

introduction

“This above all: to thine own self be true, and it must follow,
as the night the day, thou canst not then be false to any man.”

—William Shakespeare

Shakespeare’s age-honored words, spoken by Polonius to his son Laertes in Act I of *Hamlet*, sound so clear and unambiguous. They tell us that to maintain honest relations with others we must first be true to ourselves. Yet if Laertes were to be totally honest with himself, he would realize that his father may as well have told him to catch the wind. After all, to which “self” are we to be true? Is it the one that shows up when we’re in a bad mood, or the one that is present when we feel humbled by our mistakes? Is it the one who speaks from the dark recesses of the heart when we’re depressed or upset, or the one that appears during those fleeting moments when life seems so fanciful and light?

From these questions we see that the concept of “self” may turn out to be a bit more elusive than initially presumed. Perhaps if Laertes could have turned to traditional psychology, it would have shed some light on the subject. Freud (1927), the father of psychology, divided the psyche into three parts: the id, the ego, and the superego. He saw the id as our

primal, animal nature; the superego as the judgment system that society has instilled within us; and the ego as our representative to the outside world that struggles to maintain a balance between the other two powerful forces. But this certainly would not have helped young Laertes. After all, to which of these conflicting forces are we to be true?

Again we see that things are not always as simple as they seem. If we dare to look past the surface of the term “self,” questions arise that many people would rather not ask: “Are the many aspects of my being all equally part of my ‘self,’ or is there only one of me—and if so, which, where, how, and why?”

In the following chapters, we will undertake a journey of exploration of “self.” But we will not do so in a traditional manner. We will neither call upon the experts in psychology, nor upon the great philosophers. We will not argue and choose between time-honored religious views, or resort to statistically supported surveys of people’s opinions. We will, instead, turn to a single source that has phenomenal direct knowledge on the subject. We will turn to one expert who, for every moment of every day of their life, has been collecting the data necessary to finally put this great inquiry to rest. And that expert is you.

But before you get too excited, or decide that you’re not up to the task, first be clear that we’re not after your views or opinions on the subject. Neither are we interested in what books you have read, classes you have taken, nor seminars you have attended. We are only interested in your intuitive experience of what it is like to be you. We are not looking for your knowledge; we are seeking your direct experience. You see, you can’t fail at this because your “self” is what you are, at all times and in all places. We simply need to sort it out. After all, it can get quite confusing in there.

The chapters of this book are nothing but mirrors for seeing your “self” from different angles. And though the journey we are about to embark on is an inner one, it will draw upon every aspect of your life. The only requirement asked of you is the willingness to honestly look at yourself in the most natural, intuitive manner. Remember, if we are seeking the root of “self,” what we are actually seeking is you.

As you read through these pages, you will find that you know much more than you thought you did about some very deep subjects. The fact

is, you already know how to find yourself; you have just gotten distracted and disoriented. Once refocused, you will realize that you not only have the ability to find yourself, you have the ability to free yourself. Whether you choose to do so or not is entirely up to you. But upon completion of your journey through these chapters, there will be no more confusion, no more lack of empowerment, and no more blaming others. You will know exactly what must be done. And should you choose to devote yourself to the ongoing journey of self-realization, you will develop a tremendous sense of respect for who you really are. It is only then that you will come to appreciate the full depth of meaning in the advice: “This above all: to thine own self be true.”