

The Ethics of Identity

The ETHICS *of IDENTITY*



KWAME ANTHONY APPIAH

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Race, ethnicity, nationality, religion, gender, sexuality: in the past couple of decades, a great deal of attention has been paid to such collective identities. They clamor for recognition and respect, sometimes at the expense of other things we value. But to what extent do "identities" constrain our freedom, our ability to make an individual life, and to what extent do they enable our individuality? In this beautifully written work, renowned philosopher and African Studies scholar Kwame Anthony Appiah draws on thinkers through the ages and across the globe to explore such questions. The Ethics of Identity takes seriously both the claims of individuality--the task of making a life---and the claims of identity, these large and often abstract social categories through which we define ourselves. What sort of life one should lead is a subject that has preoccupied moral and political thinkers from Aristotle to Mill. Here, Appiah develops an account of ethics, in just this venerable sense--but an account that connects moral obligations with collective allegiances, our individuality with our identities. As he observes, the question who we are has always been linked to the question what we are. Adopting a broadly interdisciplinary perspective, Appiah takes aim at the clichs and received ideas amid which talk of identity so often founders. Is "culture" a good? For that matter, does the concept of culture really explain anything? Is diversity of value in itself? Are moral obligations the only kind there are? Has the rhetoric of "human rights" been overstretched? In the end, Appiah's arguments make it harder to think of the world as divided between the West and the Rest; between locals and cosmopolitans; between Us and Them. The result is a new vision of liberal humanism--one that can accommodate the vagaries and variety that make us human.

作者介绍:

夸梅·安东尼·阿皮亚，生于英国伦敦，长于加纳库马西，母亲是艺术史学家、作家，父亲是加纳阿桑特地区的律师、外交官和政治家。夸梅有着混血和跨文化成长背景，认同世界主义的观点。他于英国剑桥大学获得哲学博士学位，曾在康奈尔大学、哈佛大学、耶鲁大学等处任教，现为劳伦斯·S.洛克菲勒大学哲学教授和普林斯顿大学人类价值中心哲学教授。同时他还是文化理论家和小说家，研究领域包括政治和道德理论、语言与思想的哲学、非洲知识史等。2010年他入选《外交政策》杂志全球顶尖思想者榜单，2012年被美国总统奥巴马授予国家人文奖章。代表作有《荣誉法则：道德革命是如何发生的》、《世界主义：陌生人世界里的道德规范》、《在我父亲的房子里：文化哲学里的非洲》、《文化政治学，伦理政治学》等。《认同伦理学》是其2005年的作品。

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评论

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书评

个人主义是自由主义理论蕴含的一部分。自由主义者认为，个人正是我们在道德上需要加以考虑的。他们认为我们应当赋予个人自主选择其生活的权利。但这种个人权利与人在生理和心理上依赖他人这一社会事实如何协调呢？它又如何解释我们往往总是根据我们的社会角色来进行选择这一事...

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