Anti-Self and Pro-Self Theology: An ethical analysis of self-esteem

by Dale S. Ryan

The desirability of positive self-reference and its centrality in determining behavior are almost universally presumed by psychologists and other mental health professionals. William Glasser, for example, describes the basic goals of Reality Therapy as helping patients to meet "the need to love and be loved and the need to feel that we are worth-while to ourselves and to others" (Glasser, 1965, p. 9). Carl Rogers describes a therapeutic relationship as one in which a client "becomes more acceptant of himself. . .accepting himself as he is, respecting and caring for himself as a person" (Rogers and Stevens, 1967, p. 49). And Virginia Satir says "I am convinced that the crucial factor in what happens both inside people and between people is the picture of individual worth that each person carries around with him" (Satir, 1972, p. 21).

There are many Christians, however, who appear to totally reject either the desirability of positive self-reference or its centrality in shaping behavior. An example of the latter is Jay Adams who insists that "except possibly as loose rhetoric the notion that one must learn to love himself is biblically false. . . . There is neither need nor biblical warrant for trying to alter self-images directly or for building up self-esteem in the counselee. Nor is it possible." (Adams, 1973, p. 143). Examples of Christian theologians who explicitly reject the desirability of self-love or self-esteem are not difficult to find. Karl Barth says of self-love, for example, that it can "never be anything right or holy and acceptable to God. It is an affection which is the very opposite of love. God will never think of blowing on this fire, which is bright enough already. His demand is that the impulse should be reversed." (Barth, 1956, I,2,p. 388). A similarly strong statement is made by R. Niebuhr who describes religion ''not simply as is generally supposed an inherently virtuous human quest for God. It is merely a final battle-ground between God and man's self-esteem" (Niebuhr, 1941, I, p. 200). This kind of vehement rejection of positive self-reference is certainly not universally accepted by Christian theologians and psychologists (e.g. Ellison, 1976), but it does represent a significant element in modern Christian thought.

Some people, then, think of self-hatred as the fundamental problem and positive self-reference as part of the proposed solution. For others, self-love is the fundamental problem and some kind of negative self-reference is part of the solution. Before rushing to decide who is correct in this debate, however, observers would be well advised to ask if everybody is talking about the same thing. Does K. Barth mean by "self-love" exactly what V. Satir means by "self-esteem"? The premise of this article is that much (but certainly not all) of the disagreement about the desirability of positive self-reference is rooted in disagreements about the meaning of words like

"self" and "love" and not in disagreements about the desirability of the phenomena to which self-esteem usually refers in non-technical contexts.

That self-esteem and self-love can have a variety of meanings with different ethical connotations is not a novel insight. St. Augustine uses the term "self-love" in a variety of senses - some with negative and some with positive ethical connotations (O'Donovan, 1980). And Thomas Aquinas explicitly states that "self-love" is "in one way common to all [men], in another proper to good men, in another proper to evil men" (Aquinas, II,II,25,7). If this is the case, then the starting point for Christian theologians and psychologists who are interested in self-reference is not a decision about whether self-esteem is a virtue or a vice but rather a clarification of the sense in which positive self-reference is "proper to good men" and the sense in which it is "proper to evil men". For some the ambiguities of the term "self-love" may seem so complex that abandoning the term entirely may seem the only recourse (e.g. Tillich, 1954, p. 6). It is my own conviction both that no less ambiguous terms are available to us and that the interface between Christian theology and psychology must eventually come to terms with precisely these ambiguities if these disciplines are to enrich each other. This paper seeks contribute to this enrichment by 1) outlining the difficulties of any formal definition of self-esteem, by 2) examining the phenomena of self-esteem in order to frame an operational definition for this kind of self-reference and by 3) defending the desirability of the phenomena to which this operational definition refers.

