

Self-Esteem, Self-Ownership, Illusion



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"Finding the Challenges" is an original column appearing every other Wednesday at Everything-Voluntary.com, by Verbal Vol. Verbal is a software engineer, college professor, corporate information officer, life long student, farmer, libertarian, literarian, student of computer science and self-ordering phenomena. Archived columns can be found [here](#). FTC-only RSS feed available [here](#).

We will, in this edition, look at some illusive ideas. But their illusiveness does not, thereby, make them baseless abstractions, lies, fallacies, non-entities, or so forth. It is permanently incumbent upon all free and voluntary individuals to be perpetually on the lookout for mirages and facts, for implications and explications. This is how we deal with living. This is how we lay foundation for our children. This is how we preserve the light of reason for posterity.

Self-Esteem

This week at Socrates Cafe Louisville, we talked about self-esteem. Two hours was not enough; in fact I'm not sure we even scratched the surface. But it does occur to me that self-esteem is a very important topic to voluntaryist thinkers. What kinds of challenges are there in reaching a proper level of self-esteem; and to what end?

First of all, our children need to develop self-esteem, on their own. We adults cannot give it to them, but we can help them understand how important it is. Unfortunately, adults and other children can also impair self-esteem in developing minds. Many of us sadly recall being undercut by people who had some sort of fictional, hierarchical advantage over us. The trick of building self-esteem may be to understand the falseness of formulaic gradations. Are high school seniors in any way better than juniors? One is just closer to an isolated change of a larger sort than the other. We can encourage children by letting them know, whenever possible, about distinction with no real differences.

Is a person who excels at one task superior to one who excels at another task? One task may have greater demand in a free market, but that only counts in efficient allocation. The doer of the task is not thereby superior to the doer of another. One of the reasons that I have harped on logic fallacies in these columns is because, although we are a species with

reason, we are just the evolutionary beginning; we have not yet learned how to benefit from making false comparisons. We evolve by recognizing false comparisons as untrue, then rejecting them. Apparently making comparisons is hard work, because so often we abandon the work before it is done. Comparisons should be made, but then they must be adopted, proven, or rejected toward some larger voluntary, individual end. We cannot achieve individual ends if we do not do the work.

Warning: some may say that individual ends are intrinsically selfish, but those are really the only ends that we may work toward, in the final analysis. Human interaction must take care of itself.

Therefore, here is a final word (actually a temporary word until we discuss the topic again) on self-esteem — it is not a fundamental concern, recognition of the self underlies this. Even more importantly, self-ownership underlies both. So self-esteem is at least a third order need of the human being.

Rothbard Quote #5

The most viable method of elaborating the natural-rights statement of the libertarian position is to divide it into parts, and to begin with the basic axiom of the “right to self-ownership.” The right to self-ownership asserts the absolute right of each man, by virtue of his (or her) being a human being, to “own” his or her own body; that is, to control that body free of coercive interference. Since each individual must think, learn, value, and choose his or her ends and means in order to survive and flourish, the right to self-ownership gives man the right to perform these vital activities without being hampered and restricted by coercive molestation.

So, Murray Rothbard here states, in *For a New Liberty*, that self-ownership is fundamental in natural law (natural order). As I often assert, no two things can occupy the same time and space. If one person would take over another’s existence, her specific place in space and time, then one must relinquish his naturally ordered place in space and time. At this writing, I have no knowledge that this is even possible physically.

The problem is that too many people believe that there is a psychic path for dislodging a human being from her natural place and time toward selfish ends of others. This belief gives rise to coercion. Some believe coercion should be employed against other parties,

while some believe that coercion should be tolerated. The state itself is a manifestation of these corrupted beliefs.

Other examples are propaganda and the peculiar inversion of permission. Government uses propaganda to instill the illusion that government is by the people, that is the people permit their government. Once we permit the illusion that the state exists, then we are coerced to believe that the state will do all permitting henceforth, and most of us are convinced that this inversion serves some individual, voluntary need.

We have, really without thinking, surrendered the simple natural order, which Rothbard lauds, for an artificial order sold on false (and impossible) pretenses.

What about the “safety net?” There is a natural law safety net for everyone who takes his or her own place in space and time.

Logic Fallacy #32 — *Argumentum ad Illusion*

While we were discussing self-esteem at the Socrates Cafe Louisville, one member offered that self-esteem was only an illusion, and she seemed to imply that, as such, self-esteem was not factual. That is neither here nor there. I dislike to use high-flown philosopher’s words, like epistemology, ontology, and metaphysics, so I will try a down-home, Kentucky type of idea. The woman at Socrates Cafe was looking at illusion as a thing that makes its object unreal. But just because there is a ghost does not mean that there is not an independent reality that more or less occupies similar territory. Saying that a thing is illusive doesn’t make it unreal in any sense.

The logic ogre here raises it’s ugly head in different ways. I will address two of particular concern:

- An illusion is created to obscure a reality. For example, the neo-cons say that a treaty with Iran will cause them to attack us with nuclear weapons. The reality is that Iran may not or may attack us with nuclear weapons whether or not a treaty exists.
- That an idea may be illusion-based proves that it is false. For example, every tale of the Bible appears to be fictitious, therefore it (the Bible) can be ignored. The reality is that the conditions which underlie, and may have inspired, stories in the Bible should be taken into consideration.

The bad news is that we cannot ever rest upon our laurels. The good news is that we seem to be naturally inclined to seek the truth. We need to guard against those forces which would militate against our natural constitution.

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