

Tying Yourself to Identity is Foolish

I think it is natural to tie your ego into your characteristics in a wholistic way. It is also good to like aspects about your being that you think are productive to your goals and values. That being said, I think it an absolute disaster to tie your ego into individual or small groups of characteristics you hold. This is why I am so against “identity.”

We oversimplify ourselves and construct false narratives when we identify ourselves by our characteristics. We are complex beings with complex thoughts, emotions, interests and desires. Me being a “man” as a characteristic or something I happen to be is merely a description of a part of me. Once I take “man” as an identity, I start thinking about my thoughts, desires, emotions and interests to how men “ought” to consider these things. I merely simplify and stifle myself by taking this as identity rather than a characteristic.

When we start finding identity in characteristics we start “othering” people who don’t share identities and we start factionalizing ourselves within our culture. We naturally want to be a part of a group and we look for shared experience. When we don’t look towards identity, but hold empathy for others, we are able to cast a wide net of shared experience with people, in general, and see that most everyone has the same emotional palette and our shared experience doesn’t get narrowed down to people who merely share a specific identity.

People look for identity when they are lost. They are looking for a home, for a place where they belong and for a place where they can find meaning. The roots of these feelings are tribal and familial through evolution. Most people who have searched for identities are lost, depressed or suffer mental illness. However, today, it is being more widely encouraged. Rather than identifying and resolving your anxieties, society is merely pushing for identity tribalism and this can often solve some symptoms in the short run. Most people who find an identity solve nothing about their underlying anxieties and after a short period of time they reemerge ... since their problem never was a lack of identity.

Keep in mind that your characteristics are real, but your identity is contrived. You are you. You are not your name, race, family, religion, philosophy, etc. You will never fully know you, leave yourself open to be surprised and amenable to change. Don’t stifle and limit yourself by tying yourself to inflexible characteristics (aka identity).