

PASCAL MALONDA

Who
am
I ?

A DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVE ON IDENTITY

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WHO AM I?

A DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVE ON IDENTITY

PASCAL MALONDA

This book is dedicated to you, reader, the one holding this publication in your hands, in the hope that it provides an additional brick to the building representing your identity. Because, as long as the breath of life resides in you, you are destined to grow, to become, and to be.

Pascal Malonda

“For as he thinks within himself, so he is.”

(Proverbs 23:7)

Introduction

Nobody can pretend they were like a blank page at birth, for each of us inherits their parents' genetic legacy, which defines their personality traits, and is born in a family with a socio-economic background, which somehow shapes the setting where they are going to take their very first steps. Over the years, experiences, acquaintances, as well as significant events will add to their life story, page after page, thus extending or changing its initial direction. Every story may be personal and unique, but fulfilling it requires the contribution of one or more participants, for it can't write by itself. Everyone's input is different, some being more impactful than others. The fact remains that we should pay careful attention to the people and events we allow in the writing of our life story. Indeed, very few individuals are aware of the effects that society, education system, and entourage can have on one's identity building. To various extents, these multiple actors have nevertheless participated in making who we are today. They have influenced our beliefs, personality, mentality, and way of thinking. Yet, it is very likely that had we lived in another country or culture, some of our deepest convictions would be completely dissimilar. Today, however, they appear as irremovable pillars we built up ourselves upon, on which we lean to exist. The proof is that we tend to believe in what we understand and reject what we don't. We easily accept the

principles and reasonings that come our way, as long as they fit in our frame of reference and provided they don't challenge the beliefs we have based our life on. As time goes by, what we incorporate during childhood, adolescence, and adulthood eventually determines the way we perceive things and interact with the world around us.

It is something I experienced in the summer of 2017 while I was on a month's trip in Africa, which gave me the opportunity to visit the Democratic Republic of Congo, Zambia, Malawi, and Mozambique. During the journey, I visited a prison where teenagers were jailed. I was accompanying the members of an association that offers literacy and self-esteem classes. When I saw them, something immediately struck me: their eyes had completely lost the spark and flame that usually characterize the innocence of young boys and ladies with a whole life ahead of them. At first, I thought it was due to captivity and terrible living conditions, but I could sense there was in fact something much deeper. After thinking for a while, I realized this blank look was directly coming from their negative self-image. It was all tarnished by the hardness of their life and the failure cycle driven by jail. It was preventing them from making projections and from believing in a better future. Yet, among them were probably dormant CEOs, teachers, renowned bakers, or who knows, perhaps their country's future president. I was absolutely sure that all the boys had some promising potential, but sadly, they were not granted the necessary and favorable conditions to bloom. Upon leaving them, I was convinced that being in jail wasn't just a matter of deprivation of freedom, but of altered self-perception, too.

Today, how many men and women find themselves in the same situation as these teens? Admittedly, they are physically free, but they also remain prisoners of their own misrepresentation. This raises a fundamental question: **Who am I?**

As long as it stays unanswered, having a true depiction of ourselves is tricky, and so is knowing our authentic life story, for every narrative is articulated around the attributes of its main character. A few years ago, I personally happened to face this self-questioning and it's the reason why the explanations I'm hereby sharing with you are those I found for my own life, as well as by conversing and observing people around me.

With this book, I wish to deliver my vision of identity by taking inspiration from the concepts of three disciplines: sociology, psychology, and faith. Combining these three fields has enabled me to put together a subtler portrayal of Man and his search for identity in a society that promotes national identity, digital identity, sexual identity, but in which human beings keep losing track of who they really are. This misunderstanding results in constant uncertainty within people, thus causing emotional and behavioral disorders, if not depression. Reading this book will lead you to look within yourself, but also to lift up your eyes to the sky, for Man is way too small when confronted with certain existential questions.

This book is divided into two parts:

- The first part “Identity according to Man” describes how society, the education system, entourage, and many other spheres have shaped our system of thought, making us the people we are today.
- The second part “Identity according to God” presents Man as a spiritual being. Although essential for giving a complete and genuine picture of human beings, this point is often ignored.

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