



The Evolving Self: Problem and Process in Human Development

By Robert Kegan

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The Evolving Self focuses upon the most basic and universal of psychological problems--the individual's effort to make sense of experience, to make meaning of life. According to Robert Kegan, meaning-making is a lifelong activity that begins in earliest infancy and continues to evolve through a series of stages encompassing childhood, adolescence, and adulthood. *The Evolving Self* describes this process of evolution in rich and human detail, concentrating especially on the internal experience of growth and transition, its costs and disruptions as well as its triumphs.

At the heart of our meaning-making activity, the book suggests, is the drawing and redrawing of the distinction between *self* and *other*. Using Piagetian theory in a creative new way to make sense of how we make sense of ourselves, Kegan shows that each meaning-making stage is a new solution to the lifelong tension between the universal human yearning to be connected, attached, and included, on the one hand, and to be distinct, independent, and autonomous on the other. *The Evolving Self* is the story of our continuing negotiation of this tension. It is a book that is theoretically daring enough to propose a reinterpretation of the Oedipus complex and clinically concerned enough to suggest a variety of fresh new ways to treat those psychological complaints that commonly arise in the course of development.

Kegan is an irrepressible storyteller, an impassioned opponent of the health-and-illness approach to psychological distress, and a sturdy builder of psychological theory. His is an original and distinctive new voice in the growing discussion of human development across the life span.

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Editorial Review

Review

Kegan acknowledges a debt to Piaget, Kohlberg, and the psychoanalytic object-relations theorists. He regards his theory as a synthesis and extension of their views, resulting in a developmental theory that presents a unified conceptualization of affective, cognitive, and moral development. Individual chapters are devoted to each of six developmental stages--their growth and loss. The last chapter explores the implications of the theory for psychotherapy and for implementing growth in everyday life...The theory is elegant...There is much food for thought and many hypotheses for research in Kegan's book. If one has not appreciated the importance of meaning-making as a central concept in personality theorizing, the book might even propel one into the next stage. More likely, the reader will...obtain some important new insights. All in all I recommend the book highly. (Seymour Epstein *Contemporary Psychology*)

Kegan's great contribution is his description of the powers and difficulties entailed in each of these bases for conducting relations with self and others and his systematizing of considerations involved in changing from one basis to another...Kegan's is indeed a provocative contribution! (Guy E. Swanson *American Journal of Education*)

Replete with literary allusions and personal anecdotes, this scholarly and appealing discourse represents a fascinating appraisal of the evolution of the self, devoting particular attention to the role of environmental forces which may have crucial impact on the individual. It evaluates, compares, and contrasts the contributions of Piaget, Erikson, Freud, Kohlberg, and others in a refreshing and informative fashion. Written by a clinician, the book also proposes a thought-provoking metatheory of therapy and considers the topic of depression from an evolutionary orientation. [This work is] well articulated and comprehensive in scope. (Lucille F. Halgin *Library Journal*)

Robert Kegan has created a new perspective of personality development, focusing on the dynamics of the evolving self. The perspective integrates two universal human processes--meaning-making and social development--into a scheme that can be used to derive testable generalizations and simultaneously inform the practice of therapy. A very tall order which he fulfills admirably. (Chris Argyris)

Kegan has written a vigorous, exhilarating, and brilliant book. If it is read with the same grace and modesty and aliveness with which it is written, it could make psychotherapy more useful, psychology richer, and speculation on the nature of being human infinitely more rewarding. (Robert L. Grossman)

A landmark book...[It] proposes to integrate thought and emotion in human development and I responded to it on this double level. Breathlessly I encountered all the disparate ideas I had had about human development in the last ten years, all under one single solidly constructed theoretical roof...It is a book about meaning-making which revises one's own meaning-making in very profound ways. (Sophie Freud Lowenstein *Review of Psychoanalytic Books*)

A major contribution to the human development literature. Like Freud, Kegan's literary style matches the brilliance of his insights. (William R. Torbert, Boston College)

Review

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evolving self. The perspective integrates two universal human processes--meaning-making and social development--into a scheme that can be used to derive testable generalizations and simultaneously inform the practice of therapy. A very tall order which he fulfills admirably. (Chris Argyris)

About the Author

Robert Kegan is William and Miriam Meehan Professor of Adult Learning and Professional Development at the Harvard Graduate School of Education.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

James Sanchez:

The guide with title The Evolving Self: Problem and Process in Human Development possesses a lot of information that you can find out it. You can get a lot of gain after read this book. This specific book exist new knowledge the information that exist in this book represented the condition of the world right now. That is important to you to know how the improvement of the world. That book will bring you within new era of the global growth. You can read the e-book on the smart phone, so you can read the idea anywhere you want.

Catherine Scott:

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David Beall:

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