OBSTACLES TO A FORMAL DEFINITION OF SELF-ESTEEM

There are three obstacles to any formal definition of self-esteem. First, the ambiguities of the word "self" ought to be examined and some decisions made about the intended meaning for this word. Second, similar clarifications and decisions ought to be made about the word "esteem". And finally, any difficulties which result from the combination of a particular understanding of "self" with a particular understanding of "esteem" ought also to be clarified. In spite of the obvious value of such clarifications, very few authors, either theologians or psychologists, make any serious attempt to limit the range of meaning of the term "self-esteem" It is most common to simply use the term and to assume that the reader will understand what is intended. While not all of the disagreements about the value of positive self-reference can be resolved by clarifying differences in language, it does seem that increased clarity about the meaning of "self-esteem" would be desirable. A few examples of the range of meaning of the words "self", "esteem" and "self-esteem" may help to explain some of the confusion which results from the variety of definitions.

The word "self" has a wide range of meaning. Perhaps the most common understanding of "self" is that a "self" is simply a "person". Anyone who is a person, is therefore a "self". This understanding of "self" carries with it no necessary ethical connotations and no necessary commitment to a particular theological or philosophical anthropology. It may readily be admitted

that the word "person" is as difficult to define as the word "self" (Copleston, 1956). This does not, however, decrease the utility of this understanding of "self" since its utility comes from its correspondence to ordinary life experience. We all experience ourselves as selves, that is, as persons.

The most prominent alternative understanding of "self" in American society is an understanding which has clear roots in Puritan anthropology although its heritage extends far beyond the Puritans (Bercovitch, 1975). For the Puritans a "self" was definitely not simply a "person". A "self" was a person construed as being in opposition to God. Richard Baxter, a Puritan writer, put it this way: "The very names of Self and Own should sound in the watchful Christian's ear as very terrible, wakening words, that are next to the names of sin and Satan" (Bercovitch, 1975, p 17) And Thomas Hooker wrote that the "self" is the "great snare", the "figure or type of Hell", and "the Antichrist" (Bercovitch, 1975, p 18). Clearly this understanding of "self" carries with it a strong ethical connotation and a commitment to other elements of Puritan anthropology. This latter commitment is particularly important - the Puritan view of "self" (a self is of no value) was intimately connected to their view of "soul" (a soul is of infinite value). This understanding of "self" has played a major role in the development of American evangelical piety. I want to emphasize that this view of "self" when understood in the total context of Puritan anthropology does not by any inner necessity lead to depressive illness or suicidal despair. The Puritan view of "self" has been caricatured in this way, but their extremely high view of "my soul" served as a balance to the extremely low value they placed on "my self". It is not my purpose at present, however, to argue which of these views (or which of the many other possible views) of "self" is most consistent with Biblical principles or most useful in encouraging "healthy" self-reference. The point I wish to make is simply that people who use "self" to mean "person" are not likely to communicate effectively with those who by "self" mean "Antichrist" unless both parties are sensitive to the complexities of the language they are using.

Like the word "self", the word "esteem" has a wide range of meaning. The range of meaning of "esteem" is essentially identical to that of "love" so little clarity is achieved by attempting to distinguish between these two terms. Love can refer to benevolence. To love would, then, mean to act benevolently toward the object of love. Love can refer to emotional attraction. To love would, then, mean to "feel" in certain ways towards love's object. Love can refer to the recognition of value. To love would, then, refer to the acknowledgment of the value of love's object. Love can refer to the desire to possess. To love would, then, mean to desire the acquisition of love's object. A particularly important meaning for "love" for the present discussion is the use of "love" to mean selflessness. This view has been popularized in this century by the enormously influential work of Anders Nygren. In his *Eros and Agape*, Nygren argued that the central feature of Christian love is selflessness. Agape, according to Nygren, "excludes all self-love. Christianity does not recognize self-love as a legitimate form of love. Christian love moves in two directions, towards God and towards its neighbor, and in self-love it finds its chief adversary, which must be fought and conquered" (Nygren, 1953, p. 217). If, as Nygren

suggests, love excludes by definition all self-reference, it would be difficult to justify any form of positive self-esteem. This particular understanding of agape as the absolute prohibition of self-love has not been well-received by most recent writers on the same subject (e.g. Outka,1972; DeFerrari, 1962; O'Donovan, 1980). Again, however, it is not my purpose at present to argue which of these views is most consistent with Biblical principles or most useful in encouraging a "healthy" self-reference. It is rather my purpose to emphasize that each of these possible meanings for "esteem" has different implications for the term "self-esteem". If love means selflessness, then self-love is a contradiction in terms. If love means emotional attraction, then self-love implies some kind of narcissism. If love means recognition of value then self-love means acknowledging this value. If clear communication is desired, psychologists and theologians who discuss "self-love" or "self-esteem" would obviously be well advised to state with some clarity the range of meaning they intend for the terms "love" and "esteem".

