

## **Masking a body**

The way of care through defining the inside and the outside

Rintaro Iino, 2020

Introduction

The aim and motivation behind this essay are to take apart and explain the ways in which covering a body with clothing shows care for others and yourself, and furthermore to separate care into physical care and mental care. The mental side is often “masked” behind the practical function, for instance: You cover your face with a mask to prevent infection. This is the physical care aspect of the garment and it applies to both yourself and other people. The mental aspect of this care is for others that you show that you care about not infecting them, and for yourself it can be privacy, not having to put on makeup, or simply feeling safe from infection. This mental effect is, in this case, hidden behind the practical purpose. Broadly I am attempting to analyze the way some garments affect our sense of personal space and what kind of psychological or emotional effect this has. And specifically, I want to deepen our understanding of how the peculiarities of particular garments, such as its material or specific design details, matter in this respect.

Getting dressed is to cover up your body or just some certain parts of your body by making a new layer between yourself and others. That behavior makes it possible to be yourself as yourself. In general, The clothing serves a function to protect you, which is something inside, from the coldness and ambient physical risk. However, several elements you can see on a body often serve not only in an obvious physical function but also an additional and hidden psychological function that also contributes to protecting the inside from outside. We will focus on specific items, their characteristics, and the specific effects they produce because of these, and observe the cultural, geographical, and historical distinctions and changes in how people perceive these items.

Introduction

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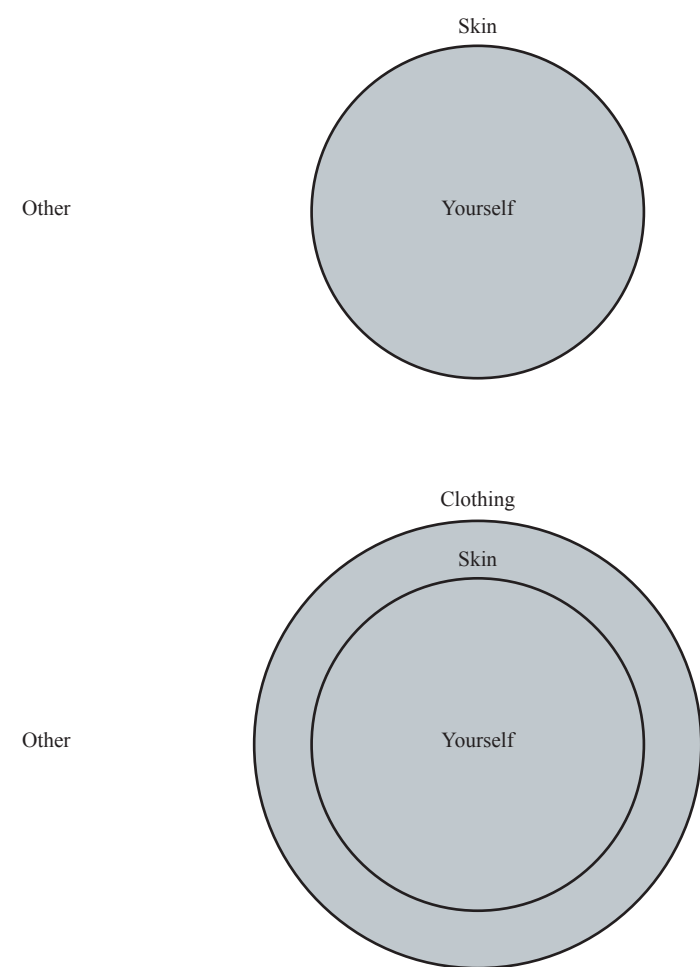


Introduction

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It is impossible to capture your body by yourself as an experience of reality but just as an image which is totally abstract and easily collapsed. The clothing fortifies that fragile image by defining the border between inside and outside and assures your identity to keep in a certain range which you feel safe enough to live in. In *The Disproportionate Body* (1995) by Kiyokazu Washida who is a Japanese philosopher specializing in clinical philosophy and ethics, he mentions:

