because we take good things for granted, or as our just deserts. When painful events "happen," apparently for no reason, we do feel resentful, and we ask "Why me?" A paper by Elliott Jaques, "Death and the Mid-Life Crisis" (1965), comments on the ages of death of three hundred and ten men of genius: "The death rate shows a sudden jump between thirty five and thirty nine, at which period it is much above the normal death rate." When these geniuses survived this critical period, Jaques noted a marked change in the quality of their productions. My own investigations reveal that, where records of families are available, the ages of the men of genius at their mid-life crises match their fathers' ages at the time of birth, either of themselves or of the next sibling, (where there is a next sibling). In other words, mid-life crises are not new events: they are precisely-timed re-plays of earlier crises in families. For example, if we look only at the ages of death of our geniuses,-and let us take, for example, three composers-such facts as these emerge: 1. Mozart died aged thirty five years and ten months. 2. Chopin died aged thirty nine years and eight months. 3. Mendelssohn died aged thirty eight years. All three died exactly as Jaques said. Now if we add the other halves of their stories we have the links in ages: 1. Mozart died aged thirty five years and ten months. Mozart's father was aged thirty six years and two months when the birth of Mozart (the last child) was registered. In those days, registration took place usually

some months after birth, because infant mortality was very high. 2. Chopin died aged thirty nine years and eight months. Chopin's father was aged forty when the next baby was born. 3. Mendelssohn died aged thirty eight years, having sickened aged thirty five. Mendelssohn's father was aged thirty-five and thirty-seven when the two babies after Felix were born. Every birth in a family means the "death" of the whole family as it existed up to that time. A birth is a "volcanic eruption" in a family's life time, and often it is as disturbing as a death. Amongst the feelings that we have at the time of a birth are wonder and awe at creativity and new life; and pain, rage, and terror at being displaced from our established positions. Love and hate wage battles within us all, and especially at times of births. Unexpressed, these intense and conflicting feelings are stored inside us in "time capsules," and the events erupt precisely on time, as mid-life crises, decades later. If we examine in more detail some of Jaques' "men of genius," we find that Jaques wrote that Goethe, between the ages of thirty seven and thirty nine, underwent a profound change in outlook, associated with this trip to Italy. Goethe's father, too, "took a trip" at that age, -into matrimony! Johann Wolfgang Goethe was born when his father was aged thirty nine. One can imagine the father's "profound change in outlook" from that of a bachelor, to that of a husband and father. It is interesting to note that both father and son married women twenty three years younger than themselves, and that both wives were uneducated. Goethe's father was forty when Cornelia, the next baby after Johann Wolfgang was born. When Goethe was forty his son Auguste was born, - the only survivor of his five children. Cornelia had been the only survivor of the five children born after our Goethe! Goethe is said to have had "a truly Olympian detachment," and a "gift for leaving the past behind him, like a sloughed snake's skin." When one reviews his, and his father's age-linked events, it seems that either Johann Wolfgang is living in his father's skin, or that his father is re-living his life in his son's skin-or both. When life as a displaced person is unthinkable, whether the displaced person be the husband or the baby, that person may try being someone else. It seems safer. For a parent, perhaps a way of being "immortal" is living again, as it were, in one's child's life. Charlotte Bronte was one of a family of English novelists, perhaps best known for her novel Jane Eyre. She was born on April 21, 1816, the third of six children of the Rev. and Mrs. Patrick Bronte. She grew up in Haworth Vicarage on the edge of the Yorkshire moors, where her parents had taken up residence when she was aged four. Mrs. Bronte had married at twenty nine; she bore her six children between the ages of thirty and thirty eight, and she died aged thirty-eight after giving birth to Anne. Charlotte became ill aged thirty five in 1851; thirty five was her mother's age when Patrick Branwell, the next child after Charlotte, was born. None of the Bronte children lived past thirty eight. Maria and Elizabeth died aged eleven and ten, Emily died aged twenty nine, Patrick Branwell died aged thirty; and both Anne and Charlotte died aged thirty eight. One can imagine their mother's mental and physical states when she was caring for her husband, their home, their children, and was pregnant six times in eight years. Charlotte married Arthur Bell Nicholls, her fourth suitor, on June 29, 1854. Nicholls was an Irish-born clergyman, as was Charlotte's father, and he was the Rev. Bronte's curate, at Haworth. Charlotte became pregnant and this is said to have weakened her health so seriously that she died in March 1855, aged thirty eight. Why then? "However it may be, O for a life of Sensations, rather than of Thoughts!" (Keats, 1817, in his "Negative Capability" letter to his brothers). Jaques refers, inter alia, to the poet John Keats. Keats was the first of his parent's five children. He was born in October 1795, when his father was aged twenty two; the next child, George, was born when father was twenty-three and a half. John Keats' miraculous poetic creativity began to dry up in 1819 when he was twenty-three and a half. He was ill at twenty-four (his father's age when Tom, and baby after George, was born), and he died aged twenty-five. His biographer, Gittings, wrote of Keats as a young man: "The stress of his love, disease, money worry over George, all took their part in his sudden and tragic finale. Yet more than these are needed to account for the complete blotting out of poetry from his system." (My italics) His time of creativity was over. John Keats' last poem was a long, comic poem which he called "The Jealousies." It was never finished; it is quite alien to all his other works. With reference to the age-linking, i.e. John's illness and death at the ages his father was when George and then Tom were born, one can conjecture that both father and son felt sick and lost when Frances