It is now quite clear that combining the word "self" with the word "esteem" results in a term with a great many different meanings. If "self" is taken to mean "man in opposition to God" and "esteem" is taken to mean "benevolence" then, "self-esteem" might mean to act in the interests of opposition to God. It is difficult to imagine how any Christian could approve of self-esteem if this were its central meaning. On the other hand, if "self" means "person" and "esteem" means "recognition of value", then "self-esteem" might mean acknowledging that as a person I have value. It is certainly not obvious that Christians are obligated to reject self-esteem if this is its central meaning. And, indeed, if the source of the value to which this definition refers is understood correctly, it is possible to imagine that self-esteem would be not only a desirable form of self-reference but that Christians would have a positive moral obligation to encourage its development. It is, in fact, this latter definition of self-esteem which seems to most commonly be presumed by those who find self-esteem to be an appropriate form of Christian self-reference.

Let me emphasize again, however, that it is not my intent to argue in favor of one of these possible formal definitions of self-esteem. What I hope to have shown is that it is possible to choose a formal definition of self-esteem which would demand its rejection as morally reprehensible. And, it is also possible to choose a formal definition of self-esteem which confers on Christians a moral obligation to encourage its development. Since formal definitions of self-esteem can result in quite different conclusions, it seems particularly important to examine carefully the *phenomena* of self-esteem. What does self-esteem look like when people actually experience it? How would you recognize it if you saw it? Until these kinds of questions can be answered it will not be possible to move beyond the disagreements that arise from conflicting formal definitions.

TOWARDS AN OPERATIONAL DEFINITION OF HIGH SELF-ESTEEM

Few people who use the expression "self-esteem" intend to communicate anything about the meaning of "self" or of "esteem". The focus of meaning is usually on the kinds of behavior

associated with self-reference, that is, on the phenomena of self-reference. An ethical analysis of self-esteem should, therefore, focus on an operational definition of self-esteem. In particular it will be important to compare the phenomena of self-esteem with the phenomena associated with other forms of self-reference. For present purposes we will examine four kinds of self-reference: high self-esteem, low self-esteem, arrogance and humility. Several comments need to be made about these choices. First, it should be noted that self-esteem has two varieties: low and high. These terms are particularly deceptive in one respect. They obviously suggest that the difference between high and low self-esteem is entirely *quantitative*. As we will see, however, the actual usage of these words refers to forms of self-reference which are dramatically different in a *qualitative* sense. Secondly, the absence of the word "pride" from our considerations should be noted. We use the word "pride" to refer to very different kinds of self-reference. For example, the meaning of "proud" in the sentence "He's too proud to apologize" is obviously quite different from the meaning intended in the sentence "I'm proud of the way you picked up your toys". The former usage corresponds roughly to the meaning of the word arrogance - hence "he's too arrogant to apologize". And the latter usage corresponds roughly to the meaning of high self-esteem - hence, "you should esteem yourself highly because of the way you picked up your toys". Since the range of meanings for the word "pride" are included in our discussion by including both "arrogance" and "high self-esteem", we will overlook nothing by ignoring the word "pride" itself.