*“The philosopher Nietzsche wrote that, “The farthest thing from us is our own self.” If we imitate this quotation, isn’t it true that I am saying that one’s own body is the farthest thing? One can only see a fraction of one’s whole body and one cannot see inside of one’s own body. Using X-rays and a stomach camera, a doctor told me, “This is your stomach.” But those pictures and the experience of the reality of my stomach were separate. Concerning the body, our sensory information is scarce.”*



Introduction

Introduction

Wearing clothing is dividing yourself from others and making a concept of the inside and the outside by the artificial approach. As animals (in a temperate environment) there is no need to cover up our bodies. From a functional perspective, even if you don't wear any garments, your basic physiological function works in the same way as much as it does now. To ignore the coldness from the outside, there would be almost no possibility to be dead by the internal factors which caused nakedness. Yet we are wearing clothes and, at this very minute, all over the world, most people are living with hiding at least some parts of their body. Considering the act of wearing in terms of self recognition, the border dividing you and others is wavering when you are naked. In other words, to define yourself with the condition of something inside, it is going to be difficult to recognize yourself as "yourself includes your skin" because your skin is existing as a wall to separate you from outside. It means we only can recognize and define ourselves properly, by just covering up the skin with one more layer of artificial skin which is clothing. Also, there is a sensuous reason too. Human's fragile last stronghold is working as a tactile sense receptor which is really important for physical safety. Without clothing, our skin will be left open to the air and it will not receive much physical information because it's touched to nothing, except ground. That makes you feel floating in the air or leaking to the space somehow. However if you cover your body with clothing, it makes random friction between your skin and fabric and it causes you to recognize your physical shape through reliable tactile senses. Covering a body is the act of preserving our identity through physically dividing yourself and others. It is obvious that making one more extra layer on the subject is important for defining and understanding, but especially now, it seems there are more values in reconsidering it.



## Hedgehog’s Dilemma

Currently, we find ourselves in a Hedgehog’s dilemma caused by the worldwide pandemic. The Hedgehog’s dilemma describes a situation in which a group of hedgehogs seeks to move close to one another to share heat during cold weather. They must remain apart, however, as they cannot avoid hurting one another with their sharp spines. Though they all share the intention of a close reciprocal relationship, this may not occur, for reasons they cannot avoid. Now, in the human world, physical contact is avoided everywhere to prevent infection, but we miss intimacy through physical expression in daily life. Coronavirus is a sharp spine on our skin which is disturbing our ability to enter each other’s personal spaces. It means now our physical personal space is swelling up to prevent infection and people are really sensitive about keeping a distance from each other.

Still, it is inevitable to share some spaces and facilities through living in society. In the course of the pandemic we have realized that we are surrounded by a lot of sharing systems, systems which have suddenly turned into risk factors. From an accessibility and sustainability view, the idea of sharing is accepted by the world and has become the majority opinion. But in addition to the risk of infection in the pandemic, the idea of sharing contains a problem about the clarification of where responsibility lies. Briefly, people cannot feel that much responsibility to shared objects compared to personally owned stuff. For instance, probably you might have seen the sharing scooters which look abandoned and just laying down on the street, called (by me) “prostitute scooters”. They don’t have an owner or a home. Technically they belong to the company(Pimp) that provides a service to a customer but I doubt the people working in the company are caring for them like they care for their own things, because they are owning them as a tentative persona. While they are being used the responsibility seems to lie at the feet of the user, but actually they are just using them temporarily and they may not have an awareness of any responsibility yet. The idea that sharing transportation is practical and eco-friendly is absolutely understandable, but it seems that both the users and the companies get the benefits but the responsibility is left lying around like the “prostitute scooters”. People simply cannot take care of them as much as they do for their property. We barely regard them as important as long as they exist in the zone of unknown ownership. Defining where the responsibility lies is the foundational step in order to properly care for yourself and others, but sometimes it is obscured by a complex persona and a multiplex personal space.



