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Sensorimotor Stage of Development

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The sensorimotor stage of development begins at birth with the simple reflexes of the neonate and terminates at around two years of age with the onset of symbolic thought representing early childlike language. Within this stage of development, Piaget documents six separate and independent, yet interrelated substages:

1. Use of early reflexes
2. Primary circular reactions
3. Secondary circular reactions
4. Coordination of secondary schemes
5. Tertiary circular reactions
6. Symbolic representation

Through an examination of these individual substages, one can see how the child develops from a relatively passive organism that acts without any systematic goal into a thinking being who shows the beginning elements of intelligence. The last stage (18 to 24 months) is especially important; there is a major breakthrough in the child's ability to understand relationships between objects and the activities associated with the objects without direct experience or experimentation.

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