

The Social Challenges Hindering Non-Distinction

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Non-distinction, as I describe it, is the idea of complete uniformity with the self and the external world. Complete non-distinction is a state-of-being where one has removed the conceptual boundary between self and the outside world. In my experience and for many others, nothing beats this state-of-being. It's a feeling of complete oneness with the world. In this state, you cannot help but feel love for all that is, your worst enemy and the candy wrapper alike.

Lately, what I have been struggling to understand is how conceptions of identity play a role in achieving a state of non-distinction. What happens when an individual anchors their concept of who they are - the self - in characteristics that society emphasizes, like race, ethnicity, sex and gender? It may become difficult or even impossible to reach states of non-distinction when grounded in conceptions of self-identity. An individual never achieves complete freedom if they cannot let go of who they are perceived to be; awareness of one's self-identity is a mental prison.

However, this is where the issue gets tricky. I do think self-identity has value. Acceptance of one's own conceptual identity, although it is social constructed, may serve as a helpful tool for developing the self-love necessary to reach non-distinction at a later time. In other words, conceptions of self-identity may act as a stepping-stone towards non-distinction. Acceptance of one's self-identity allows for self-love, and self-love is necessary in reaching non-distinction.

An overemphasis for the acceptance of self-identity digs individuals into a "mindset that hinders them from achieving non-distinction.

Before I continue there is a subtle differentiation to be made. It's subtle, but it's very important. This is it: acting in accordance with *who you are* is not the same as acting in accordance with the labels that describe you.

To illustrate this differentiation I will use an example a kinder-gardener would understand. Consider the color blue, and the color yellow. These colors are simply blue and yellow. However, when these colors are mixed together, with paint or ink, the color green is made. In our day-to-day activities we don't describe the color green as a mixture of blue and yellow, nor do we even conceptualize that green is the mixture of blue and yellow. Only when we are doing art are

we acknowledging that green is the mixture of blue and yellow. Almost never do we say "wow that green wallpaper sure is a nice blend of blue and yellow".

Similarly, a woman who has a black father and white mother ought not to be described as a mix of black and white, as this will impose a conceptual barrier about who she is on herself. Instead this woman should be described as brown. Otherwise, upon constantly acknowledging that she has black genes and white genes, she may try to conform half the time to a black identity, and the other half of the time to a white identity. In doing so she completely rejects her brown identity.

One might argue that by embracing her blackness and her whiteness she is in fact embracing her brownness. While this might be true to some degree, it doesn't work as effectively as simply embracing her brownness. Furthermore, achieving non-distinction requires embracing who you are with as little conceptual labels as possible.