

Identity and Ideology

PART

1

*Trying to define yourself is like
trying to bite your own teeth.*

—Alan Watts



Pablo Picasso, Jacqueline Rocque (1954), oil and charcoal on canvas, Picasso Estate. © Pablo Picasso Estate / SODRAC (2009)

*Only you can be
yourself; no one else is
qualified for the job.*

—anonymous,
“Bits and Pieces”



Pablo Picasso, Jacqueline Rocque (1954), oil and charcoal on canvas, Private Collection. © Pablo Picasso Estate / SODRAC (2009)



Pablo Picasso, Jacqueline (1960), oil on canvas, Private Collection. © Pablo Picasso Estate / SODRAC (2009)

Postscript: Jacqueline Rocque was Picasso's model who married him when he was 79 and she was 37.

Each of the works shown here was painted by Pablo Picasso (1881–1973), a famous European artist of the 20th century. Each work is also a portrait of a woman named Jacqueline Rocque. Each painting tries to capture the essential quality of this woman—her identity. Picasso’s works often present far more than a mere photo-like image of his subjects, so you may be able to guess at some of the qualities of Madame Rocque.

Who was this person? What kind of person was she? What were her beliefs and her values? Interestingly, our guesses about Madame Rocque—the kind of person she was, how she felt about her life, and her place in the world—would probably reveal as much about ourselves as about her.

If we see a confident woman, at peace with herself and comfortable with her role in life, does that reflect our own comfort and sense of hope? If we see a confused person, lonely, unhappy, or fragmented in some way, does that reflect our own loneliness and confusion? In any case, we can agree that everyone recognizes a fellow human in the paintings—a person with an identity. Whether we think very much about it or not, we also have an identity, and this identity is both the face we present to the world and also the filter through which we see the world.

Visit the Learn Alberta site www.LearnAlberta.ca and click on the *Perspectives on Ideology* learning object for fully interactive learning scenarios entitled ExCite (Exploring Citizenship). These scenarios related to issues and concepts in the Student Resource enhance learning.



This book is called *Perspectives on Ideology*. It rests on the notion that our identity is closely related to how we see the world and our beliefs and values about the world around us—our ideology. The Key Issue for this course is ***To what extent should we embrace an ideology?*** Part 1 of this book begins to answer this question with a study of identity. Who am I? What factors helped to make me who I am? To what extent am I a product of my environment, family, language, gender, culture, religion, spirituality, and nation? How have all these factors influenced how I see myself and how I see the world? How might my identity influence me towards certain ways of responding to, and acting in, the world?

The Related Issue for Part 1, ***To what extent should ideology be the foundation of identity?*** explores the relationship between identity and ideology and examines how our identity may cause us to favour the general ideological positions of individualism or collectivism.