Keats was busy with her new babies. When the eighteen-month-old John Keats reaches his father's age at George's birth, twenty three and a half, the whole scenario was replayed. Death and the mid-life crisis? Yes, but it can also be seen as a replay of the occasions of births in the family,-births which felt to little John like death blows to his existence. Keats' "Negative Capability" letter to his brothers takes on a new meaning in this context. Keats was not capable of surviving his inner agony, and of acknowledging his unspeakable terror. Gittings (1968) wrote in his biography of Keats: ". . . in any really essential matters of poetry, thought or human conduct, he behaved, until illness began to distort his judgment, with the ripeness of a man twice his age", (p. 240) Did he live his life in identification with his father? Or, did his father live again, in him, or both? Gittings understood Keats' limitation: "His description of Apollo's godhead is the final contradiction of this theory of Negative Capability.." "It is Hyperion who remains in the seat of half-ignorance and half-knowledge which Keats has once seen as the creative state." "Apollo only becomes the god of poetry of complete and painful knowledge." ". . . He could not yet face the pain of absolute knowledge, necessary for his continuance as a poet." (p. 297)

Charles Darwin was "the naturalist whose theory of evolution by natural selection revolutionised biology" (Encyclopedia Britannica, 1988, Vol. 16, pp 977-981). Charles was born on 12 February 1809. His father, Robert Darwin, had married, aged thirty, his cousin, Susannah Wedgwood, who was then aged thirty-one. When Charles was aged thirty, he married his cousin, Emma Wedgwood, who was then aged thirty one, in 1839. In his biography of Darwin, John Bowlby writes: ". . .1837, 1838 and 1839 were unquestionably the years of breakthrough, and consequently, of the greatest intellectual excitement, but they were also years of pervasive anxiety." According to Bowlby, Malthus' Essay on the Principle of Population "impressed him enormously when he read it in 1838. . . . by the middle of 1839 he had made formidable progress on his original, promising but appallingly difficult theory." At that time, when Charles was aged thirty, and pregnant with his theory of the origin of species, his wife, aged thirty one, was pregnant with the first of their ten children. His parents, too, aged thirty and thirty-one respectively, had embarked on their "original, promising but appallingly difficult" task of having and caring for the six children in their family. In May 1991, Rajiv Gandhi, Leader of India's Congress Party was assassinated. Several days earlier, in spite of the high security risk, he had changed his habit and began to leave his bullet-proof car and to walk among the crowds without his bodyguards around him. When I read of this, before the killing, I thought: this is suicidal behavior. Is it suicide to get oneself murdered? That is what Gandhi appears to have done. He was forty-six years old at the time and he left a forty three yearold widow and two grown-up children. But why did Rajiv Gandhi, with the terrible precedent of his own mother's assassination not so many years previously, expose himself to such danger, and at that time? His father, Feroze Gandhi, was born in September 1912. He had a heart attack in 1958, at the age of forty six. However, he recovered from this, only to die of a second heart attack four years later, in 1960. He too left a forty-three year-old widow and two children. Was this all inevitable? Could another tragedy, a repetition, have been avoided? One man's 'eruption' from his inner space can, if he is in a position of power, change the lives of millions of other people. Numerous stories have been told to me, some by people who have heard of my ideas about family time. The stories become more meaningful when the events of which they tell are understood and repetitions of dramas, which occurred originally in their families, many years before. When we realise that those events are recurring now, when we, the children of the earlier dramas, have reached the ages that our parents were, at those times, this gives us much food for thought. How often is this happening? By enquiry, anyone can discover it "happening" in four out of five families, even though many people try to hide the facts. They do not want to notice, perhaps because we all feel we already have enough to think about-and perhaps because memories are often painful. Anniversaries cannot be prevented-"time marches on"-but I feel quite sure that the nature and quality of our repetitions can be affected by us being aware of our family histories. One can become "wise" before that event, if one is aware of where one is in family time. Not exploring and not wanting to know leaves one lost in one's parents' identities, and having events when they did-in short, being "lived," instead of living one's own life. When I survey these stories, I realise that many are of misadventures, accidents and illnesses. Of course, such

