

Society, in its most literal sense, encompasses everyone and anyone. It consists of individuals who form opinions on matters that impact our daily lives and those in power who decide what is and what is not important. According to the dictionary, society is “the aggregate of people living together in a more or less ordered community” or “an organization or club formed for a particular purpose or activity”. These definitions highlight the broad and encompassing nature of society, which includes a diverse range of individuals and groups.

The questions “Who are we?” and “Who are you?” can be interpreted in various ways, either as rhetorical musings or philosophical inquiries. Some people have a clear sense of their identity, while others continue to speculate about who they might be. This introspection is a fundamental aspect of human existence, prompting us to examine our roles and personas in different contexts.

Our public persona is the face we choose to present to the world. While a rare few may display their true selves both publicly and privately, the majority of us tailor our public image. This selective presentation is a common phenomenon, underscored by the notion of “stranger danger” which is the idea that we never truly know the intentions of those we encounter. Although this scenario can seem extreme, it illustrates the gap between public and private selves.

Society often conditions us to live in certain ways, a process known as social conditioning. This conditioning influences our public personas, making us actors on the societal stage. We are taught to behave, act, and speak in specific manners, often facing consequences if we deviate. This raises questions about the origins of social conditioning and who determined the behavioral norms that govern our actions.

Oscar Wilde’s quote that says, “Society exists only as a mental concept; in the real world there are only individuals” underscores the idea that society is an abstract construct formed by the collective perceptions and interactions of individuals. This perspective aligns with the exploration of public personas and social conditioning. While societal norms and structures seem tangible, they are, in essence, the products of individual actions and beliefs. Each person contributes to the fabric of society through their behaviors and choices, yet it is the collective acceptance of certain norms and values that gives society its shape. Wilde’s quote invites us to reflect on the power of individual influence within the societal framework, suggesting that while society guides and conditions us, it ultimately derives its existence and meaning from the individuals who compose it. This interplay between individual agency and societal structures highlights the delicate balance between personal identity and communal expectations, reinforcing the idea that our public personas and social behaviors are both shaped by and shaping the society we perceive.

Is society solely based on consensus, or is it rooted in conflict? It is a mix of both. If society were based entirely on consensus, wars would not exist, and world peace would prevail. Humans would coexist without disagreements or conflicts. Conversely, if society were based solely on conflict, the concept of “peace” would be non-existent, and the death toll would rise dramatically. Thus, society balances consensus and conflict, achieving a dynamic equilibrium that, while not ideal, allows for both harmony and discord.

Can social force be considered a language? This intriguing question invites us to consider the ways in which social norms, pressures, and expectations communicate messages and influence behavior. Social force shapes our actions and interactions, acting as a powerful, albeit implicit, form of communication within the societal framework.

The ongoing genocide in Palestine profoundly impacts society on multiple levels, shaping both immediate human experiences and broader societal structures. At the human level, the violence and loss of life generate immense suffering, trauma, and displacement, disrupting communities and fracturing families. These experiences of grief and hardship foster a collective memory of injustice and persecution that can persist for generations, influencing the identities and worldviews of those directly affected.

On a broader societal scale, the massacre shapes international relations and public opinion. Media coverage and public discourse surrounding the genocide provoke strong reactions, leading to activism, advocacy, and sometimes, further division. The visibility of the conflict galvanizes international solidarity movements and influences global policies, as people and governments respond to the humanitarian crisis. The appalling situation in Palestine prompts critical reflections on issues such as human rights, colonialism, and state violence. It challenges societies to confront the moral and ethical dimensions of their political stances and actions. It further underscores the importance of justice, equity, and the protection of vulnerable populations.

Unfortunately, the genocide in Palestine is not the only atrocity occurring in the world today. Other regions are also experiencing severe humanitarian crises, often with similarly devastating effects on their societies. For instance, the Rohingya genocide in Myanmar has led to mass displacement, with hundreds of thousands fleeing to neighboring countries to escape violence and persecution. This crisis has similarly prompted international outcry and mobilized global efforts to address the plight of the Rohingya people. The ongoing violence in Syria, too, has resulted in one of the largest refugee crises in recent history, deeply affecting the social fabric and stability of the region.

These genocides and humanitarian crises highlight the pervasive nature of human rights abuses across the globe. Each situation, while unique in its context and specifics, shares common elements

of suffering, displacement, and the struggle for justice. They collectively force the international community to reckon with its responsibilities and the effectiveness of its responses to such atrocities. The global response to these crises often reveals the underlying power dynamics and geopolitical interests that influence decision making processes and humanitarian interventions.

In light of these multiple crises, it becomes clear that society, as a concept and as a reality, is continually shaped by both consensus and conflict. The international solidarity movements that arise in response to these atrocities reflect a collective desire for justice and human rights, demonstrating the power of social force as a language of advocacy and change. However, the persistent occurrence of such conflicts also underscores the limitations and challenges of achieving global consensus on these critical issues.

The plight of Palestine, along with other global genocides, compels us to critically examine the structures and norms that govern our world. It challenges us to reflect on the ways in which societal conditioning, public personas, and individual actions contribute to broader patterns of conflict and cooperation. In this context, Oscar Wilde's assertion that "Society exists only as a mental concept; in the real world there are only individuals" becomes particularly poignant. It reminds us that the power to shape society lies within each individual, and that collective action is crucial in addressing and preventing the atrocities that continue to afflict our world.

So now I ask. Who are we? Who are you? These questions, simple yet profound, compel us to look inward and examine our roles within the intricate fabric of society. As individuals, we are the building blocks of the societal structures that govern our lives. Our beliefs, actions, and inactions collectively shape the norms and values that define our communities. In a world marred by conflicts and crises, from the genocide in Palestine to the atrocities in Myanmar, Syria and many other places, these questions take on an even greater significance. They challenge us to consider our responsibilities and the impact of our individual and collective choices.

Who are we in the face of injustice and suffering? Are we passive observers or active participants in the quest for justice and human rights? Each of us has the power to influence society, whether through advocacy, solidarity, or simply by living our values authentically. Our public personas, shaped by societal conditioning, can either perpetuate existing power dynamics or challenge them. By reflecting on who we are and who we aspire to be, we can begin to bridge the gap between our private selves and the roles we play in the public sphere.

These questions remind us that society is not an abstract entity separate from us rather that it is a collective construct made up of individuals. Our shared humanity and interconnectedness demand

that we confront the moral and ethical dimensions of our actions. In doing so, we acknowledge that the pursuit of justice, equity, and the protection of vulnerable populations is not just a societal responsibility but a deeply personal one. The future of society depends on our willingness to engage with these questions and to act with integrity and compassion in the face of adversity.