# How To Find Yourself (or a reasonable facsimile)

*by* Vincent Eaton

**How To Find Yourself**
(or a reasonable facsimile)

The Head-Book Handbook

by

Vincent Eaton

*Forward*
*by*
*Doctor Louis Templeton-Arf, MD, Ph.D., fiddle-de-de*

A thin book on a large subject

This book is a compilation of scientific studies and expert opinion addressing practical methods and current theories in Finding Yourself. The casual reader will find illuminating case histories, pure psychobabble conjecture, alternative viewpoints, dreamy reminisces, cheap shot journalistic reporting and some things that just popped up and sounded halfway reasonable. The professional reader won't give this a second glance.

The aim of this book is to supply readers with practical examples and helpful hints as to how to spot, understand, and instill a real sense of self in your innermost being. This book's contents should lead readers with a more practical self-knowledge, peace of mind,

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spiritual nurturing, fuzzy thinking, and strange sexual longings you really should just keep to yourself.

This book is dedicated to all those people
who have misplaced themselves temporarily.

***Forward***
by
Doctor Louis Templeton-Arf, MD, Ph.D. fiddle-de-de

*Dr. Templeton-Arf1 is the world-renown author of those milestone tomes on Existence and Life: Why?, Volumes I and II, as well as the companion volumes, Because!, Volumes I, II, III, IV, V and VI.*

I find, as I sit down to write this forward, that I am in the midst of an Historical Occasion, even though it is sunny outside, the 3rd of May, with Spring in the air and birds singing their familiar territorial songs just outside my window, which gives me a bit of a headache, brought on partly by my wife who is in one of her moods again, compounded by the death of my dog last night. Mysterious causes. Anyway, an Historical Occasion *it is*, because, with the publication of this well-documented, thoroughly researched volume on the eternal search for self-knowledge—of which contemporary society is but a aberrant manifestation—a long, traumatic era of human history may come to an end, just like my dog, Peppy.

Of late, Civilized Men Women, who have far too much money and free time on their hands, have decided, in alarming numbers, to notice their navels, and, *en masse*, begin murmuring soothing metaphysical terms at this innocent, blank-eyed belly buttons. Without proper supervision.

While I had believed that the subject had been exhausted, that the bottomless pit of the individual navel gazer had been done to death, just like Peppy, now here arrives *How To Find Yourself* to show that

previous literature had only scratched the surface of the belly button phenomenon. The book you now hold in your hands plumbs the depths of unadulterated self-absorption and beyond. Way beyond. Beyond any real need or rational justification. Nevertheless … nice word, nevertheless … here it is, glistening between its magnificence covers, ready for unsuspecting minds to devour, digest, comprehend, grow depressed, whither away.

However, it's not as bad as all that, although the ache in my back is killing me, and my bowel movements, well, they've not been quite as regular as a gastro-intestinal specialist would desire, though things could be worse, oh yes, much, much worse. Just think of Peppy.

In conclusion, I believe it is my primary duty to put forth one emphatic warning:

***Watch out!***

This book may change your life! It is that powerful, that challenging, that potentially overwhelming.

However, if you find it does not change your life, I would suggest you read it a second time and try harder.

Now, I entreat you to begin your own personal journey into this Historical Occasion. Please, turn the page, take a breath, and dive in.

Meanwhile, I shall halt the writing this Forward, before it goes on and on … and on … risking becoming a Backward.

Oh Peppy, where are you?

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## Introduction

*First things first.*
Who am I?
Go on, say it, say it to yourself.
"Who am I?"

Say it aloud:

"Who am I?"

Yes, indeed, who *are* you?

This is the essential question that faces the vast majority of thinking peoples living in these disturbing times. Yet before you begin this book, you must face a stark reality that

*There has been a great, great deal of mischief caused in the name of Self-Knowledge.*

Quiet normal brains that would have made fine pharmacists, capable secretaries, or so-so amateur actors, take total leave of their senses when deciding to come to grips with identity crises, personality conflicts, feelings of existential anguish, the alarming memories of toilet training, not to mention dealing with the red red robin when it comes bob-bob-bobbing along.

These days, many people have been trying to find themselves yet haven't the faintest idea how to.

The reader should recognize that just as there have been only a few individuals who could do certain tasks really well—natural geniuses in gardening, overpaid handymen, or those teaching sign language to chimpanzees and actually getting paid for it—so too has there been only a select number of beings who have had sufficient education, wisdom and grounding to find themselves, and not make a complete mess of it.

Nevertheless, certain economically advantaged groups persist in wanting to have a go at finding out who they really are, and the consequences be damned.

