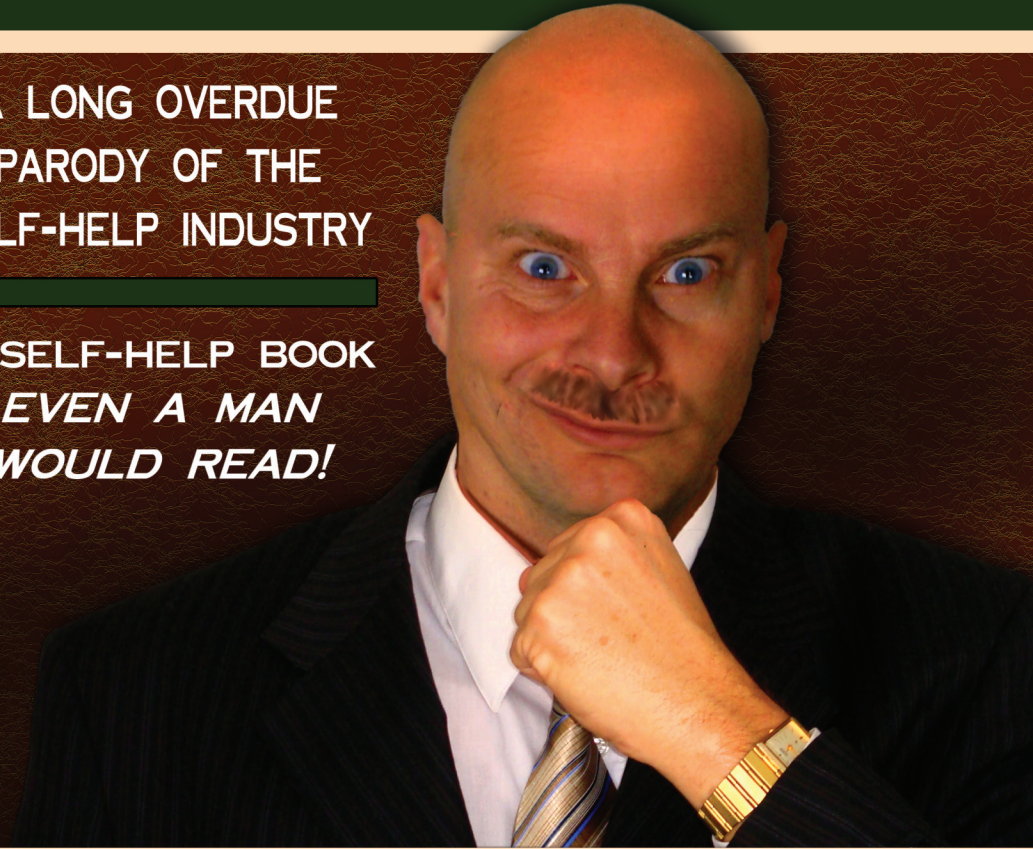


SELFISHNESS MATTERS

HOW TO LIVE YOUR LIFE COMPLETELY RIGHT
GETTING WHAT YOU WANT WITHOUT HAVING TO CARE

A LONG OVERDUE
PARODY OF THE
SELF-HELP INDUSTRY

A SELF-HELP BOOK
*EVEN A MAN
WOULD READ!*



▲ WARNING



SOME READERS MAY FIND
SOME OF THE MATERIAL
OFFENSIVE.

THE AUTHOR HOPES SO.

BY
THEO SELLES, M.SC.

Selfishness Matters

How to live your life completely right.

A Long Overdue Parody of the Self-Help Industry

(A self-help book even a man would read.)

by Theo Selles, MSc.

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Speshall thanx to my edditer, Mary Elliott

Deer Marry,

Yew reely did help and inn the end yoo made me a more indy-pendant riter.

Dan Johnson. Your feedback was invaluable. You're right, it's important that readers feel attacked by The Big Fill, not by me. I hope they get that!

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Mostly to my beloved son, Zak. I hope this makes you laugh!

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Foreword

It was quite a responsibility that I put on my shoulders when I agreed to ghostwrite this book on behalf of The Big Fill. I have been blessed—or burdened, depending on one’s perspective—with the task of accurately conveying to you the messages that he entrusted to me. It’s not at all a stretch of the imagination to consider that only Moses, clutching his tablets of truth, stumbling down from the mountain to a rudderless people below, would understand how I feel.

How did this happen? you might wonder. How was I chosen? How did I become his vessel? I asked those very same questions, my friend, and the only thing I could come up with initially was not so much answers as a sense of wonderment, and acceptance that I was indeed gifted by the universe.

After Big Fill began to speak to me, however, it occurred to me that perhaps he chose me because he wished to be exposed. Just like needy criminals who leave clues behind in the peculiar hope to be captured, perhaps he, too,

needed someone who would bring his crazed crusade to an end. Maybe this was his cry for help. Maybe he needed an intervention! Maybe he was in a hospital somewhere and was hoping for a Britney Spearsian type rescue! (Televised, of course.) I am a therapist, after all, and have been for 17 years. Over that time I admit to having become rather cynical, as many in helping professions do, whether they admit to it or not. Yes, that counselor looking at you so kindly may indeed be thinking you're a self-centered tool.

So maybe The Big Fill knew I was ready for him. Surely you've wondered, or at least I hope you have, just how someone who has never met you can tell you what you should do with your life. Doesn't it turn your stomach just a little to hear some blustering blowhard prattle on and on about your psyche and your relationships? Ever wondered just how "healthy" *that* person is, and how well they've managed their own "affairs"? How much are they helping *you* compared to how much they're helping them? (Or for that matter, how much *you're* helping them.) And just how did they earn the right to be such an authority in your life!