Hedgehog's Dilemma

Hedgehog's Dilemma





Hedgehog's Dilemma

Hedgehog's Dilemma

Again, sharing is an essential idea to live, not only about substantial objects but also something with no concrete substance. For example the way of sharing information was dramatically developed. The form of information itself has changed, and the method of the transmission and reception has also changed. In the world before the Internet, the way people interacted with information was always one-way. A few people who were allowed to have some privileges manipulated information and moved the masses. There was a solid vertical class in handling information with command hierarchy. Since the advent of the Internet, the limitation of information has begun to decline slowly, and it has been possible for those who have their own computers to get online and even share information to a world, where geographical boundaries have been removed. However, there were still many obstacles such as accessibility to the environment to get online and language problems, so it was still not possible to become widespread. And now, smartphones have become game changer, dramatically widening the threshold for access to the Internet, and allowing people all over the world to access and even share information at the same time. This democratization of the information promotes the interaction of people no matter what place and time it is, and this platform itself is representing as a symbol of human's diversity.

Hedgehog's Dilemma

Hedgehog's Dilemma

On the other hand, behind lowering the monopolization of information, The quality and reliability of it is also getting down. Tons of information that we can reach out today have sometimes no specific source and impossible to trace where it came from. Even some people who surely have privilege seem to be releasing fake news in favor of their benefit. Though it is almost chaos, we can easily get online and connect to a lot of someone's opinions, share your thoughts about that and discuss it. But if I apply the same idea which is identifying the personal space, clearly we don't care that much as we do for physical personal space. Now our physical personal space is getting bigger like already mentioned above, but also when it comes to mental personal space, it's swelling up too, because of the internet, you can reach everywhere and whenever you want. But one thing totally different from physical personal space is the difficulty to define mental identity, and vulnerability of itself in the impalpable world. It is impossible to make a line to indicate yourself through dividing you and others in the digital world because the great cause the Internet has been invented for is sharing. Your mind's personal space is floating somehow and sharing some parts of it with other's space to gain some information. It means it's being exposed to a lot of other people's space and sometimes easily interrupted by the flood of information which is from the entire world. For example, when something is going viral in society, that is gonna be the center of attention on SNS and the media. You see a lot of posts related to that event every single day and gradually it starts trying to suck you in, to involve you in their projects and machinations. After you are trapped by that flood of certain opinion or peer pressure from the media, it is gradually soaking into your mental personal space and you begin to capture it as your opinion which you really have to focus on. Of course we can't shut off all information from the internet as long as our life resources are relying on digital systems, but to avoid that kind of cacophony from the chaos and being trapped by them, we have to take a distance from that problem at least for the moment and consider what we really should work on from a bird's eye view. That makes it possible to realize what is going on or not and how it is related to you or how not. By organising them, you are gonna be able to recognize the fuzzy border of your mental personal space. In this way, being alone and taking the time to get silent mentally is essential as much as being connected to the world.

GET CLOSE, STAY WARM  
AND GET SPIKED....



Hedgehog's Dilemma

...OR KEEP AWAY,  
STAY SAFE AND FREEZE....



Hedgehog's Dilemma

About gaining solitude and defining yourself in both ways, physically and mentally, the concept of Hedgehog's dilemma indicates an important concept of that. Firstly, in this dilemma, there are two different forms of caring. One is "caring by sharing". This one is seen when the hedgehogs try sharing heat to keep warmth by making both personal spaces smaller or laying over it. Another form is "caring by distancing". It is the act of keeping distance from each other and maintaining a comfortable interval to prevent hurting each other. Currently we are devoting to the former concept, however the caring through distancing is not taking attention compared to the sharing. Distancing is usually misunderstood, like something makes even rupture, but it's an essential matter as much as sharing, to care for yourself and others in both ways, physically and mentally. From this point of view, I will analyze and observe the peculiarities of particular garments, such as its material or specific design details.



