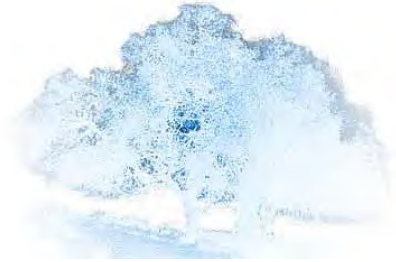


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A CONFUSION STORY

Let me tell you a story about Martin Landau and Martin Landau. Martin Landau is a political scientist and Martin Landau is a movie and television actor. This is true. Mostly. It should be *was* and *was* instead of *is* and *is* because Martin Landau is dead and so is Martin Landau. This is true for sure. You can look it up. And unless resurrection or reincarnation become things, it will stay true, although it is also possible that perhaps either Martin Landau or Martin Landau had his body cryogenically frozen in the hopes of returning to the land of the living at some point in the indeterminate but necessarily more technologically advanced future. The degree of confidence you ascribe to the future feasibility of resuscitating cryogenically preserved individuals combined with the odds you would give that either Martin Landau or Martin Landau went down the super-cold body preservation route will influence the degree of absoluteness with which you believe the truth that Martin Landau and Martin Landau are dead and will stay that way forever. Really iron-clad truths seem harder and harder to come by these days. If I had to put money on it, I'd bet it was Martin Landau and not Martin Landau who would have made his own bet on cryogenics, and in saying this it's important to note that I have no real insight into either Martin Landau's or Martin Landau's character beyond what is discernible from publicly available sources (read: Wikipedia) and so have very little way of knowing if either had some characterological feature that would have driven him to attempt to cheat death through supercharged freezing. I only met Martin Landau once and then only briefly. Certainly not long enough to get any sense of his relationship to his own mortality which I do imagine was highly personal and not something to be divulged to a near total stranger, especially in the setting in which we found ourselves (a reception with drinks and finger foods (all free)). Plates piled high with tasty, but not very culinarily adventurous food and plastic tumblers filled full with middling chardonnay, it would have been extremely odd for Martin Landau to say

something like, “As I age, I think more and more about having my body cryogenically frozen.” Beyond “Uh, huh” and stuffing my mouth with chipotle-flavored shrimp or bacon-wrapped dates to give myself a readily recognizable excuse for not saying anything more, I don’t know how I would have reacted to an admission like that. No, my supposition is based on a certain basic fact of cryogenics. It’s really expensive. Distinguished political scientists like Martin Landau can make a pretty good living – this is truer if they work for a private university instead of a public one – but I feel rather confident saying that these professors don’t make cryogenics money. Actors do, though, especially one as well known and as talented as Martin Landau. He had an Academy Award. That means major coin right there. Not so much the statue, which isn’t made of gold however well it shines, but the status of having a statue that one was awarded and didn’t buy on the secondary market (read: eBay or Sotheby’s) from an actor or an actor’s estate that needed money. That’s what’s valuable. The having been awarded. So if he wanted to freeze himself, Martin Landau had the means. Martin Landau might not have. Secondly, it takes a certain level of vanity to believe that people in the future with whom you have no direct connection and who potentially possess a very poor understanding of your place in history such as it is will a) recognize you when they read the nameplate on your cryogenics pod; b) will care enough about you and your life accomplishments to invest time and resources – two things that they might invest more profitably elsewhere – into bringing you back to life; and c) will believe enough in your skills and abilities to think that making space for you in their present will be a net positive for themselves and/or humanity generally. I don’t think it’s going too far out on the stereotyping limb to say that of the two professions – acting and political science – it’s the former rather than the latter that attracts, statistically speaking, more vain people. Who would dispute that really? To take stock then, we have Martin Landau with plenty of money and most likely more vain than the average person and Martin Landau with not as much money and likely in possession of an average or perhaps even below average level of vanity, all facts which tip the scales to Martin Landau likely being the person to have had himself cryogenically frozen and thus in position to give the lie to the fact that they are both deceased and forever destined to remain that way. What discovering

that Martin Landau had been posthumously submitted to a cryogenic procedure does not give lie to is the fact that when I met Martin Landau I thought he was Martin Landau. This confusion's occasion was at the time a highpoint of my nascent, but ultimately short-lived academic career: a conference to which I had been invited, presumably because the organizers were impressed with some aspect of my intellectual output, and thus more exclusive than the usual general academic conferences I had attended to that point, conferences that are large and where many people, especially young people at the start of their careers, end up presenting their ideas to mostly empty hotel conference rooms, the nondescript and thus forgettable appearance of which aptly reflects most, but by no means all, of the presenters' future career trajectories. The status of the conference was elevated further by the fact that it was at one of the best universities in California and, indeed, the world, reputational cachet that would shine rather brightly when added to my curriculum vitae but which did not translate, over the long-term, into a professional boost for me or, in the short-term, into a premium class of refreshments at the aforementioned opening reception where Martin Landau introduced himself to me, and I thought to myself that it was slightly odd that a famous Hollywood actor and recent recipient of an Academy Award – Martin Landau's stand-out performance in *Ed Wood* was not too far in the past – would be interested in chatting with the attendees of an (exclusive!) academic conference. Odd, but not outside of the realm of the possible. After all, while actors often appear to us as one-dimensional, they are whole people with interests beyond their chosen careers and who was to say exactly that Martin Landau didn't interest himself in esoteric academic subjects. Plus, Martin Landau looked a not insignificant amount like Martin Landau. While possible, it is not exactly probable that Martin Landau had chosen to attend the reception, a thought that did cross my mind and kept me from immediately broaching the topic of why an actor like him was interested in the moral underpinnings of American citizenship as examined from the perspective of post-war West European political thought. Instead, I asked him if it was his first time at the university where the conference was being held, a question that allowed me to not tip my hand entirely that I thought he was Martin Landau but that kept the conversational option open of discussing his interest as an actor in academic topics had

he answered, “Yes.” Which he didn’t. Instead he informed me that he had taught at the university for many years, although he was retired now, and in saying this he gave me the look that people reserve for other people they believe may be stupid or drunk. Realizing that Martin Landau wasn’t Martin Landau but Martin Landau and also very much aware of the meaning of his look and wondering additionally if it conveyed Martin Landau’s understanding that I thought he was Martin Landau, I stammered a few more pleasantries, pointed to my empty plastic wine tumbler and headed for some replacement chardonnay. While, as I mentioned previously, I’m more than fairly certain that Martin Landau would be the one who is currently cryogenically frozen and awaiting future thawing, I sometimes wish it was Martin Landau. I also sometimes wish I was still an academic. That way, it would be possible that a resuscitated Martin Landau and I could at some point in the future attend the same academic conference and I would have the chance to dispel his previous potential suspicion that I had confusedly thought he was Martin Landau by having the opportunity to go up to him and say something to the effect of, “Professor of Political Science Martin Landau, it is so good to see you again.” I’d really hit the words *professor* and *political science* when I said this and also give some emphasis to *Martin Landau* although not as much as the other words. I’d also use our meeting to congratulate him on his successful reinvigoration. Or perhaps not. It’s hard to say what exactly the social mores will be around referring to those who have been awakened from cryogenic stasis. It could be that it will be considered rude to mention it. Just as someone doesn’t mention someone else’s plastic surgery, especially if they don’t know each other well. Like Martin Landau and Martin Landau and me.

~ John Brady



Thank you for reading