

Whose responsibility is it to develop the self? Who is going to make the difference? Who will confront the tough realities of life? Who will rise to better his economic and social condition? Who will choose to be happy and make others happy? Who will dream and dare to make the dreams come true? Who will cooperate with others in worthwhile endeavors? Who will pray? Who will forgive? Who will apologize and mend fences? Who will listen? Who will lend a helping hand?

It is the “I”, the “self” that has to perform. The “I” came to this world; the “I” will die to this life; and the “I” will do whatever it takes, in the interval between birth and death – no matter how long this time happens to be! There is no escaping the “self”.

The realization that it is you, and no one else, that must initiate all thoughts and actions, is what calls for the “building self”. What does it take? Where do you begin? How about starting with “self” awareness!

To understand the self is to understand the universe. It is a very tall order. Whenever I ask participants in workshops: “Do you know yourself?” the typical reply is a spontaneous “yes!” if you think in the same way about yourself – beware, your mind is shut.

Know, that you don’t know yourself to the extent you think. It is very likely that your current understanding of yourself is superficial. I am aware that you will find accepting this proposition difficult. You are not alone. In fact, you may be in a state of what is best known as “denial” – a kind of invisible shell that rejects any idea which threatens your own concept of “self”.

Consider some extracts from a book, *The Fountainhead* by Ms Ayn Rand:

“The way people generally live today, have no self. They live within others. In what act or thought of his has there ever been a self? What was his aim in life? Greatness – in other people’s eyes. Fame, admiration, envy – all that which comes from others. Others dictated his convictions, which he did not hold, but he was satisfied that others believed he held them. Others were his motive power and his prime concern. He didn’t want to be great, but to be thought great. He didn’t want to build, but to be admired as a builder. He borrowed from others in order to make an impression on others. There’s your actual selflessness. It is his ego he has betrayed and given up. But everybody calls him selfish.”

Ms Rand asks, “Isn’t this pattern at the root of every despicable action? Not selfishness, but precisely the absence of a self?”

“Look at them. The man who cheats and lies, but [tries to] preserve a respectable front. He knows himself to be dishonest, but others think he is honest and he derives his self-respect from that, second-hand. The man who takes credit for an achievement which is not his own. He knows himself to be a mediocre, but he’s great in the eyes of others. The frustrated wretch who

professes love for the inferior and clings to those less endowed, in order to establish his own superiority by comparison.”

“The man whose sole aim is to make money. Now I don’t see anything evil in a desire to make money. But money is only a means to some end. If a man wants it for a personal purpose – to invest in his industry, to create, to study, to travel, to enjoy luxury – he’s completely moral.”.... Aren’t they [those who claim selflessness] all acting on a selfish motive – to be noticed, liked, admired? – by others, at the price of their own self-respect. In the realm of greatest importance – the realm of values, of judgment, of spirit, of thought – they place others above self, in the exact manner which altruism demands. A truly “selfish” man cannot be affected by the approval of others. He doesn’t need it.”

“It is so easy to run to others. It is so hard to stand on one’s own record. You can fake virtue for an audience. You can’t fake it in your own eyes. Your ego is the strictest judge. They run from it. They spend their lives running. It’s easier to donate a few thousand to charity and think oneself noble than to base self-respect on personal standards of personal achievement. It is simple to seek substitutes for competence – such easy substitutes: love, charm, kindness, charity. But there is no substitute for competence.”

This extract is meant to get you thinking about who you are. Why you behave the way you do? Why you seek security outside of yourself? Think for a moment. Look at all the investments you make: buying a house, a car, saving money in a bank, putting money in defense savings certificates, gold, stocks and shares – all with the expectation of a decent return and having peace of mind from knowing that it is “secure”. Ask yourself: what is safe? You know that you are the instrument through which everything happens, yet you have greater confidence in people and institutions outside of yourself. Why?

Building self is a process which begins with believing in yourself, caring for yourself, knowing that you have infinite potential. It also means being aware of others and knowing that we are all different. We all have preferred habits of thought that influence how we make decisions and interact with others. Discover your uniqueness by asking yourself, what you do well? Once you have the answer, maximize on it.

Confront your “self” because it is your job to become and achieve whatever you desire!