Mask

Speaking of a mask, there are a lot of kinds of masks in the world, but roughly there are two types of masks. One is to become a different role of persona, and another one is for medical purposes. For the former aim, it is used in spiritual, religious and theatrical occasions and it often covers the whole face of the person. But for now we will just focus on the mask for medical use. Medical masks have a long history. In the 17th century, a doctor wore the beaked mask during the plague epidemic. At the time, disease was believed to spread through miasmas, bad smells that wafted through the air. The beak was stuffed with herbs, spices and dried flowers to ward off the odors believed to spread the plague. The idea that diseases could be transmitted from one sick person to another has been around at least since the 1500s “as a serious medical theory”, said Yale professor William Summers, an expert in the history of medicine. In the mid 1800s, at last a scientist discovered a microorganism and developed the bacteriology which explains the structure of the infection. Before then, “masks for contagion control were more in the nature of amulets to frighten away evil influences,” Summers said. Masks were also used widely in the United States in the 1918 flu pandemic, which killed tens of millions of people, but Christos Lynteris, a medical anthropologist at St Andrews University in Scotland, said societies in the West have a “very weak memory” of that crisis. “So the mask being introduced now in Europe, or the Americas, that’s a completely new experience,” he said.

According to the history of masks, the scientific basis is sometimes conquered by free will. But slowly and surely masks have been accepted to the world because of Corona, but still there are not a small number of people who don’t wear a mask. The reason why people don’t wear masks like that desperately, has a practical side and psychological side. If people are asked why you hate to wear a mask, they probably answer the functional reasons first, such as hard to breath, obstructing the voice, and getting steamed inside of the mask. But the strong factor is the psychological effect the mask works for, and that factor is the key to determine whether masks become social standard or not. It is easier to regard from the cultural difference for example.



Mask

Mask



Mask

Mask

In Japan, by contrast, the public embraced mask-wearing during the Spanish flu. According to sociologist Mitsutoshi Horii, mask-wearing symbolized “modernity.” In the post-war era, Japanese people continued to wear masks to prevent the flu, only stopping in the 1970s when flu vaccines became widely available. In the 1980s and 1990s, mask-wearing increased to prevent allergies, as allergy to cedar pollen became a growing problem. In the late 1980s, the effectiveness of flu vaccinations declined and wearing a mask to avoid influenza resumed. The Japanese government recommended that all sick people wear masks to protect others, while they suggested that healthy people could wear them as a preventative measure. Horii argues that mask-wearing was a “neoliberal answer to the question of public health policy” in that it encouraged people to take individual responsibility for their own health. When H1N1 hit Japan in 2009, it first struck tourists who had returned from Canada. The sick were blamed for failing to wear masks while abroad. In a country that takes etiquette very seriously, wearing masks in Japan has become a form of politeness.

As you can see from the Japanese history of the masks, They are a show of consideration for others by demonstrating that, if you are ill in public, at least you are trying to keep your germs to yourself. It means it does work as an indulgence to show that you are making an effort to prevent infection in the society and you can avoid being blamed from your community. They always esteem cooperation and are really sensitive about the community you are belonging to, so it’s natural that Japanese society has accepted masks. However, not just fear of troubling the organization made Japanese people wear a mask, actually most of them are enjoying or using masks as a tool of privacy and hints of anonymity. Introverted people may wear masks deliberately to hide their faces and so they do not have to talk to people. Due to the privacy in the form of the “right to be left alone” is clearly practiced in Japan. They put a mask on even if it’s not hayfever season and they don’t have a cold. They wear surgical masks that are just for show, which is called “*dah-te mask*” in Japan.