What, then, can we learn about high self-esteem by comparing it and contrasting it to arrogance, low self-esteem and humility? A very common response to this question is that high self-esteem is very like arrogance. For many people arrogance and high self-esteem seem similar because they are both "positive" forms of self-reference. As we have just seen, we even use the word "pride" to refer to both of these forms of self-reference. High self-esteem is often thought to be an appropriately positive self-reference and arrogance an unreasonably positive self-reference, but they are only differentiated in a quantitative sense. If this were the case, encouraging the development of high self-esteem would be a dangerous task - if you go "too far" you would be encouraging the development of arrogance. If high self-esteem is basically the same kind of self-reference as arrogance then some people are likely to reject high self-esteem entirely in order to avoid the dangers of arrogance and others are likely to be so cautious in their acceptance of high self-esteem that many will be unable to recognize their acceptance as genuine.

But is high self-esteem only quantitatively different from arrogance? Are they both "positive" in the same way? Examination of the phenomena of self-reference suggests that arrogance and high self-esteem have little in common. On the contrary, arrogance seems to resemble low self-esteem. Similarly, the phenomena usually associated with high self-esteem seem to resemble closely the phenomena of humility. There are at least five ways of comparing these forms of self-reference which emphasize these relationships.

First, both arrogance and low self-esteem are forms of self-reference which lead a person to evaluate life experiences predominantly in terms of their impact on self. For these kinds of self-reference life tends to have very egocentric boundaries and there is a form of compulsion to this self-centeredness. For both arrogance and low self-esteem there is a dominating focus on the question: 'Are my needs getting met here?" without a corresponding focus on the question; ''Are other's needs getting met here?''. They differ in that an arrogant person may insist that his needs be met while a person with low self-esteem is likely to assume that nobody else is concerned with his unmet needs. In either case, however, there is a self-centered frame-work for understanding the meaning and significance of life events. In contrast, both high self-esteem and humility are forms of self-reference which allow the interpretation of life events in a much broader context. Neither leads to a compulsion to evaluate life in terms of its impact on "me". A humble self-reference does not preclude the recognition of the effect of events on ''me'', but there is no compulsion to this focus for interpretation. The impact of an event on other persons and their needs is, for a humble self-reference, as urgent as the impact on the self and its needs. Similarly, high self-esteem enables a person to respond to life events without demanding that their ego be the central frame of reference for interpretation. High self-esteem is a form of self-reference which reduces the anxiety of potentially threatening events to the point where a person can recognize the needs of others as clearly as he recognizes his own.

A second similarity between arrogance and low self-esteem is that both of these forms of self-reference are motivated by anxiety. In either case, this anxiety leads to a self-reference dominated by comparison to other persons. If you ask a person whose self-reference is dominated by low self-esteem about the reasons for his low self-esteem, he is likely to respond with a list of comparisons (e.g. "I got the lowest grade. I did not perform as well as the others. . ."). Similarly, a person whose self-reference is dominated by arrogance is likely to respond with a list of positive comparisons (e.g. "I got the highest grade. I out-performed the competition. . ."). These comparisons are not always limited to other persons, they may be comparisons to ideal persons (e.g. the person my parents wish I would be). In contrast, neither humility nor high self-esteem are motivated by anxiety nor are they structured in terms of comparisons to other persons. A person with a humble self-reference is not likely to explain his attitude towards self by comparing his appearance, abilities or behavior to other people. He may be quite able to make these comparisons, but they do not constitute in his mind an adequate rationale or explanation for his attitude toward himself. Similarly, a person whose self-reference is characterized by high self-esteem is likely to explain his self-reference in terms of a much broader set of influences than comparisons to other people. In fact, people whose self-reference is dominated by either humility or high self-esteem are often unable to provide an explanation for their self-reference. More commonly they tend to explain the origins of their self-reference in terms of the behavior of other people (e.g. "I'm not sure why I feel this way about myself, I did come from a loving family and that probably has a lot to do with it.") . There is, then, a contentment and peace associated with both humility and high self-esteem which stand in clear contrast to the anxiety and envy which characterize arrogance and low self-esteem.

