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Who Am I – And why are the others so different? –
by Livia Boerner

Identity! A great and sounding word with an essential meaning, but often difficult to explain, when you have to talk about yourself. Especially young people who are on the way from childhood to adulthood have problems to really forge an identity for themselves. In this passage of life, the most important thing is to find out what you want to be and who you are. Often, it seems very hard, and of course it is not easy to decide on something which matters to your future, and so I would like to discuss this problem in my essay.

Sometimes when I am walking down the street and looking at a group of teenagers hanging around, I start to think of different ways to express youth. I have never thought of myself as very narrow-minded or square but I would probably never get a tattoo or a body piercing to tell the world and especially my parents that I am a rebel. Well, this text is not meant to examine my personal view, this shall be an example of the question about why others are so different'. Why do we judge others by their appearance, why do we dare to think we know about what happens in their heads? I suppose this is our method to get a better idea of ourselves. Classifying others, ranking their personalities just to clarify approximately where we want to see ourselves. I guess this is how it works.

So why do we have to have a clear pattern of our identity? You can find the answer to that when you take a closer look at everyone's everyday life. It starts in school when you have to decide for example whether you choose a third foreign language or whether you take more science classes instead. Many pupils justify their choice by a simple 'Well, I'm rather the science-type' or the other way round. That is how they consolidate their own position and simultaneously tighten their identity. Afterwards, when teenagers have to choose their way of living, whether they want to go to college or to university, the real question of 'Who Am I?' becomes more concentrated.

Some people see themselves as very creative and become artists. Others love working with animals and start a career in that domain. Others in turn relate to famous politicians and accordingly major in that subject. But school and your job are not the only situations in which you decide which type you are. If the person you fell in love with tells you he fancies for example the rather rebellious type, which you are apparently not, maybe you have to think about who you really are again. There are a lot of examples, and so many of these situations do come up in your adolescence. Thus it is evident why particularly teenagers have to face the issue of finding an identity.

When, eventually, young people come to this point, what do they find out? I have the impression that nobody manages to get a clearly structured idea of the separate identity, of course not, because every human being is far too complicated.

However, the point is that everybody thinks of him- or herself as kind of special. It may sound self-centred, but in reality everyone is made up of a body and a brain, you always see yourself as someone different from the rest. This does make sense, because if we did not have various characters, just everything would be unbearably boring. And is it not the uniqueness that renders human beings so pulsating?

Subsequent to this diagnosis, an interesting question arises: 'If everybody goes against the tide, what, after all, is actually individuality?' Of course you think you are special! Needless to say, everyone is! You are just as naïve as everyone else - ?!

This is no amiable evidence, no kind thing to say and nothing likeable to hear. And at the same time it is not as simple as that! To explain, let us take a look at the 'floating with the tide'-statement. Imagine all the little fish that personify our identities. If they all swim against the stream, its direction changes, and we are floating in the 'against the stream'-stream. Then, again, you can turn around and face the tide. And in addition to that, there are more than these two directions, it is possible as well to make leeway, just to drift a bit to the right or to the left and suddenly you find your own direction, your personal stream.

In almost the same manner this works for your own identity. Everyone is different, and this in a different way.

So, in the end there is this one question left – 'Who Am I?' This search of identity cannot be answered with certain attributes, it is impossible to specify a human character like an object. The only way to learn more about people is to listen carefully to what they say and to consider the

decisions they make. By the way, you too can try to find out more about yourself, by reconsidering choices, contemplating them critically and by thinking again about things you said rashly. Because especially these unconscious decisions that your brain made automatically without looking at the advantages and disadvantages are traces of your character. This can make people regret, a feeling that is not too comfortable. But this is okay because seeing mistakes we made is one of the very rare possibilities to change your identity in a good way, so you like it better afterwards. Our identity is always changing. Every moment you try to fit your personality into your model of imagination. I do not think it will ever be really perfect, but the important thing is to be happy anyway. To love you and your, you have to admit, imperfect identity. To love the thought of your future, to take whatever might come, knowing it will only help you progress.

So here you are. Try to accept you perfect imperfectness, always look back and look forward. Try.