Mask

Mask

The number of people using dah-te masks is increasing and it is largely influenced by the Internet, which is a “faceless communication tool” that has rapidly spread in recent years. The dah-te mask provides the wearer with a sense of security by providing only the information they want to show to others and maintaining a sense of distance that is suitable for each other. That sense of safety is coming from a reasonable mutual relationship that can be built by keeping others out of the part you want to hide, and at the same time, avoiding being rejected by them because of going deep into other’s business. In modern society, which demands a weak connection with the other party, the dah-te mask may be considered as a tool to create a barrier. Even some people are addicted to wearing a dah-te mask. They always want to communicate in the appropriate persona, and protect their territory and position by hiding some of them well, without exposing all of themselves. By expressing themselves according to the place and situation, they make it easier for them to be accepted by the other person, thereby establishing their position in the relationship. It seems that the personality changes from one to another depending on the situation, and it may seem that one’s identity is not stable. However, being able to change the way to treat yourself and others according to the situation, may be possible only because you have established a solid self-awareness. I’m not saying that you should forcibly suppress your innate nature and personality depending on the person and environment you interact with, but you need to respond flexibly on the premise of stable self-establishment and caring for the other person and yourself. The relationship of “showing only the part you want to show” has the risk of weakening the connection between people. However, no one can show everything to everyone. Also, it is becoming more and more important to hide parts of yourself in order to have successful socialization in modern society. Masks have a strategic power to make it possible to adjust yourself according to the context.



Sunglasses

Sunglasses

## Sunglasses

There is no defined source of the first idea of hiding eyes, but the history of sunglasses did not always derived solely from the desire to shield the eyes from the sun. It is said that the Roman emperor Nero liked to watch gladiator fights using cut emeralds. These, however, appear to have worked rather like mirrors. In the 12th century, Chinese sunglasses were made from panes of smoky quartz used to dim the light. In doing so, the judges could give the illusion of non-responsiveness to the testimonies, thereby concealing their decision until the final verdict. Also, Inuit peoples wore flattened walrus ivory “glasses”, looking through narrow slits to block harmful reflected rays of the Sun. Sunglasses similar to what we wear today can be traced back to 18th century English optician James Ayscough, who originally created spectacles with tinted lenses, which he thought could improve vision.

Humans and most mammals are known to communicate with each other through eye contact. Eye contact accounts for a very large proportion of the basics of communication. The eyes are the window to the soul, and sunglasses sometimes act as a blind of mind in our lives. Therefore, people who do not want others to know their intentions, will feel safe and will be able to speak positively suddenly, by wearing sunglasses.



Sunglasses

Sunglasses

Let me introduce an interesting case about a man who is obsessed with wearing sunglasses from “*The Secret Emotional Life of Clothes*”. He was growing up in the southside of Chicago, and he was hoping that a single article of clothing could help him conquer one of the parts of adolescence. When he was young he was bullied a lot in school and to change that situation, he tried to wear some clothes that looked crazy. He was convinced that the right article of clothing could transform him, make him someone unpickable. But unfortunately it all didn’t work. However one day he bought new glasses, a pair of large tinted frames. He showed up to the school with those glasses and he heard something new, “Cool glasses”. That’s it. it ended. At the time sunglasses were kind of symbol of the dancer in the black community and they were sharp and cool. It just stopped with those tinted frames hiding his eyes. “I was like a ghost almost. And I know that sounds strange but it was like people did not notice me.” he said. Since he experienced it, he got their prescription and his addiction with sunglasses has begun and he is still so devoted to wearing them, now he is 48. He wears them, whether it’s indoors, whether at the grocery store, or going on a date. He had even wear them during sex. He genuinely believes that sunglasses have a kind of magical power. “It’s like being able to look at the world through a telescope, or from behind a wall.” But the most interesting thing is the adverse effect that happens when he takes off his sunglasses. The interviewer suggested to wear off the glasses and they found out he looked so uncomfortable and even refused to do that first. But they kept pushing him and finally when he took them off, “suddenly there was a transformation”, the interviewer said. The man who just a moment ago was so sure of himself, turned into an unassertive person who had fluttering eyes and looked naked and vulnerable. Even his voice had changed too. After the interview ended, he put the sunglasses back on, and once again, everything changed and he is back to cracking jokes, dancing and even singing. Actually, sun-glasses work as an one-way mirror in society, you can see them but they cannot see you. No need to explain why he feels safe.

