"Ethics, Identity, and Education: A Levinasian Perspective."

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“Identity would seem to be the garment with which one covers the nakedness of the self.” --James Baldwin.

A person’s identity is one of thorniest issues of our time. Our politics, our education, our daily activities are all tinged with identity questions. Baldwin says we cover our nakedness with our identities. What does he mean by this and what is this identity we fashion? We can understand identity in three dimensions. Identity is who a person sees her/himself as being in his/her many capacities and attributes. This intersects with how others assign us an identity which affects how we live in society. Thus, identity becomes a daily negotiation of the collision between our inner visions of self and society’s outer visions of who we are and who we can become.

In this talk I will present Emmanuel Levinas’ thinking on how each of us crafts an identity covering our nakedness (what Levinas calls our infinite possibilities), as well as how each of us has a common motivation for crafting a self, live in relation to others who are also crafting identities, and come to live in an ethical manner of responsibility and care for each other. We will also discuss implications for our education projects.

About the Speaker