

POSITIVE THINKING

Evolution is a misleading term if it implies optimism. Religious evolution imagines that God is slowly making things better. What they mean in their species way is that he is making things better for us most of all. Some think it is only about us. Religious evolution can imply either of those which is enough to make it questionable and off-putting. Natural selection which says that the most adaptable will be the survivors or the best equipped to live is a better thing to concentrate on. Maybe we should talk about natural selection not evolution. It is clearer. But natural selection warns that if we cease to be adaptable and we have ceased to be for we are destroying the planet then we will expire and maybe cockroaches will then be the dominant life form on earth. Religious evolution is a dangerous irresponsible doctrine. It is not evolution but almost it. It is evolution with a religious twist. Natural selection is a blind fact and something we have to put up with. But this religious version of evolution makes it something to agree should be the case and it is just an action to be praised by God. The religious evolutionist is more dog eat dog than the scientific evolutionist.

If morality is only about us trying to survive then it amounts to being only about what we feel is right and wrong. It follows that if we feel we want to rob the neighbours in famine time we should. If morality is intrinsically about survival whether fully or partly then it follows that peace is a myth: what we call peace is just a cold war. It would explain why religion is so dangerous as is anything that creates a "We are us and they are them" has to increase the potential for trouble. Religion lies about the survival motive and that makes it so much more dangerous than any force that just that faces the truth. Survival shows why violence is as natural as eating porridge.

Rule: Look for at and the good in everything

Happiness is made up of two kinds of happiness.

One is the feeling good side - emotional.

Two is the side that recognises that your situation is good - cognitive.

Positive thinking when it is based on that rule is dangerous. It is always dangerous but infinitely more so when you take it seriously. You need to see past its façade of helpfulness and see tht it is actually to one degree or another callous. By highlighting the positives you dodge any suggestion that you should suffer with the person to help them.

Consider the following.

Ann's toddler gets out of the house and crosses the road and dies in a hit and run.

The positive way to approach this is

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Optimism is not about expecting wleath or helath or whatever. It is about feeling they are wonderful if they happen. So it is really about emotional bliss.

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Is optimism or positive thinking rational? It is said to be no more sensible or rational than the notion that things will always get worse.

If God never gives us more than we can handle then it would mean that we cannot meet anything that we cannot survive or solve using our own strength.

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Positive thinking is thinking you will do well and that you will be safe. It involves being confident that you can always do the best you can to feel as good as possible whatever happens.

For example, instead of being worried about a job interview, the positive thinker will feel that it will work out for the best even if he or she does not get the job. An unrealistic form of positive thinking may be exercised if the person actually expects to get the job.

Negative thinking is when you think you will not do well and fail to be safe. An unrealistic form of negative thinking may be exercised if the person actually expects to fail and is sure of it. An unrealistic form of negative thinking may lead to the person being certain that everything is a threat. He might not get help with cancer for he thinks he will die anyway.

Positive thinking and negative thinking are dangerous if the person is not interested in reality or in being realistic.

Both positive and negative thinking are about protecting yourself. In so far as they are an effort to do that, they are praiseworthy. But it is how they go about protecting you that is the problem. There are mistakes to be corrected.

The battered wife though able to leave her husband easily might tell herself, "It is my fault. He is a good man." Then she ends up staying with him. She sees herself as deserving punishment and so she stays with him in the hope that soon she will be punished enough and be happy again or that she will still be punished somehow if she leaves.

The person who is tormented by his religion might stay in it telling himself, "It is better to put up with this than to rock the boat." Or, "Better the devil you know." Or, "I can't be happy in any religion, its my fault. I'm so useless."

A kindly secretary bullied daily from start of work to finish by her boss might tell herself, that the boss will change or that she is not all bad or that she cannot do without her. She may even say the boss does not mean to be evil or cruel. These are her excuses for putting up with it.

All these people think it is weakness to communicate the hurt you feel to those who oppress you. They fear that doing so will worsen the rejection and exploitation they receive. They think they cannot stand on their own two feet. They think they should be wonderful in all their dealings with others but that they sadly are not which makes them feel it is their fault if the other person hates them.

They need to see that doing nothing fails to help and is worse than doing something.

Judging others is telling yourself you should be judged too if you do wrong. Its negative. If the thought of thinking positive and judging nobody seems to difficult then set yourself a goal. The goal is that you will think positive and judge nobody for a day. You will see then that it is not too hard. This will encourage you to keep your goal. It will allow you to have the chance to make the goal of doing these things two days, Then three,. Then four ...

Do not believe that when things go well they have to go wrong! Do not make the mistake of thinking that if windfalls of wealth and blessings shower upon you, that something has to go wrong. It does not. To worry is to fail to enjoy the blessings properly. You are not letting them be the blessings they could be.

You might think the worst will happen. But the fact is you don't know. So why expect it? if you expect it you annoy yourself. This means that if it does happen you have contributed to making it worse for yourself.

