

Ask Dr. Robertson 9 — The Age of Psychology, Low Self-Esteem, Crazy Making, Schizophrenia, Racism, and Religious Fundamentalism



Scott Douglas Jacobsen in Question Time

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Dr. Lloyd Hawkeye Robertson is a Registered Doctoral Psychologist with expertise in Counselling Psychology, Educational Psychology, and Human Resource Development. He earned qualifications in Social Work too. Duly note, he has five postsecondary degrees, of which 3 are undergraduate level. His research interests include memes as applied to self-knowledge, the evolution of religion and spirituality, the aboriginal self's structure, residential school syndrome, prior learning recognition and assessment, and the treatment of attention deficit disorder and suicide ideation. In addition, he works in anxiety and trauma, addictions, and psycho-educational assessment, and relationship, family, and group counselling.

Here we talk about psychology, low self-esteem, crazy, and more.

Listing of previous sessions with links at the end of the interview.

Scott Douglas Jacobsen: In “[The Age of Psychology](#),” you describe, in brief, the ways in which psychology is utilized in the modern world. The “[Epidemic of Low Self-Esteem](#)” described how this age of psychology can be used for the positive.

“[Crazy Making in Our Communities](#)” talks about the ways in which individuals can go wrong, act strangely, or malfunction depending on the frame, as in the case of [schizophrenia](#).

“[From Lloydminster to Leningrad](#)” spoke to the manifestations of the social illness of racism reflected in certain psychologies, which seems to reflect [religious fundamentalism](#).

If we look to treat extreme mental or social illnesses, how can the age of psychology, moving forward, help with their treatment — either reduction or even eventual elimination?

Humanist Canada Vice-President Dr. Lloyd Hawkeye Robertson: Scott, you honour me by referencing articles I wrote for the now defunct weekly newspaper, *The Northerner*, 20 years ago. The main theme of *The Age of Psychology* seems to be even more apropos today. As a heuristic, if you read something, don't learn anything new, but feel angry, chances are someone has been pushing your psychological buttons to get you to do something. My views on self-esteem have broadened substantially since I wrote *Epidemic*. I continue to recommend that parents spend considerably more time finding what is good and positive about their children than the negative; however, I believe that the self-esteem movement has gone too far producing people who overestimate their abilities while feeling entitled to the benefits that come with greater achievement. Studies comparing U.S. American and Japanese high school students, for example, have found that the U.S. students have higher self-esteem as related to their abilities in mathematics but their math achievement is substantially lower. Yes, we need to praise people, particularly for effort, but they also need to be grounded in reality. I am sorry, but we cannot all be whatever we want to be, we each have limitations, and in any case it requires work to accomplish that which is worthwhile. Our reluctance to give negative feedback has resulted in people with fragile egos who cannot handle criticism and have learned to treat negative feedback as “traumatizing.”

I was fascinated in the *Lloydminster to Leningrad* article to observe two people separated by 50 years and 7,000 kilometres who held identical racist views about Jews. Efforts to have them question their biases with facts just led to a series of rationalizations, often based on conspiracy theories, to explain away those facts. Those mechanisms are also used by the religious fundamentalists described in the article of that name. In his book *The Deadly Doctrine* Canadian psychologist and humanist Wendell Watters described religion as a kind of mental illness and in this he is in the company of Sigmund Freud who viewed religion as a kind of mass hysteria.

All of this speaks to my favourite article you referenced, *Crazy Making*. What is “crazy?” It is not being in touch with reality. The antidote is to teach reality testing skills based on natural rather than supernatural explanations using the rational and scientific skills honed in the Enlightenment. These skills need to be coupled with the belief that one can always choose courses of action that will make one’s future better instead of worse. This is the positive in self-esteem. But *Crazy Making* goes beyond this simple analysis. Communities, even societies, “make crazy” selected people they choose to demonize. The people could be Jews, Muslims, right-wingers, left-wingers, men or any other identifiable group viewed as “toxic” in some way. The 1960s rock band Jethro Tull, in their song *Aqualung*, sang of demonizing the homeless as a way of making the majority feel good about themselves. As a humanist, I don’t believe in demons. I believe people are essentially good and I agree with something Jordan Peterson said that we should approach every encounter with the attitude that here is a human being who knows something I do not yet know. I think that if we hold our own beliefs to be tentative dependent on further evidence, and that the people holding contrary beliefs are, nonetheless, good in their intentions, that we will have done a lot to improve mental health in the world.

Jacobsen: Thank you for the opportunity and your time, Dr. Robertson, again.

Robertson: Thank you for this opportunity to go down memory lane, Scott. I hope my reflections will help others to also reflect, each in their own way. The ability to reflect is in effect, the ability to reprogram ourselves, and that is a key part of what it means to be human.

For previous sessions, please see: [Ask Dr. Robertson 1 — Counselling and Psychology](#), [Ask Dr. Robertson 2 — Psychotherapy](#), [Ask Dr. Robertson 3 — Social and Psychological Sciences Gone Wrong](#), [Ask Dr. Robertson 4 — Just You and Me, One-on-One Counselling](#), [Ask Dr. Robertson 5 — Self-Actualization, Boys, and Young Males: Solution:Problem::Hammer:Nail](#), [Ask Dr. Robertson 6 — It’s All About Me, Me, Meme, and the Self: From First Nations to Second Nations, Building Third Culture Counselling](#), *and* [Ask Dr. Robertson \(and Teela\) 7 — Elate, Hawkeye on Roberts: A Happy Counselling Psychology Family Affair](#), *and* [Ask Dr. Robertson 8 — A Social Work Betrayal of Male](#).

Image Credit: Dr. Lloyd Hawkeye Robertson.

Scott Douglas Jacobsen founded *In-Sight: Independent Interview-Based Journal* and *In-Sight Publishing*. He authored/co-authored some **e-books**, free or low-cost. If you want to contact Scott: Scott.D.Jacobsen@Gmail.com.