

COMMON AND SOCIETAL THREATS TO YOUR SELF-ESTEEM

SELF-ESTEEM

We must have true self-esteem.

Real self-esteem is realising we have the right to be respected and to respect ourselves and to engage in self-compassion.

We all seek the feeling of wellbeing and self-esteem. It is impossible to develop the feeling of self-esteem in isolation. It can only be won if you surround yourself with people who have a good enough perception of you. It is your perception of what they perceive about you that gives you self-esteem - or not. Why do you follow your perception? You do it for you see no reason for it being wrong though you know it could be. To feel good with others it is necessary to have a healthy relationship with yourself. That way you will draw and be drawn to those who have healthy relationships with themselves. You will be protected from abusive situations. You will generate an example that attracts others to the beauty of healthy self-respect.

We know that if we battle for happiness it eludes us. So we must have the self-esteem to let go. If we do good works we paradoxically end up happy. Self-esteem is of great importance.

THE ENEMY

The concept of moral evil is the enemy. True self-esteem means seeing this enemy. You must then see through it. In other words, what some call evils or sins see them as mistakes not true evils. A person doing an evil is a response to something that is not right in their life. When they hit you it could be a way of trying to feel in control and not really about hurting you. It is never necessary to see any harmful act as a moral evil. Seeing it as a sort of mistake will do. To judge a thief as being somehow mistaken is more encouraging to her or him than seeing her or him as bad.

God is blamed for sanctioning and teaching the concept of moral evil but it is man. If there is a God then moral evil must exist for we need to account for how he can be good when evil exists. So drop God for the God idea is a slow-working poison.

OBJECTIONS TO SELF-ESTEEM

Many say that to try and love yourself is selfish in a bad and dangerous way. They say you should be trying to love others instead.

Should you try just doing all you can for others in order to see if it helps you love yourself? But it does not work for everybody.

And if it does work, how do you know that it was down to seeing how valuable love is and how great you are and not down to helping others in itself? What if it just happens?

People love themselves and love few others while better people than they who help others a lot may not love themselves much. Those who tell you to love others and not to think about yourself are ignorant and untruthful.

Some feel that if you don't like or love yourself you will never be happy but they say it does not stop you loving another person. Even if that is true, you would need to deepen your love and appreciation for yourself in order to love the other person better. A person who is not trying to be happier is as good as deliberately becoming a pain to others.

For many, their ability to love themselves better could be separate from any power they have to love others.

For others, their growing appreciation for themselves could mean they are not ashamed any more of their flaws so they could have closer and more intimate friendships and relationship with others. They would want to share themselves and their lives warts and all.

Many say it is bad and selfish to love yourself because you cannot really do it and you are fooling yourself and others by trying to do it or saying it is possible. You are selfishly wasting time on the impossible instead of loving others. At least that is not vicious and preachy like the previous paragraph's version. It is hoping to make you realistic.

They argue that the reason loving yourself is not possible is because you can only love the qualities you have and the things you have that are kind of part of you. You can love your sunny disposition and you can love how you went and bought that nice car. But if loving the qualities you have means you do not love yourself and you cannot love anything but qualities implies you do not love others either. In fact you are more likely to look after yourself than them for you experience your qualities but you cannot really know, just believe, that their qualities are as good as they seem.

Another problem is that loving things about yourself seems to be unpraiseworthy in itself. But not all people have that perception. The eagerness of the world to learn about self-esteem shows that. And if you were a humanitarian, you would encourage yourself to love your quality of being charming for it helps you do good better.

Another worry is that if you are to love yourself unconditionally then how you behave does not matter - you will love yourself no matter what you do. No evidence that you are unlovable will matter. And love involves respect for evidence for evidence is a good thing even if it points to something alarming.

If self-love masks love for things about you and not you then it is a lie and it logically requires that you love it if you actually go out and murder people. But if unconditional love is so toxic it does not matter if you love yourself or others for there is a danger either way.

We love ourselves. This translates as loving our power to act. Even being aware is an act. To love ourselves is to love our power to act whether we abuse it or not. You love your power to do harm to others but you may hate the consequences. We are naturally pro-me not pro-God. God is only an excuse for getting what you want and what you want isn't always something pleasant (so don't be convinced by the sacrifices people make for God for they may not be for God!). The enemies of self-esteem philosophy are usually out to get you to put God at the centre not you. They harm you in doing this for it is impossible and unnatural and hypocritical.