To exploit this market need, this book has been thrown together over the last fifteen years for the express purpose of enabling your average self-seeker to discover those meaningful parts of his or her being that vaguely resemble his or her own Self.

Consuming the facts and stories this book does not demand any specialized educational background, you don't have to tell us who your parents are, we *don't want to know* how they treated you, and best of all you won't be required to take any tests to see whether

you have passed or failed after finishing the book. You'll just *be*, at last.

So good luck, whoever you are, whoever you are about to become. So begin your journey into your darkest, most innermost self (flashlight and batteries not included).

1 Dr. Templeton-Arf is a Visiting Fellow from Oxford, England. At other times, he's a nice guy or a real understanding person. Most of the time, however, he's just a Visiting Fellow.

A partial checklist of where ***not*** to find yourself

First of all, do not look underneath the living room couch.

Avoid excessive navel gazing. You will usually not be there, either. Contrary to popular belief, navel gazing has been determined by the vast majority of mental health experts as a purely theoretical rather than practical aid in Finding Oneself.

Do not travel to foreign countries with the express purpose to discover who you are. For instance if you live in North America, never use the common declaration, "I'm going to Europe to find myself." Often, you will not be there.

Attending purely religious ceremonies should be actively shunned when trying to Find Yourself. Supreme Beings and Blind Faith are generally considered distractions where massive self-absorption is required.

Avoid strenuous nose blowing. Recent medical studies have shown that over-exertion of the sinus cavities may lead to identity disorientation, which may last from three to five days, or be permanent.

It cannot be stressed too often that suicide should also be avoided. Most, though not all, reputable scientific organizations regard suicide as an overwhelming setback in the Search for Self, and that it can lead to extreme discouragement and subsequent long-term depression.

And **Do Not** -- I repeat, **Do Not** -- gaze into a mirror, hoping to peer deep into your soul and discover who you really are. That ain't the way it works, folks.

**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.)

**The False Self-Actualization Syndrome**

*A The False Self-Actualization Syndrome, Case History Number 1Case Study*

The Case

Larry Burt was an overweight forty-three year old financial controller for a candy manufacturer who was brought to the Self-Realization, Actualization, Detonation Center in a state of extreme shock and depression.

It appeared that he had looked into the mirror that morning and felt he had come to a complete understanding of who he was; the knowledge had disappointed him.

Once at our Center, he wept copiously and without pause for three straight days. He was given sedatives and laxatives and told bedtime stories in funny voices but nothing seemed to help. At the beginning of the fourth day, I was consulted and was immediately intrigued at the intensity of the crying jag.

"And did you apply the laxatives?" I asked.

"All four varieties."

I was incredulous. "And no results?"

"He's white as a sheet, drinks a lot of liquids and is heard to whimper

*Mama mia* while looking towards heaven. Other than that, no results."

I asked to see this patient. I marched to Intensive Care, Ward Three, Room Eight, Enter at Own Risk, Third Bed Along, and there he was, Larry Burt.

In appearance, he was unexceptional: balding, plump, a certain bureaucratic roundness to the shoulders. He sobbed, blubbered and moaned, without shame or moderation.

"What is the meaning of this!" I snapped. I have found, in extreme cases of what I term *Self-Knowledge Mania*, that an authoritarian, not to say fascistic intonation, affects wonders. Yet the patient merely raised his head, sniveled, muttered *Mama mia* plaintively and continued weeping. When I insisted, "What is the meaning of this, sir!" he turned away, retreating in a crouch to a dusty corner1 in despair.

I pursued him with my questioning, in order to break the spell, bring him around, watch him squirm.

"I have been informed, Mr. Burt, that you have looked into the mirror. Correct?"

He nodded, vaguely. This was the first sign of communication with the outside world he had made in four days.

"And when you looked in the mirror, who exactly did you expect to see?"

He whimpered. He shivered. "My grandfather," he responded hoarsely, "on my mother's side."

"And you didn't see him?"

"No. And I should have known better. He's been dead for years."

"Then who did you see?"

At this, he began to tremble and weep.

"Control yourself and answer my question," I commanded with an impatient stomp of my foot, then added, to increase his trust, "I'm a doctor."

He seemed to shrink further into the dusty corner, sputtering, drooling, emitting unhealthy sounds. His answer came slowly. "...*me*... oh God!" Larry Burt almost screamed. "*I expected to see me!*"

"And…?"

And then poured forth a tortured, sob-filled jumble of words from which I could piece together Larry Burt's amazing story of tragic proportions. Here it is, in his own words.

Larry Burt's Own Words

Whenever I have asked myself Who I Am?, I've always fallen asleep. I guess whoever I was a pretty boring person.

