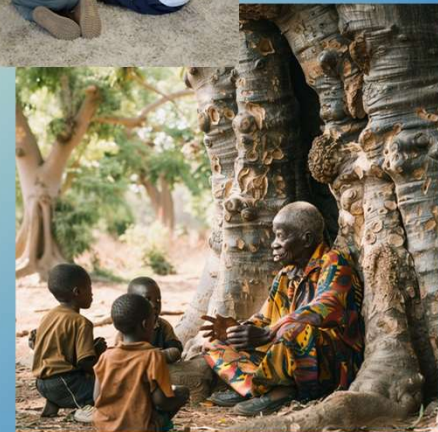


Chapter 14, Life Tasks

Chapter 15, Life Stories



2. Chapter 14 – Life Tasks

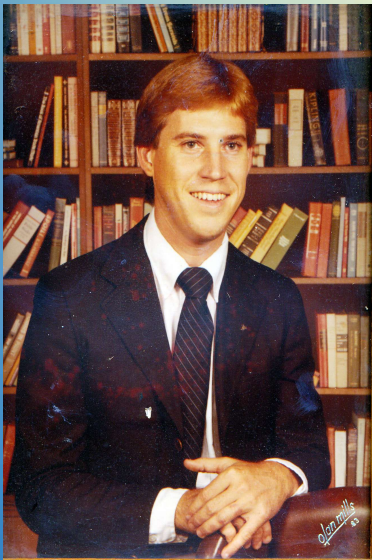
Psychologist Daniel Gilbert:
“Human beings are works in progress that mistakenly think they are finished.”



Each person you meet is at one spot on their lifelong process of growth.

3. We are Unaware of Our Changing Stages

We are often blind to how much we are changing.



Carl Jung: *"We cannot live the afternoon of life according to the program of life's morning, for what was great in the morning will be little at evening, and what in the morning was true will at evening have become a lie."*

4. Developmental psychology

- Ideas that have proven to be false:
- **1. Human development happens in childhood**
- People go through a series of developmental stages until about 21 and then they're done.
- But people develop across the life span.



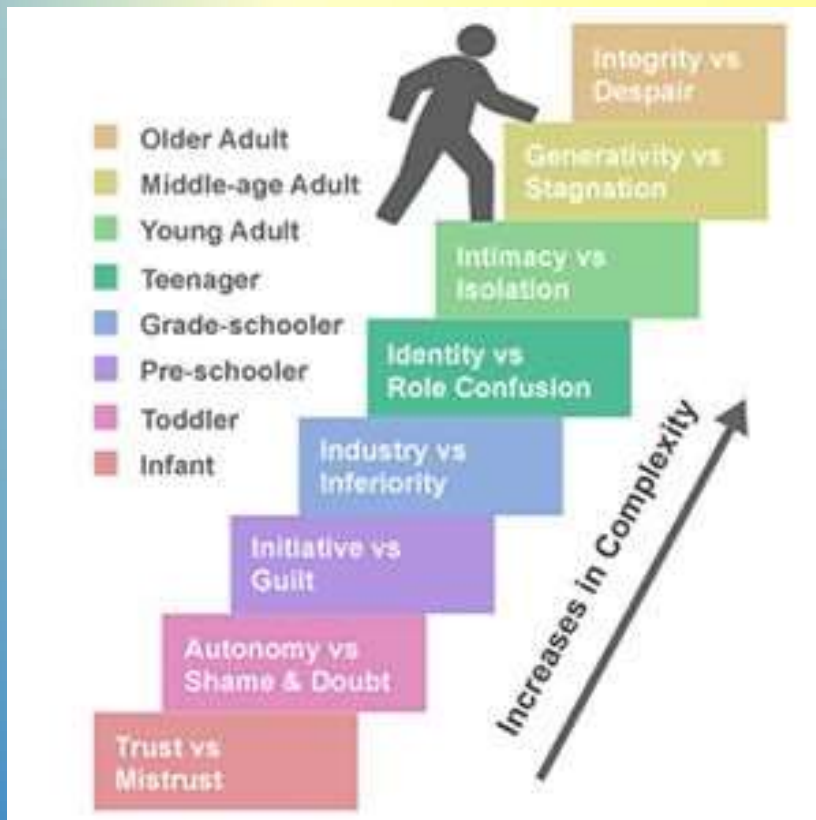
5. Problem with Stages Based Theories

- **2. Life is a march through a series of distinct “stages”**
- You can't enter one stage of life unless you've completed the previous stage.
- But: Not everybody does the tasks in the same order
- Not everybody performs all the tasks

And, everyone is engaged in the heroic activity of their life, tackling this or that task.