A WARNING

Be careful that when you want to love that you don't develop the feeling, "I will never be able to do enough for this person's wellbeing. I will never love enough." Belief in God forces you to feel you will never love him enough thus it is a danger to self-esteem. Why is "I love me" important and why is "God loves me" unimportant? Because it makes me independent and puts the means of my own eternal security in my own hands. If God is good, he will love me no matter what. If he is going to love me anyway, it does not matter if I consider his love important or not. What matters about your medicine is that it works, not what you think of it. The only important love is loving yourself.

ACCUSATION THAT SELF-ESTEEM CARES ABOUT THE KILLER NOT HIS VICTIMS

I must help others mainly or only because it is the only true way to respect myself.

The objection to that is, "That idea is shallow and dangerous. Suppose a man kills millions cruelly. The moral theorists would have to contend that the worst thing he did was to demean himself by doing so and not the fact that he hurt those people. We cannot agree with that. It doesn't put as much value on the victims as it does on him. To accept such a teaching is to imply that if we are among those millions we are of little or no consequence. In fact it would be a harmful attitude to adopt."

But that objection is nonsense. It is true that man degrades himself by doing that. He degrades himself or he does not. Do you want to say that he does NOT degrade himself by doing what he did?

Complaining about his self-degradation respects him and hopes he can and will do better and so that the millions will live. It is good.

And how can we be accused of caring about his dignity and not his victims for if one of the victims stood in his place we would remind him or her of human dignity?

THE GOD MOTIVE

The people who usually have a problem if you try to work on your self-esteem are people who are trying to make and keep room for God and the notion that what is right and wrong depends on his authority. People say you cannot be truly good unless you believe in God. If what you need is self-respect not God this is not true and in fact is way off the mark in such a fundamental issue.

A few Christians say they regard atheists as capable of being good and say atheists do much good but that as they deny God

they cannot really believe in good. That is a very confused argument. If you think maths is just something people have made up and it is no more true than the story of Cinderella, no matter how good you are at maths, you are not truly a mathematician. You simulate it. So to close the argument, if self-respect encourages you to be harmless then there is no point in worrying that it means if somebody does great evil the problem is not the harm they did others but the harm they did to themselves. You are not saying the harm done doesn't matter. You are saying how they feel about themselves matters most because it holds the key to whether or not they will do grave harm. So we see that saying the problem is the person does not imply any indifference or insult to their victims but in fact is trying to face reality in the hope of inspiring people to do good not bad.

If there is a God that does not mean you can know him. You will know your feelings and perceptions of him but not him. A person who claims to know God but who clearly does not can have the same perception of God as a person who seems to know God. The Bible says that unloving people do not know God though they say and could swear they do.

To believe in God is like making him real to yourself though he is not. It is like trying to create him. It is like making an idol. You shouldn't need to make a god when you are the creator of such a god. That is evil and wholly against self-esteem. And if your god is in any way believed to be evil that makes it far worse. There is no point in believing in God if you do only what you want so even if he were a harmless concept he is not harmless in so far as you think his will comes before yours which you will have to think if you believe in his absolute perfection in holiness and power.

An act is only really done in the interest of another if the other person needs it.

God does not need anything so God has no relevance to human living. To teach that he does is very dangerous if it is not true. If self-love is the only way I can be good to others then to oppose that is paving the way for making me into a monster.

Suppose we should love others and not ourselves. If we put our focus on serving others and not God, we will be better people. Serving God is really just turning away from those who we should love even if it benefits them.

Whether we should love ourselves principally or others, it makes no difference. God is a hindrance. We should put our self-confidence first. Our actions have to be all self-confident not God-confident.

If you really value yourself you will not need faith in God to help you value yourself.

Even if self-esteem is selfish, belief in God is worse.

DO YOU REALLY GIVE?

Another argument from the pro-altruism brigade, "We can be givers. I can want to give you my last loaf of bread. I do not give it for me. I do it for you. Some say that because I want to do it means I want the pleasure of doing it so it is not really about helping another at all. They say only looks as if I am being selfless. But just because an intention or desire or thought is mine doesn't mean it is about me. It is because I want to give. I want to give for another not me. I cannot really give if I'm forced to do it. The only real givers are willing givers."

