

Flowers for Algernon - Daniel Keyes

The main character Charlie Gordon, a mentally disabled man, becomes a genius with an operation. A genius that doesn't know who he is. He tries to find himself, learn about his surroundings and unpleasant facts about society. All happens while the retarded version of himself resides and watches him at the corners of his subconsciousness. His intelligence doesn't last long, however. With time it deteriorates at the same rate it increased. He's aware of it. Doesn't matter how valiantly he fights against it; he can't change the outcome. Zugzwang situation. This reminds me of old age.

We dive into psychology as a science. We see the experiments and tests being conducted around certain hypotheses. The author explains research principles, and what makes a research valuable through the words of the characters. We dive into psychology as a philosophy as well. Charlie sees his other self in his subconsciousness. Finds similarities between the women he loves and his mom. This makes him furious against his lover.

We also get to see the author's view on people and intelligence. As Charlie gets more intelligent, we see he dedicates himself to his work. He walks towards a purpose, wants to discover and create. His love, friends even himself comes after that. As his intelligence deteriorates, he finds himself watching a woman naked through the window of his apartment and watches TV shows even though he knows this poisons his mind.

Quotes and Thoughts

"That's the way it is with the changes in you. They are happening so slow you can't tell."

This one is from Dr. Strauss. You can't force time.

"People think it's funny when a dumb person can't do things the same way they can."

This applies to anyone who feels superior compared to the other person.

"I guess I was pretty dumb because I believed what people told me."

One of the first thoughts of a person who gained understanding of his

surroundings.

"There are echoes inside him that say, do it right and they will like you."

This gets me thinking how often do we do this without realizing?

"the more I thought about it the less simple it became."

Look for The Weight of Thought statue. Don't control, let it flow. If you can.

"dog will like him more than me, and it'll be his dog instead of mine."

This is how love or a relationship shouldn't be.

"Everything is too neat and straight and you're all boxed in. Like Algernon in his sculpture there."

Sometimes we create our own prison by trying to control everything.

"It's Charlie, the little boy who's afraid of women because of things his mother did to him"

Charlie afraid of women because of his mother. What do we afraid and because of what?

"intelligence and education that hasn't been tempered by human affection isn't worth a damn."

Not just for intelligence and education. Nothing worth a damn without human affection.

"It's good to have friends..."

Simple as that. It's good to have friends.

Lessons

We're the Results of Our Surroundings: As Charlie discovers himself, rather rapidly, he finds the roots of all his distresses in his home. Within his childhood, with his family and surroundings. They shaped his character.

You Can't Control Everything: Charlie is the epitome of intelligence. However, doesn't matter how much he's capable, he can't stop his inevitable intelligence decrease.

We Need Other People: Even flowers, cats or other animals can't do without a presence of another living creature. Without love. It applies to humans times more. Even it's a mouse we need someone that we think understands us, whom we do understand. Just like Charlie and Algernon.