You Are Not a GPA Machine — On the Harm of Objectification

Hello everyone,

I want to begin today’s speech with a photo:

***(send my friend GPA photo into the chat)***

This is my friend’s GPA—nearly perfect.  
He’s not someone who crams or burns out. He plans ahead and sticks to every schedule he sets.

But here’s the twist—recently, he told me:

“I don’t understand why I have to chase a high GPA; it makes me feel so hollow.”

That moment struck me.  
Because if someone so organized, so focused, and so seemingly in control still feels empty—what is the reason?

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The reason is one word: **objectification**.  
It means reducing a person to a score or a number—treating them not as a human being, but as a tool to be used.

As an ECNUer just like my friend, like you, I sometimes feel empty ***or objectified*** by GPA as well. Nearly 90% of you said the same thing. But what struck me even more wasn’t just the agreement—it was the excuses.  
They fell into two false patterns I want to talk about today.

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The first pattern says:

“In the current environment, we don't have many choices. While it's good to keep a clear mind, it can also bring a lot of pain. Maybe it's better to just let it go.”

On the one hand, yes, the environment is hard to change, but does that mean “because I can’t improve the air quality by myself, I decided not to take any action.” You will wear a mask in a foggy Monday to protect your lungs from the bad weather. So in this situation, these students consciously abandon their true self and surrender to the objectification. On the other hand, this statement actually reveals how we objectify ourselves daily. For example, some of us pick courses not because we’re interested, but just to get a higher GPA.

This is called self-objectification.

And this is how objectification works—not by forcing you,  
but by making you internalize the number, the GPA, as your identity.  
You stop seeing yourself as someone who chooses.  
You become someone who calculates.

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Another response sounds intellectual. It goes like this:

“Every time a word goes viral, people abuse it. Maybe ‘objectification’ is being applied too loosely.”

Fair enough—we should always be careful with our concepts.  
But there’s a key **logical slip** here.

This argument treats abuse of a concept as evidence against its *validity*.  
Researchers from the University of Southern California found that the [GPA competition increase college students’ rates of anxiety by 70 per cent and depression by 40 per cent](https://web-app.usc.edu/web/rossier/publications/219/Posselt%20Lipson_2016_JCSD.pdf). China’s Ministry of Education and South China Normal University further expanded on this work, [establishing a link between GPA competition and anxiety.](https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC9961629/) This GPA competition is actually another form of objectification.

Imagine your sense of value depends on outperforming others—  
That’s not just academic pressure.

That is objectification.

Calling something by its name isn’t exaggeration. It’s clarity.  
When we stop naming things because they’re “trendy,” we stop seeing them at all.

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Now let me wrap up my speech for you:

Do not give in to the first pattern—giving up just because the environment is tough.

Do not fall into the second pattern—thinking a word abused just because the word is popular.

You are not a GPA machine.

You’re a human being.

**So stay human.**

Thank you.