

# Appiah notes on identity, authenticity, survival

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



SLIDE 2- QUESTIONS OF RECOGNITION ? APPIAH quotes CHARLES TAYLOR, asserting that modern social and political life and very much based off of questions of recognition. In our liberal society, we see recognition as a method to acknowledge individuals and what we perceive to be their identities. We have a notion from "ethics of authenticity" that people have the right to be acknowledged publically as what they already really are. We deny people rights when society tells people to hide something about themselves and pretend to be something they're not, such as being Jewish or gay. Discussion on recognition conflicts with the idea of an individual's authenticity and identity. "If what matters is my individual and authentic self, why is so much contemporary talk of identity about large categories- gender, ethnicity, nationality, race, sexuality- which seem so far from the individual." (149) There is a disconnect between using collective language such as this and the movement for an individual to have a "modern notion of the self".

SLIDE 3- RUBRIC OF IDENTITY APPIAH maintains TAYLOR's defense to this phenomenon, and throughout this essay discusses features of TAYLOR's story under three crucial rubrics- identity, authenticity, and survival. ? Identities whose recognition TAYLOR discusses are what we call collective social identities, such as religion, gender, ethnicity, race, and sexuality. APPIAH says these identities are somewhat heterogeneous or diverse because they matter differently to people who subscribe to them in different ways, but these are the major collective identities that demand recognition in North America. He uses the example of religion or of sexuality- both of which he says matter differently to different people and are experienced in different ways at various stages of life. Connection between a person's

individual identity, which is the focus of TAYLORS discussion, and these collective identities: each persons identity is seen as having two major dimensions. •There is a collective dimension- intersection of collective identities •Also a personal dimension- consisting of other socially or morally important features, such as charm, intelligence, wit, that are not the basis of forms of collective identity (people who have these identities don't form a social group)

SLIDE 4- RUBRIC OF AUTHENTICITY Uses this rubric to acknowledge the importance and connection between the two personal and collective identities oUses quote of TAYLOR to show the " ideal of authenticity", " there is a certain way of being that is my way. I am called upon to live my life in this way.. if I am not true to myself, I miss the point of my life. oTAYLOR justifies the politics of recognition, maintaining the oppositional aspects to authenticity that would complicate the picture because it focuses too sharply on the difference between the two levels of authenticity that the contemporary politics of recognition combine oAPPHIAT says TAYLOR/ HERDERS way of framing the issue doesn't pay enough attention to the connection between the originality of people and nations> today the individual identity, which screams out for recognition, is likely to have what HERDER would have seen as a national identity as a component of its collective dimension. APPHIAT says being an African American is part of the authentic self he seeks to express. It is partly because he wants to express his self that he seeks recognition of an African American identity.

- Conflicts with TRILLING in this context because recognition as an African American means social acknowledgement of that collective identity, which

requires both recognizing its existence and actually demonstrating respect for it.

If in seeing himself as African American, APPHIAT resists white norms, mainstream American conventions, the racism of white culture, why would he ever seek recognition from others who are white? Irony in the ways in which this "bohemian ideal" leads authenticity to require us to reject many components of our society. Secondly, another problem with the bohemian ideal has components of errors of philosophical anthropology. • It fails to see what TAYLOR recognizes as the way in which the self is dialogically constituted. Rhetoric of authenticity suggests not only that you have a way of being that is all your own, but in that developing it, you must fight against the family, organized religion, society, the school, and the state- all of the forces of convention > this point is wrong in that: • It is in dialogue with others understandings of who you are that develops a concept of your own identity, but also because identity is created through concepts and practices made available to a person by religion, society, school, family and the state. Dialogue shapes the identity a person develops as they grow up and what TAYLOR calls "language in a broad sense" Overall, APPHIAT claims that in every identity, there is a broader context that allows for a space in the other. He claims for example, African American identity is centrally shaped by American Society and its institutions, and it can't be seen as solely constructed within African-American communities. He claims a third problem with the standard framing of authenticity is essentialism, which seems inherent in the way questions of authenticity are normally posed.

After romanticism, the idea that the self is something that one creates so that “ every life should be a work of art this is his or her own greatest creation”. Authenticity in politics should not be considered essentialist or monological. ? APPHIAT supposes that TAYLOR is content with the collective identities and this might be why he is less likely to make concessions to them. SLIDE 5- SURVIVAL RUBRIC ? TAYLOR argues that pluralism in societies will require us to modify procedural liberalism.

HE agrees that we should not accept the insistence on the uniform application of rules without exception and the suspicion of collective goals. We should not accept the insistence without the suspicion. There can be legit goals that would give up proceduralism. ? APPAHIAT acknowledges Taylors discussion of collective goals in multicultural states, but moves the focus on to say that the collective goals of society shouldn't be that the language or practice of a culture is eventually still happening, but that there should be a desire for the language and practice to be moved on from one generation to the next.

EXAMPLE- Canada paying a group of unrelated people on an island in the south pacific to carry on French Canadian culture- this doesn't meet the need. ? In addition, there needs to be a goal to respecting the autonomy of future individuals. Sometimes children resist to practices that theyre families uphold, such as arranged marriages. In this case, the ethical principles of equal dignity that underlie liberal thinking seem to be against allowing parents to maintain their personal practices because we care about the autonomy of the children. If we create a culture that our descendants will want to hold on to- our culture will survive in them. He says we have to help

children make themselves, and we have to do so according to our values because children do not begin with values of their own. He also claims that we must both appeal to and transmit values more substantial than a respect for liberal procedures. Education is run by government institutions on purpose for creating collective goals in social reproduction. APPHIAT agrees with TAYLORS objections to pure proceduralism because of social reproduction. SLIDE 6- CONCLUSION Large collective identities that call for recognition come with notions of how a proper person of that kind behaves- there isn't one way that a group should behave, but there are modes of behavior. These notions provide loose norms and models which play a role in shaping the life of those who make these collective identities central to their individual identities. Collective identities provide "scripts" which are narratives that people can use in shaping their life plans and stories. In telling a persons story, how a person fits into the wider story of various collectivities is important.

Many identities fit each individual story into a larger narrative. Today, it is widely agreed upon that insults to collective or individual identities are seriously wrong. Ethics of authenticity requires us to express who we really are, they further demands recognition in social life. Because there is no reason to treat people of identities badly, there should be cultural work to resist the stereotypes, to challenge insults, and to lift restrictions. In order to construct a life with dignity, take the collective identities and construct positive life scripts instead