We Aren't in Zero-Sum Relationships

If you look at relationships as zero-sum, and the ego/self as fundamentally exploitative, than you will view a strong ego as a state of disconnection from others, "selfish" and predatory. From this conceptual framework, "ego death" is a transcendent equilibrium where we can be connected with one another in a non-exploitive harmony. "Pride" in this context is the ultimate manifestation of toxic ego where a person isolates and stands up for his ego/self (at the expense of connection and others), and it is what must be combated in order to have productive relationships. Advocates of this framework often wants to imply that strong ego/self is a taught mechanism rooted in abuse and isolation.

I find this analysis highly flawed for multiple reasons. We aren't in zero-sum relationships, we can get what we desire while other people get what they desire. It is people who suffer from the most abuse who often have the worst boundaries and regard for themselves. People value themselves and their loved ones more than strangers. I think this analysis just fundamentally misunderstands human psychology and evolution.

I find that a strong ego (strong regard for oneself) is an absolutely vital part in creating valuable relationships, harvesting productive cultures, and living an enjoyable life. While a person can advocate for themselves at the expense of others, this isn't the innate condition of mankind. We are able to have win/win interactions and relationships. Productive cultures are ones in which people have strong egos, good boundaries, and mutual regard for one another. A culture that highly regards the autonomy and dignity of each actor is one where people are able to maximize value/utility. This is framework is one where people have no need to abandon themselves (the ego) in order to connect and share with others. The ego/self is an honoring of our own values, our own interests, our own dignity and it ought not disconnect us … but rather shape the tambour of our cooperative relationships.