

Iipseity from another angle

Look at me the way I see me. Perhaps that's why the name is sticky: of and by yourself – a selfie.

I hike in the Muir Woods today - the old growth redwoods here are older than and will outlast me. It is a tempting thought that I belong of the same earth and to such majesty. This is a thought for which a thousand words will certainly struggle to do justice. The area is beautiful and I recommend to anyone a hike when the opportunity presents itself.

Perched on a rock at the summit of a canopy trail is a lovely couple positioning to take a picture of themselves with the Woods among a sunny background. The scene could be nothing less than idyllic.

Short of breath from an unnecessarily determined ascent, my offer to make available assistance for a photograph coincides with their having settled in time. As if in disregard to interruption, the cameraphone shutter activates; they capture their moment.

Both preface an address with smiles and reply that my assistance is not required today and that they have their picture. In parting, one of the pair jests "what picture is complete without the selfie?"

It isn't a few hundred feet trekking, now on a favourable and shaded decline, that I am compelled to stop and regurgitate a question: Why would a photograph from a traditional perspective be incomplete?

3... 2... 1... Say Control!

“The appeal of selfies comes from how easy they are to create and share, and the control they give self-photographers over how they present themselves.”

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Selfie#Sociology>

Perhaps some find ease in travelling with a selfie stick. I prefer to believe some bear the inconvenience only reflecting an even greater value these folk attribute to the control of self-representation.

The value here is embedded in social exchange and attributed to the contextual expression of self-image: Look at me the way I see me, and let me show you how. Depending on the purpose of the photograph, it is entirely fair for a picture to be incomplete without one's degree of control to stake a claim for selfhood in that moment.

A selfie may be worth a thousand words, but it is more convenient to carry a single one and ask for change if necessary.