The advantages of negative thoughts and fears and feelings is,

#They warn you about possible threats that may emotionally hurt you or otherwise hurt you.

#You can use this warning to help you decide to take steps to avoid the hurt.

#They warn you to change what you are doing and take the steps.

#They motivate you to do this.

It is necessary to be aware of this. Negativity cannot help us if we don't. Negativity and positivity have to work together and find a meeting point. The important thing in life is that we be realistic about what can happen and be prepared and able to deal with and work through whatever pain comes.

We are not advocating negativity. Far from it. We are admitting that even the most positive person has a tinge of negativity. Do not be negative towards your own negativity. That is adding fuel to the fire that threatens you. Instead be grateful for the warning it gives and take steps if necessary so that you heed the warning. The best way to heed the warning is to keep the positivity stronger. You do that by recognising and protecting the positivity you actually have.

People battle to develop a psychological immune system that protects them from infection from mentally destructive traumas. They engage positive thinking, prayer, superstition and counselling while in fact they already probably have an adequate psychological immune system. Experts Timothy Wilson and Daniel Gilbert assert that trying to think more positively is inadvisable for you are doing it anyway and are trying to be unrealistic. You should have the level of positivity that is right for you. It helps us cope with negative or devastating information. We have the power to revise what we think about some loss so that we start to see maybe the loss was not that bad.

Positive thinking is very future-centred which mean you will not enjoy the present moment but look to future moments. That is one reason why trying to be more positive than you should be will fail. What is the point of caring about the future if your wonderful present does not impress you and get your attention. Trying to get rid of your negative emotions when

they are about warning you is the reason being positive will not make you happy - you are blinding yourself to risks and dangers, to what you sense, and that is no way to get happiness. It won't work for it is you trying to convince yourself you are okay because you are not okay.

Positive thinking goes with the appalling outlook, everything happens for a reason. That "proverb" leads to you failing to learn from your own mistakes and you see the disaster as something that is going to be good for you regardless of how negative you feel about it. You end up burying the negativity. You end up feeling that life is in control and you are in control too for you just go along with it. That will only make you less prepared to handle a new disaster.

We must realise that we can think positive thoughts without making an effort. Making an effort shows you are trying to think what you in fact do not think. Just let them happen and you will feel positive and you won't be sacrificing. That allows happiness to happen. If we are negative, all the forgetting about happiness to be happy and doing all the good works in the world will not make us happy. People will not be content if we do good for them and they sense we take no pride or joy in helping them. The moral is, "Do not think positive but see that you already do that".

APPENDIX: QUOTE FROM THE ANTIDOTE

The Antidote: Happiness for People Who Can't Stand Positive Thinking, Oliver Burkeman

The first benefit of dwelling on how bad things might get is a straightforward one. Psychologists have long agreed that one of the greatest enemies of human happiness is 'hedonic adaptation' – the predictable and frustrating way in which any new source of pleasure we obtain, whether it's as minor as a new piece of electronic gadgetry or as major as a marriage, swiftly gets relegated to the backdrop of our lives. We grow accustomed to it, and so it ceases to deliver so much joy. It follows, then, that regularly reminding yourself that you might lose any of the things you currently enjoy – indeed, that you will definitely lose them all, in the end, when death catches up with you – would reverse the adaptation effect. Thinking about the possibility of losing something you value shifts it from the backdrop of your life back to centre stage, where it can deliver pleasure once more. 'Whenever you grow attached to something,' writes Epictetus, 'do not act as though it were one of those things that cannot be taken away, but as though it were something like a jar or a crystal goblet . . . if you kiss your child, your brother, your friend . . . remind yourself that you love a mortal, something not your own; it has been given to you for the present, not inseparably nor forever, but like a fig, or a bunch of grapes, at a fixed season of the year.' Each time you kiss your child goodnight, he contends, you should specifically consider the possibility that she might die tomorrow. This jarring advice that might strike any parent as horrifying, but Epictetus is adamant: the practice will make you love her all the more, while simultaneously reducing the shock should that awful eventuality ever come to pass.

The second, subtler, and arguably even more powerful benefit of the premeditation of evils is as an antidote to anxiety. Consider how we normally seek to assuage worries about the future: we seek reassurance, looking to persuade ourselves that everything will be all right. But reassurance is a double-edged sword. In the short term, it can be wonderful, but like all forms of optimism, it requires constant maintenance: if you offer reassurance to a friend who is in the grip of anxiety, you often find that a few days later, he'll be back for more. Worse, reassurance can actually exacerbate anxiety: when you reassure your friend that the worst-case scenario he fears probably won't occur, you inadvertently reinforce his belief that it would be catastrophic if it did. You are tightening the coil of his anxiety, not loosening it. All too often, the Stoics point out, things will not turn out for the best.