

The Maturity Illusion

The stages of life – see if you can pick the pattern here.

The frightening thing is that in the game of life, each age-group is potentially dangerous:

- Teens are **dangerous because they think they now know it all** and have the bodies but not yet the minds to implement, while having no idea yet of their own impact or power.
- 20-somethings are **dangerous because they think they now know it all** because they now have the knowledge and energy to implement.
- 30-somethings are **dangerous because they think they now know it all** because they have the experience, knowledge and energy to implement.
- 40 to 60-somethings are really **dangerous because they ‘know’ they now know it all** and they have the authority, experience and power to implement.
- 70-somethings are ... well, I’m still finding out! But I’m pretty sure **I really know it all now** and you should all take notice of me! Those that still hold any organisational power may hold a lot of it and will be **incredibly dangerous**. Those retaining their marbles but no longer holding organisational power will have some perspective at least, having survived the rat-race that they can now look back on. Finally wise and all-seeing? Maybe. Still thinking that something can actually be done to fix things? Perhaps. Full of advice that no one wants to take any notice of? Of course!

Ah well! It seems that life is just one gigantic ego problem! Our egos are such (predictably) difficult things to deal with. No wonder Yeshua (Jesus Christ) advocated humility! Each age group is so full of hubris that none really want to shut up and listen. All want to think they know it all! In our career development years, we just want to get promoted - so we can make our very own mistakes! Pity about the consequences to the community, not to mention the time and cost of fixing them.

Of course all age-groups do actually know something. But what’s the way out of this bind? What’s everyone missing?

What they are all missing is that their knowledge falls within a context - that they’re likely to forget to tell you about and may not even be aware of themselves.

Wisdom boils down to how we can handle other contexts outside our own little thought bubble - our very own Truman show that we cast ourselves as the hero in.

We are the only ones who can recognise that we need to aspire to understanding other contexts outside of ourselves. No one else can do that for us. And we’ll likely call refusing to do this self-esteem when it’s actually pride! Oh, dear!

To cap this off this little fun-poking piece, I propose a three-stage motivational model. It’s based on the proposition that life is about getting attention in some form so that we can develop and get what we need to stay alive and prosper. It’s a synthesis of what I observe happening. I make no pretence of it being derived from any rigorously developed social science theory. It is an **ego** or **show off** model with three developmental stages:

1. Me - Hey Mummy/ teacher/ anybody, watch me! The attention this brings gets us through childhood to independence.

2. Family - Hey sweetheart/ kids/ boss/ competitors/ people/ God/ self, watch me! The attention this brings takes care of family (and can provide the key to our unwitting corruption if we weren't unduly selfish in the first place).
3. Community - Hey world, I've got this framework for everybody else to see/ follow/ learn from, watch me! The attention this brings can get us legacy, awards and statues.

We really don't change much. Throughout the whole game, we make such heavy weather of getting out of our own thought bubbles and developing humility! It's as if we are spring-loaded to reject the very knowledge that would set us free.

We really do need to have a good laugh at ourselves and at the game we find ourselves in. Then we need to come to grips with it and have some fun with it. We shouldn't really need much more than recognition of what the real problem is - for the solutions of seeking context and developing humility to naturally follow.