things have always happened, and they always will. We can, however, learn more about our personal times of vulnerability if we ask: Why then? Why did it happen then? We can take special care at the vulnerable ages that lie ahead of us. "There is properly no history: only biography" R. W. Emerson (1803-1882) The observations noted, and recorded here, are of age-linked life events occurring across generations. It is not claimed that they are comprehensive-indeed, the reader may well find more links. They are as accurate as the information available to the writer at present. Equally, the observations are in no way intended as critical, nor in any way derogatory. They are intended to show how much more there is to see in this life, and how much more there is that we do not as yet understand. When we are little, or ill or old, there are times when we "leak," i.e. when we are unable to manage our bodies properly. It is embarrassing to be told that we have made a mess, or have not done up our dress, or trousers, but usually we can soon feel glad that someone noticed, so that we can put things right, or can be helped. The phenomena which I have observed and recorded can be thought of as mentally leaking. When we are not attending to ourselves, within whatever settings we may be, we may unwittingly leak into someone else's identity. Instead of thinking about the task at hand, we may quite automatically "do it like Mum"-or "like Dad"-and in itself there is nothing wrong with that. However, if we do not notice what we are doing, we may do it so often and so continuously that our whole selves may leak out! We may "become" Mum, or Dad. Often enough Mum and Dad do not notice either what is going on, or they may encourage it. They may be thought of as joining in, and leaking into us! As Reiterate Kipling wrote, in *We and They* "All the people like us are We, And everyone else is They." In the Christian Bible, Genesis 26, we read: And God said "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness." Are we permitted to have minds of our own? I believe that becoming aware of being time-tied to one's parents, and of time-tying our children to us, gives us an option for change. Change can be terrifying. Such questions arise as: Who might I really be? What else might I do? And we can easily decide "better the devil I know, than some stranger," Shakespeare helps us consider the eternal question: "To be or not to be." (*Hamlet*, Act III, Scene I) "This above all-to thine own self be true." (*Ibid*, Act I, Scene III) And Goethe: ". . . the last and greatest art is to limit and isolate oneself." (from *Conversations with Eckermann*, 1825) Becoming truly oneself is the work of a lifetime, a lifetime of never-ending growth and fulfillment. CONCLUSION I wonder to what extent we do live our own lives, and to what extent we allow ourselves to be lived, by repeating family events. They say: "History repeats itself," but surely we repeat it. History cannot repeat itself; it is not a live person. We do it, on time, and in some uncanny way, we make sure that the next generation has the same experiences we had. As adults, we pass on our un-thinkabout-able experiences, and as children, we inherit these from our parents. Mid-life crises, for example, are predictable; they are manifestations of eruptions of "time-bombs" from our internal environment. We experience crises in our lives, for example, at precisely the same ages that our parents were when we and our siblings were born. Our events are different from their events; our ages are the same. Observations reveal that women match more with their mothers' ages and men with their fathers' ages. Awareness of these phenomena means that, if we choose, we can manage our lives, rather than be managed by forces of which we have been unaware. The unconscious forces responsible for these phenomena are, I believe, as powerful as any known physical forces of gravity, magnetism, electricity, and nuclear energy. They can be managed only if they are made conscious, and awareness of Family Time is one of the keys to their recognition and to their management. Inevitably, questions arise: What decides whether our "eruptions" in later life will be creative or destructive? Will love, or hate, prevail at eruption time? Can we both feel, and think about what we feel?-and will this coupling modify our life events? The capacity to feel feelings, and to think about when they happened, and what they mean, seems to me essential. If we have our feelings, we have a chance of managing them. If they have us, they control us,-our behavior, our bodies, and our minds. Knowing that a time of change is inevitable, and imminent, may well allow us to decide what change we will, or will not, make. We can become more responsible for our lives. So how can we manage this life-long task? By taking time for ourselves, I believe, to investigate, to reflect and wonder, to read, and to talk to our elders and to our children. Otherwise we lose ourselves in physical activity, and in the

acquisition of material things. We accept the wisdom of physical hygiene, regular exercise, care with our diets and so on. I believe mental hygiene exercises are both possible and essential. I believe that by knowing where I am, at my age, with reference to my mother's life time enables me to work through and to consider situations and changes rather than blindly repeating them. Repetitions of our parents' events are, in my opinion, expressed in our actions, in our physical states and/or in our mental states, when we fail to take time to sort ourselves out from the undigested family events of the past. The reader may decide to undertake his or her own researches. AuthorAffiliation Averil Earnshaw, M.D. AuthorAffiliation Dr. Averil Earnshaw is a Fellow of the Australian and New Zealand Clinical Practitioners and an early proponent of the pre- and perinatal psychology movement. This article is a synopsis of her book Time Will Tell. References cited throughout this article can be obtained by writing to the author. Address correspondence to 13 Cawarra Road, Middle Cove, N.S.W. 2068, Australia.

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