

History and Self

Before proceeding into the body of this work, we must face squarely the matter of your cherished singularity, placing it within a broad historical context.

For this, we surreptitiously captured live on audio two young men who we will call Zek and Zak, dressed in baggy clothes with baseball caps turned backwards, both feeling a little zonked out sitting around at a Mall. The philosophical transcript is herewith reproduced verbatim.

"Hey, Zek? You know, lately, I've been thinking about who I am."

"Whoa, like alert the media."

"It's no joke, man. 'Cause you know it all got like really weird when I thought about who I was. Got deep."

"Ooh major bad."

"Tell me about it. I started thinking about all sorts of crap, like about everyone who has ever lived and walked and talked on the face of earth.

And then I realized."

"...Like, realized...?"

"Realized I'm not the first person to be born and want to know who I am."

"Well, like, duh. Big time."

"No, think about it, man. How many dudes and dudettes over hundreds of centuries have come and gone and been someone before you or me ever came along?"

"You want an exact figure or can I guess?"

"Come on. Just like think about it, think about everyone who has ever existed.... No cheating, think."

"You mean, like think think?"

"Totally. Like close your eyes tight– visualize everyone–and I mean *everyone*, every sucker throughout the ages, before Christ, during Christ, the Middle Ages, *China*."

"Okay. Okay.... Mmmmm....*Whoa mama!*".

"You see?"

"There are a lot of folks behind my eyes. Like tons and billions and godzillions. I see 'em, man, like lined up, one after another, on top of each

other's heads, reaching out into the universe, wrapping around Saturn five times and coming back to earth. We're talking mucho zeros here...."

"Now, Zek, like consider the possibility that because so many people have been born and already existed that—there really is no one left to be."

(Note: like the sound of distant, wounded animal, a moan slowly rose from Zek's breast, and grew in enormity until it filled the air with as a high-whine.)

"The dawn is breaking over your brow. You understand, Zek. That every identity with every imaginable variation and nuance and individual stamp has lived and walked and talked and been somebody."

"And when you think about throwing reincarnation into the mix...."

"Perhaps for the first time in human history we face the likelihood that ... hold it ... everyone's been done. Or at least, everyone worth being...."

"Oh fuck. Oh fuck. Oh fuck. Then you're saying I could just be imitating someone else who has already like lived and everything?"

"You got it. It's like when you ask yourself, *Who am I?*, you hear a faint voice from the near or distant past whispering in your ear... *'Who are you?-- why, you're me. I was already who you are. Exactly. Down to the very last detail, frowning forehead, nervous tick and all.'*"

(Note: a long, long silence.)

"Zippy-fucking-doo-dah man."

"Yeah but you know most people prefer being somebody else so they don't have to worry who they are."

"Yeah, like our parents. And their friends."

"But when I think that I might be like a carbon copy of some ancient being, it's like, soooo discouraging, man."

"Can't get my head around this."

"Oh man."

"Fucking-A."

"You said it."

"Nah, somebody already said that."

"Zippy-fucking-doo-dah man. Fucking-doo-dah."

(Tape runs out at this point.)