Eyes have a lot of information and it’s always speaking, sometimes more than mouth somehow. Every glance, even really subtle movement of your eye, can have a meaning depending on a context. Also, as a receiver, we are super sensitive to eyes. For example, pareidolia causes people to interpret random images, or patterns of light and shadow, as faces. That phenomenon makes us see a face in just three dots arranged in V shape. People unintentionally ignore the person who is wearing sunglasses, because the giant organ, which indicates so much information and has an important role to communicate with, suddenly vanished from the face. It looks like almost nothing to deserve to talk with.



Headphones

Headphones

## Headphones

Headphones started with phone operators - It was a single earpiece that rested on the user's shoulder and weighed over 10 pounds. Shortly thereafter came the Electrophone. Invented in Britain in the 1890s, this subscription service allowed customers to dial in to a switchboard and be connected to a live performance from theatres across London. Engineer Nathaniel Baldwin invented the first pair of audio headphones resembling modern day pairs at his kitchen table in 1910. The Navy ordered 100 pairs, not knowing that Baldwin was making them by hand. In 1958, John Koss rewrote the rule book when he created the first stereo headphones, the Koss SP-3. Early models were nothing more than mini speakers covered in cardboard and sofa foam, but their impact was immense. Rather than make do with radio communication equipment and aviation hardware, Jazz lover Koss came up with something purely for music – and he helped fuel a revolution in the way people listened to it. In 1979, Sony made headphones portable for the first time with their cassette player, the Walkman, which sold over 400 million units. While now a thing of the past, the habit it spawned It allowed people to listen to music wherever and whenever you want. After that, MP3 players had been around for a minute, the invention of the iPod took portable digital music to the mainstream in 2001. Their colorful commercials and clever marketing succeeded, and hundreds of millions of ubiquitous white Apple wired earbuds were suddenly everywhere.

The major difference that sunglasses have compared to masks and sunglasses, is that headphones are created and developed as an item for satisfying a desire such as listening to songs, not for covering up to protect something. It succeeded in shutting out other information by creating something to concentrate on. Humans hesitate to interfere with people who are listening to music. It's not only about headphones, it's also applied when listening through speakers, and it's taboo to stop or interrupt listening instinctively or socially. You can see how much music dominates and holds power. Nowadays, especially in the young generation, it's a natural common sense that music is a personal experience but actually, it has only recently been established. Music was for sharing. People used to go to the theater or hall to listen to the orchestra and they were using speakers at home. It means the sound was a space and that was open to the public. Also, since there were not many opportunities to listen to music, the value of listening music was high.



Headphones

Headphones

However, that had been changed completely after the appearance of the Walkman. The inventor of the Walkman was Akio Morita, co-founder of Sony. He wanted to enjoy opera music on an airplane, and he ordered that small speaker to an engineer for just himself. (It must have been quite arrogant at that time.) The Walkman has become explosively popular since its appearance. But the essence that Walkman has is not that portability that can be carried to anywhere, but the user's isolation and independence. The Walkman overturned the notion of where you are belonging. Some people were afraid of the small box when they saw that dramatic phenomenon. One Christian magazine warned that the Walkman would tempt youth with "still one more competitor to the voice of God." Allan Bloom, in his bestseller *"The Closing of the American Mind"*, imagined a 13-year-old boy "doing his math assignment while wearing his Walkman headphones," a practice certain to turn his life into a "masturbational fantasy," for as long as such boys "have the Walkman on, they cannot hear what the great tradition has to say." Ironically, this was a prophecy and it was right. But now headphones save us as earplugs that protect our temporary relaxation from the noise of information that is the price of living in an advanced information society. At last, I share an interesting excerpt of Fred Kaplan as a reaction of people after the announcement of the Walkman.