Thirdly, both arrogance and low self-esteem are forms of self-reference which require a person to resist the acquisition of information about self and therefore to resist change. Neither praise nor criticism are easily received by arrogance or low self-esteem. Either might desperately search for praise but there is a resistance to the full acceptance of approval and this resistance makes the search ultimately unsatisfying. Since comparisons to other persons play such a dominant role in these kinds of self-reference, reception of criticism or other negative information poses a formidable threat which is often, therefore, denied or ignored. This unavailability to information is exactly the opposite of the openness to praise and criticism which is usually associated with both humility and high self-esteem. A humble person is available to information about self-there is no resistance to approval, no urgency to deny praiseworthy achievements and no desperate need to defend self against criticism. Similarly, high self-esteem enables a person to experience potentially negative information about self without resistance or withdrawal and to experience positive information about self without exaggerating its significance. Both humility and high self-esteem are ways of talking about a kind of self-reference which is open to new information about self and consequently open to change.

Fourth, the phenomena of arrogance and low self-esteem are similar in that they both are forms of self-reference which significantly limit a person's ability to invest in interpersonal relationships. A person whose self-reference is dominated by low self-esteem finds it difficult to risk the vulnerability which relationships demand. The anxieties associated with new relationships or changes in established relationships are not easily tolerated by low self-esteem. This may result in an inability to invest in new relationships or in a desperate insistence that established relationships meet all of a person's needs without requiring any change. A person whose self- reference is dominated by arrogance shares this fear of vulnerability although it becomes apparent in different kinds of behavior. The resistance to intimacy which is associated with arrogance typically presents itself as a denial of the need for or the value of intimacy This can result in an inability to communicate personal needs and a compulsive need for autonomy. In contrast to both of these forms of self-reference, both high self-esteem and humility provide the basis for intimate relationships. High self-esteem is a form of self-reference which allows a person to risk the vulnerability which is necessary for the development of intimacy. The term high self-esteem is frequently used to refer to a kind of self- reference which reduces the anxiety of facing one's own needs. This reduction in anxiety makes it possible for a person to recognize his own needs, to communicate them to others while at the same time not insisting either that these needs be met immediately or that they be the only agenda for the relationship. Humility is also a kind of self-reference which enables a person to recognize his own needs and to communicate them to others. Humility allows a person to assess his strengths and his weaknesses realistically, and to risk sharing this information with others. Humility, then, enables a person to tolerate the vulnerability which makes intimacy possible.

Finally, both arrogance and low self-esteem are similar in that they are kinds of self-reference which are nurtured in the context of contingent relationships. The source of low self-esteem is not the experience of failure, but the experience of conditional love. Low self-esteem is rooted in the anxiety which accompanies the possibility that love will be withdrawn. The source of arrogance is not the experience of success or achievement but rather the need to prove oneself which is rooted in conditional love. Arrogance, like low self-esteem, is rooted in the anxiety that love will be withheld. If relationships which are important to me are contingent on my performance, the anxiety associated with this contingency is likely to be expressed either as low self-esteem or as arrogance. In contrast, both high self-esteem and humility are nurtured in the context of unconditional love. The source of high self-esteem is not the experience of success but the security and contentment which come from unconditional love. Similarly, humility does not come from the experience of failure, but rather from acknowledging limitations in the certainty that these limitations are not a threat to love.

What, then, does high self-esteem look like? To what does it refer in ordinary non-technical conversation? It appears to be a kind of self-reference which is in operation very similar to humility. It does not insist upon an egotistical focus for interpretation of life events, it is motivated by contentment rather than anxiety and is not therefore structured in terms of comparison to other persons, it allows a person to be open to new information about himself and therefore to be open to change, it allows a person to risk the dangers of intimacy and it is rooted in the experience of unconditional love. Many other features of high self-esteem could be mentioned, but these are sufficient to demonstrate the close connection between high self-esteem and humility and the dramatic dissimilarity between these forms of self-reference and both arrogance and low self-esteem.

This discussion is not intended to be an exhaustive description of the phenomena to which the expression "high self-esteem" refers in ordinary non-technical conversations. It should now be possible, however, to at least outline some of the considerations which would constitute an ethical analysis of this kind of self-reference.