6. Erickson's Life Stage Challenges



- **Stage 1: Trust vs. Mistrust** (Infancy from birth to 18 months)
- **Stage 2: Autonomy vs. Shame and Doubt** (Toddler years from 18 months to three years)
- **Stage 3: Initiative vs. Guilt** (Preschool years from three to five)
- **Stage 4: Industry vs. Inferiority** (Middle school years from six to 11)
- **Stage 5: Identity vs. Confusion** (Teen years from 12 to 18)
- **Stage 6: Intimacy vs. Isolation** (Young adult years from 18 to 40)
- **Stage 7: Generativity vs. Stagnation** (Middle age from 40 to 65)
- **Stage 8: Integrity vs. Despair** (Older adulthood from 65 to death)

7. Kegan's Stages



IMPULSIVE MIND

When we're born, we inhabit the **impulsive mind**, acting on nothing but impulse and instinct.



IMPERIAL MIND

Then we grow into the **imperial mind**. We become aware of the world around us, but the emphasis is still on our own needs.



SOCIALIZED MIND

Many people, but not all, then develop into the **socialized mind**. Here we become so aware of our culture that it becomes the most important determinant of our perspective. We base all of our decisions on society's norms and beliefs. Our self-esteem becomes dependent on what others think of us.



SELF-AUTHORING MIND

If we manage to break through those cultural illusions, we grow into the fourth stage, called the **self-authoring mind**. At this stage, we define who we are ourselves. We create our own individual sense of self, making ourselves as we go.



SELF-TRANSFORMING MIND

A handful of individuals, estimated to be 1% of the population, develop into an even higher level of being. This stage is called the **self-transforming mind**. These people become unattached to identities and roles. They let go of preconceived notions of how they should behave. Instead, they're always shifting and adapting, updating their mental models in response to new information. Every interaction affects the identities and roles they inhabit.

8. Imperial Consciousness

- Early in life - establish a sense of our own agency.
- A need to demonstrate to ourselves and others
- we can take control, work hard, be good at things
- essential to developing a sense of self-confidence.
- Failure to do so produces feelings of inferiority.



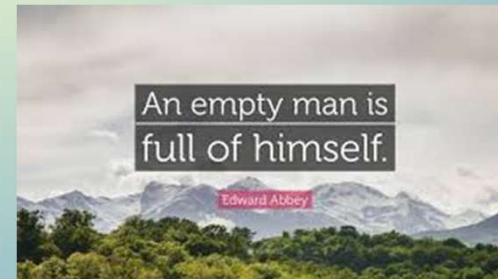
- **Kegan's imperial consciousness.**
- People with this mindset can be quite self-centered, their own desires and interests are paramount.
- The world is a message about me, about how I am valued.

9. It's All About Me



- We tolerate this somewhat self-centered consciousness in adolescents, but sometimes the imperial consciousness carries on into adulthood – arrested development
- Life is a series of disjointed contests one must win.

- An intense desire to see oneself as a winner, touchy pride reacts strongly against any sign of disrespect.
- For people with this consciousness, relationships tend to be instrumental.
- Inability to see the world from the others' perspective.
- Perceived need for constant affirmation and praise.
- Probably doesn't have a rich internal life.
- Such persons are not seeking self-knowledge; they're trying to make their presence impressive to the world.



10. Arrested Development –

- Many of our power holders today exhibit these signs. – **Arrested Development**
- **Donald Trump and Vladimir Putin** - men who never moved beyond imperial consciousness.
- What happens when such persons are given power?



Keule Ruke, Mural, Vilnius, Lithuania

11. Stage 6 – Need to Belong

- Periods that are dominated by an intense desire to stand out and be superior are often followed by periods dominated by an intense desire to fit in.
- Often in adolescence
- Life task is to establish your social identity. Friendships and social status become the central obsessions in our lives.





12. Feeling the Pain of Others

- People in the midst of the interpersonal task often become idealistic.
- An **interpersonal consciousness** can not only experience other people's experiences, that extends to humanity as a whole.
- They feel the pain of the community and be driven to heal that pain.
- **Kegan** - at this moment the person goes from being physical to being metaphysical.
- They see not only what is but also the ideal of what might be.
- This idealism can be intense but also dogmatic and unforgiving.
- The purpose of idealism, at this moment of consciousness, is not only to seek the common good; it's also to help bond more tightly with a group.

