

Identity and Social Constructs

Younger than 10 years old, people generally don't consider most realms of identity. Some issues regarding sex are considered since children tend to naturally gravitate towards similar interests and sex often weighs heavily on childhood interests.

Once we hit puberty, we become a new type of social creature. We try to discover where we belong, who we are, where/who is our tribe, what ought we desire in life, how will we get what we desire in life, etc. To this ends we experiment, explore and try to carve out a niche for ourselves in the world. For some people this seems relatively simple, while for others it seems such a monumental struggle that can end with suicide.

Often a girl will try out being sexy, cute, quirky, tomboy, and a myriad of other attributes to find out what can stick and work productively at getting attention and finding a sense of belonging. However, that is just one small aspect. The same girl will explore the role she plays to her peers, her family, and every other realm of life. Is she an intellectual? Is she a jock? Is she an artist? Is she sweet? Is she a rebel? All questions and attributes the person is seeking out.

While this search is natural and necessary, it is also total bullshit.

This pubescent (and post-pubescent) search for identity is a negotiation of individual desires with artificial social constructs. The individual must live in society and they need an avenue to build their lives. This means they must negotiate with these social constructs to fulfill their desires. To fully live outside of these constructs is to live outside of society. We must all learn to navigate these waters.

One of the worst things about our journey in this realm is that we are often force into atmosphere with rigid hierarchies, forced association and general inflexibility. This makes it so pressure is high and the consequences seem dire. This makes identity seem so incredibly important, rigid and dire ... when it doesn't have to be.

All identities are bullshit. They are artificial constructs that we are using. Ideally we can use them productively, and ideally they can be flexible, forgiving, and voluntary. As we age and exit forced atmospheres usually the social pressures lift and our identities become less important. We choose our associations and our identities become flexible and much less meaningful. Hopefully, we start seeing identity merely as an artificially means of accomplishing our desires rather than an actual thing we must conform ourselves to. Of course, it doesn't happen this way for everyone.

I often tell people I happen to be male, but I don't feel like a man. When I say this I always get a huge look of surprise as they almost anticipate me revealing the new identity I've

been hiding this whole time. I let them down when I tell them that “man” isn’t a feeling. No matter what I feel I will be a biological male. No matter what I feel, the social construct of “man” will be artificial and bullshit.

I’m not trying to proclaim the end of identity. I’m trying to point out the artificial nature of identity. I advocate a world of voluntary association, role flexibility and individualism where we use identity merely as a flexible description rather than a pigeon hole. I don’t feel like a man because I would have to concretize what a man feels like and I have no desire to pigeon hole myself or anyone else. Biological male means something. The identity of man means nothing.

I pity most people who get lost in identity. These are people pigeonholing themselves. These are people who can’t accept themselves. These are people who can’t negotiate who they are and how they feel with society and so they abandon themselves and opt to become an artificial construct.

At points in our lives we all have felt lost without identity. However, when we have been content with our social lives and liked ourselves most of us have been able to look at identity as a meaningless construct. Identity is only meaningful for someone who is lost. It is a false map that leads you to the wrong destination.