

Letter from Steve to Ewen, Excerpt

I had an interesting internal dialogue with myself the other day on the ego. As you may imagine, men walk around here like they are ready to chew bars of steel and spit out nails. Then you have the short, small framed men who understandablyglom onto the group of larger men and/or gang members. Once they feel a part of the group they've attached themselves to, it's as if they've grown half a meter and gained 70-90 kilos. There is one such young man I know, who we will simply call "Fred." Our interaction is infrequent because we have differing objectives while in prison. I admit that it would only be a guess, but I think that he's merely trying to get through this experience as safely as possible. I walk around here amiably and open to conversing with most people. I honestly can't say for certain, but my experience leads me to believe this is the reason for his apparently low opinion of me.

Anyway, he is doing something in a manner which is more difficult than it has to be. I consider the fruitfulness of offering up an easier method as I watch him completing his task. I figure, 'What the heck, let's give it a shot.' The young man sadly proves my suspicions correct. His remark that, "It's just mopping, Dude," was simply dripping with contempt. I'm grateful for my practice because the internal dialogue began immediately, and I didn't just react with an equally snide remark myself.

"Who is he offending here?"

"No one."

"So what are these feelings being experienced?"

"They are irritation and hurt."

"What are the causes of these?"

"The still-held belief in an illusory ego is the cause. Because 'I' don't feel like he valued me as a person, or 'my' suggestion to give it, at least, a second of consideration.

"Does his opinion of 'you' devalue you as a person?"

"No."

"Instead of irritation, shouldn't you cultivate understanding and well-being towards Fred?" "Yes!"

Fred will likely never learn of this internal dialogue, or ever come to understand, or see the value in why I am the person I am. But he helped me that day without knowing it, so I cultivate gratitude and compassion towards him.