



Who Am I?

I find it difficult to write about myself. The whole exercise is unusually exhausting, and I'm constantly fighting the urge delete everything and start from scratch. I believe an accurate biography would be a dialog between my own narrative and the narrative of others, and so pretending that I am the sole author feels disingenuous. My own biases warp reality, and besides, even from a more conventional perspective my interpretation of self is not a static object. It is generated from the transitory thoughts of bus rides and small walks, and from my constantly changing set of values. My own conception of who I am has dramatically changed even in the last few years, and so writing a biography imposes a level of permanence that I am not entirely comfortable with.

It seems the purpose of an essay like this is to self-categorize, to say "I am an artist" or "I am an intellectual" or "I am someone who loves my family," and I know this because of "anecdote x" with "evidence y," but my brain resists these paradigms. The benefit of this mode of thinking is that it can help in creating a feedback loop of growth. For example, when I was young I thought of myself as an artist. Whenever I had a spare moment, I would draw, and the positive reaction from teachers and peers reinforced my behavior. While this mode of thinking is useful for the chaotic mind of a child, the psychological and emotional infrastructure required to maintain it is complicated and indirect. In contrast to the positive feedback of creating artwork, my initial struggle with

the composition became a deterrent that I could have overcome, but I didn't think I had the natural talent of a writer.

It's all too easy to create false limitations on our identities by adhering to imposed psychological paradigms instead of simply acting on our ideals. I've known many people who lament to me that they wish they could draw, but they just aren't artistic. The problem is that if someone actually practiced for fifteen minutes a day, then they would become an artist, but because they initially dismiss the value of that work, they never get to see who they could have become. Instead we should identify who we want to be and work towards that goal prior to defining ourselves.

Whether we realize it or not, our identities fluctuate with the conditions of our minds and our lives, and I believe that this is a good thing. The impermanence of it allows us to forgive ourselves for our past shortcomings and grow beyond them. Instead of getting paralyzed by thoughts of who we are or who we could be, we should just act.