

Eckhart tolle: beyond happiness and unhappiness summary

[Sociology](#), [Identity](#)



Response to " Beyond Happiness and Unhappiness" In the essay, " Beyond Happiness and Unhappiness", Eckhart Tolle discusses the individual's attempts to establish and define their identity. According to Eckhart Tolle, " The self is a story that develops in the head, very much like a fictitious creation. Yet it forms the basis of most people's sense of who they are, and that sense, of course, is reinforced by the surrounding world" (6). There are several different aspects that Tolle says can influence a person's view of their identity: society, our family and our past, technology, and religion and philosophy. Eckhart Tolle believes that these aspects cause a person a to view themselves the way they do and that, in turn, prevents humans from achieving the greater intelligence found within everyone, which could save the world. Eckhart Tolle spends the majority of this essay discussing a person's identity, saying that society, our family and our past, technology, and religion and philosophy are big factors and that this is what makes people unhappy with their lives. According to Tolle, this all starts " when your parents tell you what your name is" (6). This label is absorbed by the person and starts their mental concept of who they are. The name " becomes like a basket in which further life experiences are collected" (6). Parents will have an affect on their child's mental identity by what they tell their children. For example, a parent telling their child that they are not good enough will make the child view himself as not good enough. Both the past and the future also play a role in this, with the memories of the past and a mental image of the future causing a person create a mental picture of themselves based on past experiences and based on what they imagine their future to be. Instead of focusing on the Now and who they are now, they are thinking of other times

and creating a false sense of identity. Society's view of someone influences this as well. Tolle mimics a person's thoughts of this when he says, " If people's opinions of me are good [...] then I will have status in society[...] If they think badly of me [then][...] I haven't made it. I'm not good enough" (6). Technological inventions have sometimes had " very dramatic downsides" that have arisen from the madness of the world and drastically skewed humanity's sense of self (7). Religion and Philosophy, according to Tolle, were originally good and had the right ideas, but then " the human mind, with its tendency to conceptualize, obscured the original truth of these teachings" (8) Eckhart Tolle believes that religions of today are total delusion, like people's identities. Tolle's point in all this though, is that these factors make a person have a mental identity of themselves, that is not their true identity. They will be unhappy because they are focusing on a false identity rather than finding who they really are in the Now. Eckhart says that there is " so much more to a human being than thought activity" (7). With this he means that the thoughts and identity we create in our head are nothing compared to the reality of what we really are. Eckhart Tolle believes that " there is so much more intelligence beyond the world of thought" and that humanity must awaken this greater intelligence if it wants to survive (7). He says that because of the " human madness" that has arisen from people's thoughts and the influences all people have, the world is threatened with destroying itself. A change is now taking place, according to Tolle, where this greater intelligence is arising in people, because this has to happen if humanity is to keep existing. To do this, one has to realize that " you are not your thoughts" and that you should observe the contents of your

mind, but not derive a sense of self from them (9). If a person can overcome their mental sense of self, they can make the greater intelligence arise and thus get rid of their "human madness" (9). This would help to restore the sanity and safety of the world. In conclusion, Eckhart Tolle wants to help the world and does so by telling everyone about the influences in their lives and the fact that these influences affect a person's view of their own identity. This sense of self is not a correct one, however, and it makes people unhappy and contributes to the madness of the world. This false sense of self must be overcome, however, because the madness of the world is threatening to destroy the world. Thus, Tolle believes that a change is taking place all over the world. One that will awaken the greater intelligence contained within every person and sanity to the world, thus saving the world.

Works Cited Donoso, Steven. "Beyond Happiness and Unhappiness: An Interview with Spiritual Teacher Eckhart Tolle." *The Sun* July 2002: 4-11.