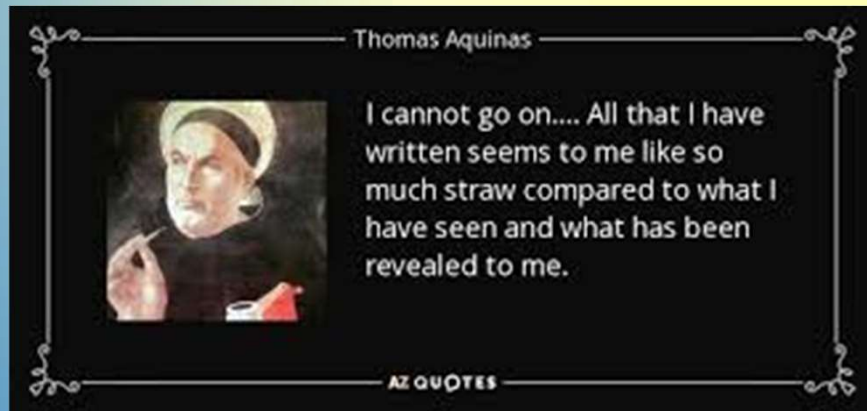
13. Stage 7 - Making a Difference

- At a certain point in life, we have to find the career that we will devote ourselves to, the way we will make a difference in the world— **calling**
- One must achieve career consolidation or experience drift.
- People in the midst of career consolidation often develop a more individualistic mindset:
- Can appear selfish and egotistical

George Vaillant (Grant Study):
“Only when developmental ‘selfishness’ has been achieved are we reliably capable of giving the self away.”



14. Costs of Individuation



- **Carl Jung:** *"The achievements which society rewards are won at the cost of a diminution of personality."*
- Eventually the costs become too high.
- The person at the end of this task realizes that there is a spiritual hunger that's been unmet, a desire to selflessly serve some cause, to leave some legacy for others.
- A sense that you simply no longer want what you used to want.

15. Legacies, Mentorship

- During the generative life task, people try to find some way to be of service to the world or they fall into stagnation.
- **Vaillant** defines generativity as “*the capacity to foster and guide the next generations.*”
- The generative person can assume the role of guardian.
- often leading, serving some institution, whether a company, a community organization, a school, or a family.
- A guardian has an in-depth respect for the institution she has inherited



16. Gratitude –

All the Hands That Have Touched One's Life



- At this moment in maturity, such a person fully appreciates that she didn't create her own life.
- – *Myths of the Self-Made Man, the Rugged Individualist*
- The family one grew up in, the school attended, the mentors, friends and organizations who helped implant values, standards of excellence, ways of being.
- One is seized with a fervent desire to pass it on.

17. Greeting Sister Death

- **The Final Task** - the struggle to achieve integrity or endure despair.
- **Integrity is** the ability to come to terms with your life in the face of death.
- A feeling of peace that you used your time well.
- A sense of accomplishment and acceptance.
- **Despair** - marked by a sense of regret.
- You didn't lead your life as you believe you should have.
- Despair involves bitterness, ruminating over past mistakes,



18. Chapter 15 – Life Stories

- We live in a society in which people don't get to tell their stories.
- We work and live around people for years without ever really knowing them.
- How did it come to be this way?
- If you give people a little nudge, they will share their life stories with enthusiasm.
- People are eager, often desperate, to be seen, heard, and understood.



19. Two Ways of Thinking

- Psychologist Jerome Bruner's two modes of thinking
- **The paradigmatic mode** - amassing data, collecting evidence, offering hypotheses.
- great for understanding data, making the case for propositions, analyzing trends
- It is not great for seeing an individual person.



- **Narrative thinking** - necessary for understanding the unique individual in front of you.
- Stories capture the unique presence of a person's character and changes over time.
- The thousand little influences that come together to shape a life
- how people struggle and strive with lives shaped by lucky, unlucky breaks.
- *We live in a culture that is paradigmatically rich and narrative poor.*

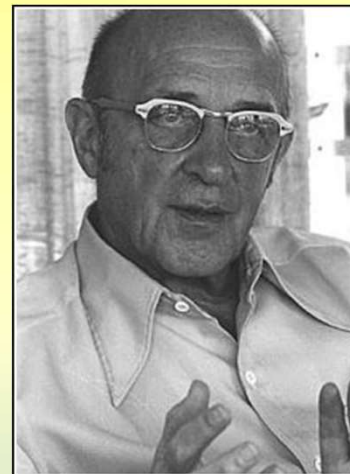
20. Discussion Questions

1. Spiritual Vision: How might “seeing someone deeply,” as Brooks describes, reflect Jesus’ own way of seeing people?

Can you think of examples from Scripture where Jesus noticed someone others overlooked?

2. Obstacles to Connection: Brooks talks about the barriers to truly seeing others. What spiritual or cultural habits (like busyness, judgment, or distraction) can make it hard for us to recognize the dignity of others in our church or community?

3. Seeing with Compassion: How can our Baptismal Covenant—particularly the promise to “*seek and serve Christ in all persons*”—inform how we approach truly seeing others?



When a person realizes he has been deeply heard, his eyes moisten. I think in some real sense he is weeping for joy. It is as though he were saying, "Thank God, somebody heard me. Someone knows what it's like to be me".

— Carl Rogers —

AZ QUOTES

4. Personal Reflection: When have you felt truly seen—either by another person or by God? What effect did that have on you?