My first memory of this happening was when I was a baby and began to speak. Relatives came over and my mother would sit me in the middle of the room and ask me to say my name in front of everybody. She was proud, I guess, like any mother. She would lean over me, her face like a big moon, and say, "Tell everybody your name, honey. Tell the nice people." I gurgled, I replied, "Larry Burt." And I was right, up to a point. Everyone clapped politely, making approving comments to one another. But when my mother asked me, "And who is that, my little sweetie?" … I collapsed, plopped right over on the rug like a limp rag-doll. They thought it was epilepsy. They brought in doctors, specialists. They pricked and probed. Some of it hurt, some of it I started to enjoy, but they couldn't find a single thing wrong with me, except when asked who I was, I fell asleep.

From then on, my family avoided asking me any awkward questions concerning my identity or selfhood or what I felt like having for supper. I avoided myself, too. I hurried past mirrors,

didn't stay too long alone in the bathroom, yet every time I bent down to tie my shoe, I *knew* whose foot was *really* in that shoe. I don't think anyone can possibly realize what agony I was going through. I was continually running away from myself; yet even after sprinting ten city blocks, *I'd still be there*.

So one day, I came to a compromise with me. In place of self-knowledge, I'd study to become an accountant. I have always worked hard throughout my life, kept to myself, said *Yes* whenever I could to anyone who addressed me, and have been frugal by most people's standards. But dear God, my inner soul has always been so barren. I've always had this sneaky feeling that there was not much of me to know. Maybe one, two modifiers at most.

Then, after many, many years, when I thought I'd forgotten all this, forgot about who I wasn't, really just forgot, I carelessly glanced into the mirror, and that's something I *never, ever do.* Did I half-hope to see my grandfather, on my mother's side, whom I have always admired, and that he would be who I was and offer me some good advice. But he wasn't in the mirror. There was just me, whoever that was. At that instant I had a flash of horrible clarity. It was more intense than sex. Well, almost. I saw who I was. I *knew* who I was.

(Larry Burt halted for some moments to control himself, to wipe away a tear as well as some off-color liquids leaking from his nose.)

"But it took such a short time for me to *know* who I was. I mean, within two seconds, I *knew*, positively, absolutely knew, who I was. Only two seconds worth! I had read all those wonderful things in books about the *Self*, where it says it takes some people *years* to know themselves. But me? *A couple of seconds*. I was crushed. The next thing I knew after seeing myself in the mirror, I had blacked out and then woke up here. Honestly, I don't know if anyone can help me now. Really.

Curing Larry Burt

Larry Burt's problem was not so much psychological as fundamental. We at the Center call this the *False-Self-Actualization*

*Syndrome*. Simplified for popular consumption, this Syndrome can be explained it thusly:

Just as some women can work themselves into a state of Hysterical Pregnancy that exhibits all the outward, biological signs of real pregnancy where none exists, so may a common form of False-Self-Actualization occur in some susceptible minds. While in this state, the individual exhibits all the outward manifestations of one who has just crossed the border into deep self-knowledge, with all its attendant consequences of euphoria followed by mild disappointment.

With this analysis made, Larry Burt was kept under strict supervision at the Center for five months and given unique set of daily treatments to reveal to him his fundamental error and how it correct it2. In the end, running out of tears and drugged to the gills, Larry Burt realized his self-defeating blunder. We successfully erased from his memory any and all thoughts of who he thought he once was. When he finally smiled in his third month of captivity, and we knew a break-through had occurred.

Answering The Question

Before his release, as a final test, Larry Burt was given a mirror to look into. Gulping, hesitating, flocked by medical students with notebooks, he looked into a mirror. His face at first registered shock, then surprise, then a great big smile.

"What do you see, Mr. Burt?"

He looked up at me, tears welling up in his eyes. "My old Granddad," he replied.

He was subjected to a last, pointed question to discover his capacity to deal with the outside world3.

"*Who are you?*"

He answered without hesitation, "I am Larry Burt, a man like any other. Willing to admit his mistakes. A man who does not yet truly know himself, but who is still willing to give it another try. I am a man who wishes to contribute to society and his community, and

only to look for himself in his spare time with the appropriate medication."

The fact that Larry Burt was able to answer the simple question, "Who are you" without falling asleep attested to his current mental health, and he was released into society at large.

Coda

Larry Burt's cure was of an unfortunate short duration. Some weeks later, it appears he suffered a severe relapse, and it was last reported that he was asking people along Highway 101 in California whether or not they had seen Larry Burt lately, and if so, what did he look like?

1 It is our long standing policy to maintain several dusty corners conveniently located throughout the Center's premises, allowing patients who feel a sudden emotional collapse coming on to find quick refuge and solace in these murky sanctuaries.