AN ETHICAL ASSESSMENT OF THE PHENOMENA OF HIGH SELF-ESTEEM

In the first part of this paper it was emphasized that self-esteem could be formally defined in ways that required radically different ethical assessments. This was due to the fact that the word "self" implies a commitment to a particular theological anthropology and the word "esteem" may imply a commitment to a general ethical theory of some kind. In ordinary conversation, however, when people use the expression "self-esteem" they rarely intend to commit themselves to a position on these issues. More typically they intend a reference to a particular kind of behavior, to an observable phenomena of some kind. Each of the phenomena which were discussed in the previous section of this paper as typical of high self-esteem can be described in ethical terms without use of the words "self" or "esteem". This will certainly not reduce the usefulness of

formal definitions, but it will hopefully make possible an ethical assessment of the phenomena which are of concern to the average person.

For example, the term "high self-esteem" describes a self-reference which does not result in an egotistical framework for interpreting life events. If a person says "he has high self-esteem" he may mean "he is able to let other's needs be as important as his own". In this context, then, to encourage high self-esteem means to encourage people to be empathetic, that is, to "look not only to your own interest, but also to the interests of others" (Phil 2:4). This is a clear biblical mandate. We should learn to think and feel about ourselves in ways that make it possible to be empathetic. The kind of self-reference which makes empathy possible can be designated by a variety of words but the reality to which these words refer is more important to the average person than the nomenclature.

Secondly, the term "high self-esteem" describes a self- reference which is motivated by contentment rather than by anxiety and which is therefore not dominated by comparisons to other persons. If a person says "he has high self-esteem" he may mean "he is content with/at peace with himself and doesn't need to compare himself to others". In this context, then, to encourage high self-esteem is to encourage contentment and peace rather than envy or anxiety. Paul speaks explicitly of this phenomena when he says that "each person should test his own actions. Then he can take pride in himself, without comparing himself to somebody else" (Gal 6:4). We should learn, then, to think and feel about ourselves in ways that make it possible to "take pride" appropriately without comparing ourselves to others. The expression "high self-esteem" would seem to be the most appropriate label for this kind of self- reference, but again, the reality of contentment and appropriate "taking pride" are more important than the nomenclature we use to describe it.

Thirdly, the expression "high self-esteem" refers to a self-reference which allows a person to be open to both praise and criticism. If a person says "he has high self- esteem" he may mean "he is open to information about himself." In this context, then, to encourage high self-esteem is the same as to encourage honesty. Honesty and truthfulness have a clear biblical mandate. We are to "put off falsehood and speak truthfully" (Eph 4:25) because "love. . .rejoices in the truth" (1 Cor 13:6). We should, then, learn to think and feel about ourselves in ways that make it possible for us to hear the truth about ourselves. The phenomena of arrogance and low self-esteem do not appear to allow for this kind of openness but humility and high self-esteem are ways of talking about a self-reference which encourages honesty.
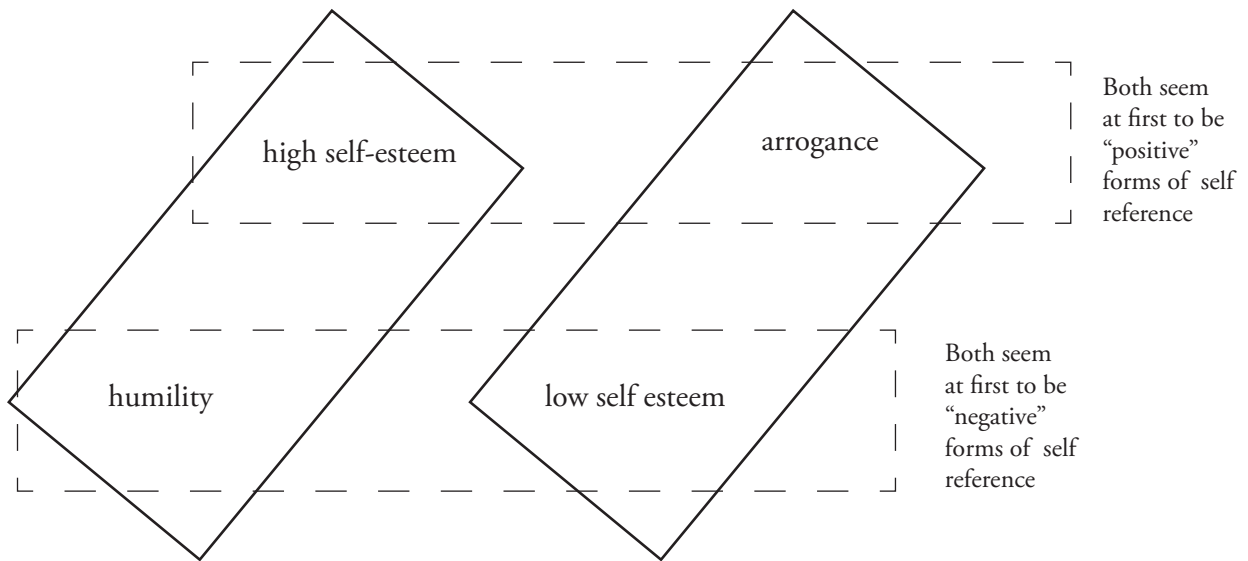
Fourthly, the expression "high self-esteem" refers to a self-reference which allows a person to invest in intimacy in spite of the risks and vulnerability which accompany that investment. If a person says he has high self-esteem" he may mean "he is courageous in the way he invests in relationships". In this context, then, to encourage high self-esteem means to encourage people to be courageous rather than fearful. We find in I John that "there is no fear in love, but perfect

