



INDIVIDUALISM IN TODAY'S ERA

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Espousing the full development of the individual and his capabilities, individualism is an ideology that many of us could find both agreeable and desirable for ourselves. We all want to face recognition for our own selves, our individual efforts, and our personal merits.

The seduction of living life by one's own rules is at once exciting as it is interesting. Business enterprises have strived to cash in on the individuality scheme, supporting revolutionary ideas that scream "I am me" at all angles. Even young people are motivated to seek their own corner of the sky and to seize opportunities that will empower them to be themselves. This is all well and good, considering how so many of our own ancestors were "imprisoned" by what had been considered right, just and true. To be able to carve a niche in this world is both beautiful and novel, a feat that anyone would want to succeed at.

However, having your own quirks and enjoying them can sometimes be a challenge. We have been trained from childhood to follow rules; we can't just easily abandon older teachings in order to follow our own calling and dance to our own beat. We have to bow down to tradition in the face of overwhelming change. And in order to prove ourselves, a certain level of individuality must be reached, with no room for the mediocre and the inherently weak. In other words, in order to be recognized for our personal abilities, we must be able to show the world that what sets us apart is clear enough to be seen.

Self-identity can be very difficult to find in these times when teamwork is considered the norm and organizations are deemed effective because of the sheer reality of their existence as groups. We can not strictly play by our own rules; we have others with us to think about. Self-experimentation and creation easily make way for what is deemed popular or conventional, so self-reinvention is considered risky and rebellious, if not downright contemptible.

In a world that thrives on singular accomplishments and lauds joint efforts even more, individuals must prove themselves worthy of accolades and recognitions. Room for error might prove inconsequential at times because there will always be another individual out there better than we are. Although much of the world would be better off with an "I don't care" approach, we have already been oriented about the benefits of universalism from the very beginning. Convention is not quite easy to let go of.

Still, individualists have all the time in the world to support their individualistic philosophies. Just as long as their self-interests do not pose a threat to others in society, then they can go their own way all the time.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

1. Define individualism in your own words. Do you honestly agree with this ideology? Why or why not?
2. What are the risks of individualism? How can the pitfalls of individualism be avoided?
3. Do you believe that all men are created equal? Why or why not?
4. How would you practice individualism?
5. Do research on famous supporters of individualism and their philosophies. Be able to talk about them in class.