

FLATTERY

Imitation is the sincerest of flattery. Charles Caleb Colton (and so is plagiarism.)

Among all the diseases of the mind there is not one epidemical or more pernicious than the love of flattery. Sir Richard Steele

Self-love is the greatest of all flatterers. La Rochefoucauld.

Flattery corrupts both the receiver and the giver. Edmund Burke

Mediocre minds usually dismiss anything which reaches beyond their own understanding. La Rochefoucauld.

Erb and Sen were having their usual daily session via a rather sophisticated electronic device. The one thing they had in common was that they were both space explorers but from two vastly different worlds. The major purpose of their meetings was to keep each other abreast of anything new, odd or strange they had come across. They rarely visited the same realm of space so that there was always something novel that would be revealed. On this particular occasion they found that they had both stumbled on the same planet, one occupied by sentient life forms. Erb made the following commentary to Sen.

“The beings of this planet are peculiar indeed. They have a slogan that is mostly false but has some verity to it. “All Humans are born equal.” This is a most amusing adage for the inhabitants of this planet. After all, they are predominantly equal in their mediocrity, ignorance, inability to analyze and synthesize, easily influenced by nonsensical propaganda, slogans and ridiculous songs and dances, as well as just being plain stupid.

Yet they do have a redeeming trait. Many with superior talents are frequently placed on a pedestal and receive high honours. Unfortunately, it is also true that many who are highly placed do not merit their accolades but received them because of their ancestry or from chicanery on their part. Heads of government and state are very often prime examples. There is an old saying that fits this scenario. “In our society, it is not the cream that rises to the top but the crud.” However, the meritorious elite when recognized, or the phonies, are given titles, prizes, places of high tribute and indulged with a reverence that is often unsolicited. In any case, this is nothing more than a form of flattery which really should not be encouraged.

Why do these insipid beings involve themselves in such shenanigans? Perhaps it is because they wish to identify themselves with those whom they believe are heroic. In other words they may be doing nothing more than flattering themselves.”

After Sen had been listening intently. He then offered his thoughts.

“Erb, I think that your comments are valid but too sketchy. Let me make the following observations.

First of all, false compliments, in others words flattery, is so prevalent amongst these beings that hardly a verbal, written, or a painting does not contain some such nonsense. It is nearly impossible to avoid the clichés containing phrases such as ‘What a beautiful dress you have on; You look terrific. Did you lose weight?’ Your oration was simply marvellous; The décor in your home is stunning; You are the best.’ This type of drivel is common. Unfortunately it even occurs with: “I completely agree with your argument with some minor caveats; Your theory merits much consideration.” I could go on with many more examples. Perhaps the most maudlin example is during the courting of hopefully one’s future mate. It is likely that the mock compliments thus paid are the primary reason why over half of the resulting matrimones fail.

The most telling example of flattery is how these beings approach their Deity, someone whom they believe is responsible for the creation of everything, who is all powerful and knowing. First, they utilize a great deal of their economic assets to construct huge and elaborate edifices called temples, in which they convene to contact their God. This communication is regularly in the form of pleas called prayers. This consists habitually of expressing their view that the Deity is the greatest and is responsible for all that is benevolent, exalted and is also most merciful. This is usually followed by a plea for well-being both economic and health. It is as if this God, if one such exists, cannot see through their duplicity and hypocrisy. They continue along these lines despite some horrible natural disasters and conflicts which they frequently deem as punishment for their sins.

All this raises an interesting question for which currently we have no answer. Is the source of this flattery affliction genetic or is it caused by some environmental pathogen that attacks their nervous system, bypassing their immunity organization? If it is the former, there appears to be nothing we can do about it since we are not permitted to alter the physiognomy of any species we encounter. If the latter, then our concern is whether it is contagious. After all, we were in direct contact with them during our sojourn on their planet.”

Erb immediately replied. “We are a superior species, so that our ability to fight off any such pathogen is unquestioned. Thus there is no way we can become afflicted with the flattery malady. Sen, you are one of the most able beings I have ever encountered, both physically and mentally.”

“And you Erb are equally untouchable. I have never met anyone like you, despite the fact that all our communications have and will continue to be electronic.”

Jack Basuk (Who never flatters Nikki.)

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