"Those too young to remember when the Walkman first appeared on city streets three decades ago may find it hard to imagine how strange the phenomenon looked. Take this 1981 article in Money magazine, written in the form of a letter to a friend:

*"When you were in New York last month, you wondered why some glassy-eyed folks were walking around with headphones wired to little boxes. ... Well, after you left, I asked around and learned that we were wrong—they're not members of some crazy new cult. Those little boxes are portable tape cassette players. It seems that you don't have to stay home to listen to your stereo these days."*

To most people today, the "glassy-eyed folks" are those, like me, who do."









Hat

Hat

Men have to remove their hat indoors and during the national anthem. We all know this etiquette and we feel so uncomfortable when we see someone wearing a hat on that certain occasion. It's almost an unwritten law, but why do we do this and how was it started? The gesture of removing one's hat, headdress or helmet dates back to ancient times. The exact date of origin is not known, but it probably began with medieval knights. Knights removed helmets in the presence of a king as a display of vulnerability and trust that the king would not kill them. Any knight who failed to remove his helmet or lift his visor to identify himself could face fatal consequences. They also removed helmets in church as an expression of security in one's sanctuary and in the presence of a lady, knights displayed chivalry by removing headpieces. The practice of removing one's headdress evolved to represent a show of respect and courtesy in various situations including the removal of the hat when entering a home, courtroom, restaurant or church.

Nowadays, hats are considered as a more fashion item such as beanies and baseball caps but on some occasions we still feel uncomfortable to see someone who is putting a hat on indoors. It probably means we still see certain levels of aggression in a hat and we want to demilitarize them when we see someone wearing a hat in the space we are sharing with them. Conversely, you can gain permission to get into someone's comfort zone through showing your vulnerability, removing your hat. It seems it is related to the Underdog effect which is a phenomenon of public opinion impinging upon itself: When at an election or referendum or with regard to opinions on issues citizens perceive a particular party, candidate, or political position to be the likely winner, or at least to be dominant, they support an alternative that is expected to lose.

As you can see, The hat has a powerful context that has been cultivated over a long period and meaning in human relationships, and it is useful for keeping a distance from the other person and also for getting close emotionally. Also, by performing the action of taking off the hat in an appropriate place, it can be a help to leave an impression that you have a high regard for old traditions. Always better to remove your hat, at least temporarily, no matter what kind of situation you are in, because it will never be rude anytime.

Conclusion

Some of the elements I’ve introduced so far, might help you create an appropriate sense of distance quietly and comfortably for you, also without making the other person feel stressed.

Looking at these factors, I feel that they are addictive to wear. Perhaps because they result in psychological protection of the wearer, they really act like the mental skin and, as a cognition, they become a real part of the body. It may be a kind of addiction that we are wearing clothes now as well.

So far, we have focused on the role of shields which the act of wearing has, but what these items and clothes have in common and very important factor is that they are removable. We can take off our clothes whenever we want, our shields can be down. I think this is the precious element and human ambiguity of wearing. We want people who we trust to see and know us, and to open themselves to us in return. What makes the act of exposing oneself a valuable act is the act of wearing and hiding. We create the valuableness of undressing by the act of wearing, which enhances the credibility of approving the other party. Being naked in public is not socially acceptable (because we are confused by the sudden coercion of approval from an untrusted stranger), but to some extent, by removing several layers you can show that you have trust and feeling comfortable around them.

For us living in a modern age where there is too much information and distractions, it is the initial factor to set a distance between ourselves and others and to calmly judge and act by yourself. We have to avoid being swallowed by a tsunami of information. It causes your mind to overload and let your will go in the direction of the wave. We have to build your own wharf properly, recognize its outline and face the society and others with your own opinion. In the coming era, the sense of balance between oneself and others will become even more important.

Conclusion

Conclusion

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