love casts out fear". Paul puts it this way: "God did not give us a spirit of timidity but a spirit of power and love and self-control." (2 Tim 1:7). We ought, then, to learn to think and feel about ourselves in ways that allow us to be fearless in our relationships rather than timid and fearful. Whether or not you choose the expression "high self-esteem" to stand for this kind of self-reference, is not as important as the reality of courage which is a necessary element in any relationship.

Finally, the expression "high self-esteem" refers to a kind of self-reference which is rooted in unconditional love. If a person says "he has high self-esteem" he may mean "he shows that he has experienced unconditional love'' . In this context, then, to encourage high self-esteem is to encourage people to root their self-understanding in the experience of grace rather than in the experience of legalism. The apostle Paul said of himself that "by the grace of God, I am what I am." (1 Cor 15:10). It is the experience of being "rooted and established" in unconditional love that makes this kind of self-reference possible. There is a clear biblical mandate, then, for learning to think and feel about ourselves in the context of Grace. We are to make Grace the foundation for all of life. We are, for example, to use whatever we have "received" to "minister God's grace" to each other (I Peter 4:10) or, as Paul puts it, we are to speak to each other in ways that "build up" by "giving grace" to each other (Eph 4:29). The phenomena of being "built up" by the experience of "grace" is the phenomena to which people often refer when they speak of high self-esteem. This label for the phenomena may be confusing for some people, but we must not allow this confusion to restrain our commitment to the reality to which being "built up" refers.

An acceptance of the phenomena of high self-esteem as virtuous, then, need not rest on the defense of a particular understanding of ''self'' or of ''esteem''. The phenomena to which most people intend to refer when they use the term "high self-esteem" can be assessed ethically by its similarity to humility and by reference to virtues such as empathy, contentment, honesty, courage and grace. As long as the phenomena of self-reference is the focus for discussion, there is a clear biblical mandate for encouraging the development of high self-esteem.

A comparison of different forms of self reference

high self-esteem

arrogance

Both seem at first to be "positive" forms of self reference

humility

low self esteem

Both seem at first to be "negative" forms of self reference

People whose self-reference is characterized by either high self-esteem or humility share the following:

1) a capacity for empathy. a non-egocentric focus for life.

2) contentment, non-comparative frame of reference

3) honesty, open to information about self

4) courage, ability to invest in intimacy in spite of fears

5) grace. produced by unconditional love

People whose self reference is characterized by either arrogance or low self-esteem share the following:

1) lack of empathy, egocentric focus for life.

2) anxiety and structured in comparisons

3) closed to information about self

4) fear in relationships

5) produced by contingent love