



The Self on the Shelf: Recovery Books and the Good Life

Gary Greenberg

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This book examines the cultural and philosophical determinants of popular "recovery" books. Greenberg argues that this literature can be read as documents of the prevailing understanding of the self in American society. The construction of the self promoted by recovery literature is seen as a nihilistic one insofar as it denies the significance of what continental philosophy calls the Other. In this sense the self-help books are correct in their assertion that we have lost sight of how to love, but their proposed solution shows up as a recapitulation and strengthening of the conditions that gave rise to the situation in the first place. Greenberg's critique provides a commentary on the difficulties that face our culture in achieving any sense of meaningful community, and on the way that this problem surfaces in a highly popular discourse.

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