FOREWORD REVIEWS THE INDIE WE LOVE.

Being and Life: On Becoming One's Being
Scott K. Smith
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People who seem content and well adjusted in the social world, according to the author, are likely completely alienated from their true being, what he calls “realself.” Ontology, or the study of being, is hardly a household term, but Smith’s work may broaden its reach. A philosopher and ontologist, the author here presents the first volume in an anticipated four-volume “Being and Life” series, designed to provide practical help to those exploring and deepening their sense of being.

Symptoms of this alienation from “realself,” says Smith, include discomfort with one’s public persona, the sense that it doesn’t seem to “fit,” and that “the person I am being is not who I truly am.” Moving from these inklings and semi-conscious awareness to living full-time “as one’s realself in the realself world” is portrayed as a continuum of steps forward and back. The seekers for their “realself” are contrasted with the majority, who subsist as “socialself beings in the socialself world,” unknowingly totally alienated from their “realself,” and determined to demonize the realself seekers. Smith’s goal in the series is to support those uncovering the “realself” while awakening socialself folk “to make the realself that exists in everyone aware of itself and aware that it should realize itself fully.”

The process can move through dark and murky territory. Because little is available to guide those following this path, Smith breaks new ground as he charts the territory, sharing maps of what is found on the journey to the realself. Drawing quotes from literature (D.H. Lawrence, Emily Brontë), psychology (Erich Fromm, Carl R. Rogers, R.D. Laing, Rollo May) and philosophy (Plato, Plotinus, Thoreau), Smith identifies the many ways that beginning awareness of the realself has been expressed, thus helping readers locate themselves on the path. The thorough index and endnotes help as well.

It is a challenging book to digest. The author suggests that the material be considered in small segments, and pondered deeply, before reading on. This is good advice, especially as Smith explains the layers of confusion and alienation that people pursuing the realself life will encounter as they become aware that all negative qualities exist within themselves, alongside the

positive. This happens along the continuum of increasing awareness he calls Transition. Yet, he notes the paradox: those people who are aware of their alienation from their realself are actually *less* alienated than those who have never moved past the comfy, sanctioned, but ultimately constricting, socialself world.

Those seeking to better understand themselves, to clarify why some people don't "fit in," and psychologists and social scientists willing to consider an alternative perspective regarding guilt, depression, schizophrenia, and other common disorders, all will be well served to ponder the possibilities Smith outlines.

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