

# Your planet has a population of 1

Be yourself. And let the world be itself.

Eight words. Which do a damn good job of summing up my lifetime of philosophizing, spiritual seeking, pondering the Meaning of It All.

The strangest thing is you, me, every individual. Inside the human cranium is an utterly private realm, unknown to anyone but the consciousness that experiences it from the inside.

Enclosed in our subjectivity, we try to communicate what it is like to be us. Words, gestures, emotions, music, poetry, art. There are so many ways people try to build a bridge between the inner and outer worlds.

All fall incomplete. The bridge always has gaps. It is impossible for anyone else to truly know what you're experiencing.

Often we hear "This is really hard to put into words" and "You aren't getting what I mean." There was a bestselling book called Men are from Mars, Women are from Venus. Actually, the planetary geography is even more diverse.

Each of us inhabits a unique planet of personal experience with a population of one.

This is marvelously strange. I revel in the knowledge that no sentient being in the universe has ever looked upon existence in the way that I do. Or, as you do.

Yet here we are, so often tentative, unsure, wary of wholeheartedly embracing our precious existential peculiarity.

We look to others for confirmation that what we think or feel is OK. We are afraid of appearing different. We blend into cultural norms like a chameleon who automatically takes on the appearance of its surroundings.

Still, there's nothing wrong with conformity if this is what we really want. I'm just urging us toward a more confident acceptance of the One-Of-A-Kind that each of us is.

There is no alternative to the oft-heard advice, "be yourself."

It isn't possible for you to be anyone other than who you are at every moment. So why the reluctance to express yourself openly, honestly, forthrightly? Remember: your experience of life is yours alone.

However, what you sense also is sensed by others. There is a world outside your skin which isn't you. It belongs to all. Such is the marvel of objectivity, the complementary yin to the yang of subjectivity.

Like artists, we all have a unique vision that springs from our private consciousness. Like scientists, we all have a shared knowledge derived from efforts to understand public reality. Wisdom lies in keeping these talents properly aligned.

Often people get things backward.

They wrongly take aspects of their personal inner world to be objectively real for everyone (such is the mistake of religious fundamentalists). They deny scientific truths like evolution and global warming.

In line with the slogan "you are entitled to your own opinion, but not your own facts," this is my Core Creed of Strangeness:

Glory in your uniqueness while marveling at the world's commonality. From our own personal planets, we gaze upon a single universe. E pluribus unum: out of many, one.

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