2 The techniques utilized in this process are not yet perfected, and, since it remains in its experimental stages, it must be withheld from public and professional scrutiny at this time. However, a paper is in preparation for delivery at next year's International Psychologists Convention in Zurich, Switzerland, with the working title, "*Retrograde Self-Knowledge, or, Who You Are May Not Be Who You Think You Are, a study of the misapplication of identity in limited sensory organs, such as the brains of Contented Housewives or Corporate Middle Management*."

3 In conformance with State Law.

**The Moral Dilemma of Finding Yourself**

1. If it feels good, it is good.

If it feels bad, it is bad.

If it feels mediocre, you're wasting your time.

1. Pain, in relation to finding yourself, is good. That is why it is a moral dilemma. If you begin to feel bad when you think about who you are, this indicates that you are actually making a decent effort and are on the right track.

If, on the other hand, it does not hurt, this signifies one of two things:

1. Either you are not making a real effort and so are attempting to fool someone (possibly yourself), or,
2. You have already found yourself and should not be occupied creating a moral dilemma where none exists1.

1. Many individuals, upon setting out on the path toward self-enlightenment, often have to give up learned behavior patterns that have survived since childhood. Herman Schmidt gave up his pacifier, even though it was a bright pink. Emily Fipple would not give up her diapers and has consequently abandoned all chances of ever finding herself, at least in this life (although she figures if she's reincarnated as a cockroach or a Mid-Westerner, it'll all be much easier). Jim Dobbs had to give up hoping for his mother and father's love, even though he was an orphan.... These are all examples of Moral Dilemmas, although not nearly as interesting as sex.

1. Sex brings us to the question of whether one should make love when one does not know who one truly is. If you make love not knowing who you are, then who is this person making love? You or who? If you reach climax, whose climax is it? If your partner murmurs, "I love you", before, during, or directly after the act of sexual intercourse, when all sorts of bio-chemicals are being triggered internally to cause exactly such bonding reactions, to whom exactly are they saying this all-powerful phrase of I love you? To you or to whom they think you are? Here, the Moral Dilemma can only be ignored at your own peril, if yourown peril is truly

yours, of course. Thus, next time someone says to you bold as brass, "Let's do it, honey", reply thoughtfully, "Who, with me? The real me? Or with the superficial me? The merely physical me? Or the me you think you know or the me you hope I am? The existential me or the spiritual part of me? The *me* me or simply just me?" You will be surprised at the reactions you will receive by introducing such moral dilemmas into the casual act of recreational sex.

1. The history of the Moral Dilemma of Finding Yourself goes back at least fifteen centuries, although some people claim it only started on the fifth of last month when someone was in a bad mood.

The first known example of moral dilemma and self was one Elmer Tug, a ripe Anglo-Saxon sheep dipper who one day didn't know where his boots ended and the sheep-dip began. He solved this by buying new boots. Not all moral dilemmas are so easy to solve. Some are real headaches, such as how do you say aesthetics without sounding effeminate? Other dilemmas remain a complete mystery, such as the purpose of the navel after the womb, or the meaning of death if life is an illusion.

1. The further history of moral dilemmas is interesting if you look at it from the side; an aerial view is also revealing, though there remains a hard-core group who insist on looking at this dilemma from the bottom up. All views are acceptable, yet oddly open to debate. But whichever view you subscribe to, the moral dilemma remains the same: a general pain in the ass.

1. The extended history of the Moral Dilemma as a Pain in the Ass goes back to the beginning of recorded history, and it probably goes back even further but they won't let us look at their notes. But even at the beginning there were tremendous decisions to be made that looked a lot like

dilemmas, such as, "What should come first, the A or the B?" And that's just for starters; they hadn't even come to G and J yet, which still confuses many people right into our own times.

But what has all this got to do with Moral Dilemmas of Finding Yourself? Nothing. Nothing at all. As the great Camus said, paraphrasing a footnote by Kierkegaard, "Who knows!"

And to which we can only add, "Well, it depends."

On what?

Well, that depends, too.

But that's another essay (and a different dilemma).

1 This, in fact, would be slightly immoral, but that is a different dilemma located in a separate philosophical branch of study. Nevertheless, Shame on you.

**How to Find Yourself during Adolescence**

You don't1.

1 Try it again after you've reached twenty-eight or twenty-nine years of age, or have been married and divorced at least once; it comes to about the same thing. Generally speaking, if you're fifteen, have a lot of pimples, wonder about the existence of God, think your mother and father are just, like, so totally out of it, and your so-called friends seem shallow and conformist, well, then, you've got enough to worry about without bringing your innermost being into it. My advice is just do who you seem to be right now, and worry about the rest of who you are when your complexion clears up. Oh, and good luck.