In real life, we do not care. We are made to like others helping us for their own sake as long as they don't manipulate in any different way. We don't mind somebody helping us so that they might feel good but we do mind if they do it to make it look like they consider us useless and in need of patronising. If God has a problem with us helping others because we like to do it and not because we should then stuff God. Those who say God helps them live a better life, are calling their feelings that inspire them to honour themselves by doing good for others, God. But it is not.

It is interesting how nobody thinks you can be altruistic towards yourself. Some contend, "Doing things for myself need not be selfish! Just because I do an act for me doesn't mean I am selfish. I may look after myself so that I can have the energy to help others better. If I do the act for another and want nothing back it is surmised that I am being unselfish. Why then can't it be thought I can be unselfish towards myself? It is the motive that determines if what I do is unselfish not who it is done for." One would think it is possible to be altruistic towards yourself and nobody else! If altruism is so great then what is wrong with that for you cannot help everybody?

APPROVAL

Why help your neighbour and not yourself? Why not help yourself only?

Why should I ask for God's approval of me. Why should I ask for anybody's?

The belief that you must get the approval and love of all the important people in your life is destructive to self-esteem.

Why? Because it is impossible to guarantee such approval and love. If you do good, it would be good if your own approval were enough. Why would you look for anybody else's approval? Do you think it is not really good and that you need to be assured that it is? You end up identifying good with the opinion of others. Social conformity can be a sign of enslavement to public opinion.

If I look for the approval of others, I am implying that I don't approve of myself. I indicate that I will only be happy or happier when I get it from them. This makes my life dangerous and fearful. It only helps make me hate them.

I am conditioned to seek the approval of others. To let this be done to me is self-demeaning. I will change myself so that I don't give a damn any more.

Caring about what others think is a sure sign that we do not know what we want. If you really want something, you will go for it and you won't even hear the critics.

Let go of your need to seek self-esteem and just make an effort with others. You are not looking for their approval. You have already got it. You just need to let them see the real you so that they will let you see they approve.

SELF-CENTREDNESS IS HARMFUL?

Self-centredness in itself is harmless. Belief in God makes it harmful. It is only the way it is carried out that may do damage. Believe in being self-centred but believe that the best way to put it into practice is going out and doing things for others because you enjoy it. It takes immense self-confidence to do that. See this self-confidence as your creation out of nothing - not God's. It is all yours. You are your own God.

It is commonly believed that selfless love is the result of true healthy self-esteem. The argument is that because you deal with your own demons

If you do not wish to be loved and respected then you do not love yourself much. If you do not wish to be loved and respected then you don't want others to love and respect you. In other words, you permit them to abuse the gifts they have to hurt you. Your respect for them is poor when you would let them treat themselves like that. It is when you fail to love and respect yourself that you fail to love and respect others.

HURT PRIDE ARGUMENT

It is said that people who supposedly suffer from low self-esteem actually are suffering from hurt pride. The only way to address hurt pride would be to appraise oneself honestly so that one sees one's self exactly as one is. Pride means you are conscious of your value as a person - not as a worker, a friend, a success, smart or a looker. You are more than any of these.

GOD

My self-esteem will grow the more good I do. I do not do good because of laws and because God's opinions, religion's opinions, or other people's opinions matter. They don't. I do good because it is attractive and it is mine, my goodness. It is my beauty and worthiness shining through. In serving others I exalt myself. Money and physical beauty and even health will not make me a "divine" being on earth. Only service can.

If God is so great, then we should wish we were God above all things. The belief inflicts suffering on us. It is wanting suffering and trying to worsen the inevitable suffering of life.

PANTHEISM

Some pantheistic mystics say, "Love yourself properly and you will start to love your neighbour as yourself. We are parcels of the same power. To love others is to love ourselves - literally." This is really trying to use faith as a prop to help you love others. A really good person does not need gimmicks to love. What would that say if you cannot love other unless you start to see them as being you but in other bodies?

CONCLUSION

Self-esteem is something that is often defined wrongly and suffers many threats. The threats put pressure on people to twist its meaning and block its benefits. It is self-assertion to politely but firmly object to any threats. Self-esteem will grow fastest if you be brave and do that. The threats lose their power over you.