The formula for writing self-help books and establishing one's guru credentials is fairly basic. First, share a personal angst-filled journey, then describe a revelation or transformative moment; next, find a way of letting your audience realize how much wiser you are now than they, and then commence with the sage advice giving. It helps if you can talk down to people without their noticing. Strategically, you want people to feel stupid without being able to blame you for it. They'll be ever so grateful to you when you then lead them out of their wildernesses of dysfunction. Oh, and if you're inclined to be creative, you'll make up a rigged psychological self-assessment questionnaire for your readers to take that would find even God dysfunctional and in desperate need of your guidance.

So as you read this twisted parable of The Big Fill, his journey, how stupid and inferior he thinks you are, and what he tells you to do about it, think about whether this kind of psychological proselytization has happened in your life and, if so, was it really helpful. Consider also the nature of the advice given. If you're inclined to the warped side of things, you'll find it funny, but maybe there's more to the story than the satire. Do we really need to focus

more of our energy on our “Selves”? Is *more* self-love truly likely to be the answer to our personal and relationship problems, or does The Big Fill inadvertently make the point that it’s actually the *cause* of many of our ongoing struggles?

All the “advice” in this book comes from channeling The Big Fill but, sadly, I recognize it all too well. With the possible exceptions of Motor Oil Massages, and harvesting stem cells from their children, it’s all based on what I witness people do every day in my practice with their focus on self, and their efforts to escape accountability for their own unhappiness, and, regrettably, I admit to these failings as well. Blaming others for feelings, trying to win at marriage counseling, focusing excessively on self-esteem and inner children while being hurtful to real “outer” children, attempting to get as much as we can from relationships as if involved in an ongoing competition with our loved ones, putting faith in “the secret” of magical thinking rather than rationality, it’s all in here. Yep, you finally are getting a real, admittedly darkly ironic, look at people, the process of self-help and therapy, and maybe yourself, from the

“inside.” If you’re honest, you may decide that, in its own odd way, this may be the most truthful book you’ve ever read.

Of course, if you’re honest, you’ll perhaps agree with me when I say that there’s a very good chance that you buy self-help books instead of actually changing. I mean, who’s got the time and energy to change when there’s so much to read! If you play your cards right, you can delay working on change indefinitely by never quite finishing your chosen books. Oh you will *someday*, you say to yourself but, in the meantime, the books do look great on your shelves as evidence of your obvious insight. The Big Fill is quick to point out that it’s the *appearance* of change and, of course, especially the change of *others* that ultimately matters. Ouch! “Snap!!”

Even after having been intimately possessed by The Big Fill, I hardly know what to make of him. On one hand, he’s clearly a lunatic. All you have to do is look at his picture on the cover of the book to know that, let alone read about his troubled past and his ongoing poodle fixation. Still, I can’t help but feel as though I’ve had a brush with the kind of greatness usually found

wandering in deserts eating locusts and honey. Is he a madman or a prophet? Should you laugh at him, or find meaning in his teachings? Is it possible to like both smooth *and* crunchy peanut butter? These are the questions that keep me up at night. And now, on with the parody...

One evening, while in my bubble bath, as I contemplated my toes and the essential futility of life, I heard my cell phone ring. I considered not picking it up. To be honest, the water was warm, the air was cold, and I was tired. Yes, I was tired. I was tired of people and their endless squabbling, their mind-numbing babbling, their ongoing personal and emotional issues, and their ceaseless neuroses and psychoses. Whoever was on the phone had nothing new to tell me. Much like The Big Fill described in his account of how he ran away in the desert, I too ran, though in a less dramatic manner. I submerged my head in bubbly vanilla and hoped the ringing would stop. It didn't.

I could tell you about the soulful timbre and manly resonance of his voice. I could try to describe the odd experience of excitement, fear, and peace that I felt all at the same time. I could try to convey how stupid and inferior I was

made to feel, and how much I learned despite my ignorance, hurt feelings, and lingering uncertainty. But perhaps the best way that I can offer you all of that, is to let the man speak for himself. I am, at best, merely the Dr. Watson to his Mr. Holmes. Any failure present in these writings is my fault, not that of the man whose debatable genius was manifested in me.

Ladies and gentlemen, prepare to face and possibly overcome your ignorance. I most humbly present to you, the guru of gurus, a mystical man possessing the self-help wisdom of a thousand buffoons, The Big Fill. I know he'll transform your life as he has done mine. If you're going to be selfish, do it right! And thank you for taking part in his intervention.

Your servant,

Theo Selles

Written this day of our Lord, November 2, 2010

Prince Albert, ON

Dedication

To My ex-wives: You stuck by Me, for a while.

To My children, without whom none of this would have been possible:
Thank you for your patience. Thank you for not complaining too much
when I was too busy to change your diapers, hold your hand, play ball,
watch your school plays, meet your girlfriends, and attend your weddings.
Thank you for understanding My need to be Selfish. I don't remember
your names, but you know who you are.

To My poodles, Fifi and Fritzie: Who's a good doggy then? Are you good
doggies? Are you Daddy's widdle sweetums, are you, are you, are you?
Yes, yous a good doggies. Give daddy kisses, c'mon, kiss Daddy. Give
Daddy sweet widdle dwoggy kwisses, kiss Daddy, kiss Daddy, kiss Daddy,
DAMMIT, KISS ME!!!!

The Big Fill

Acknowledgements

To Me: It's not always easy to know what's right for other people. You, more than anyone else, know the hard road I've travelled. You know the heaviness of the burden of perfection that weighs upon My unbowed shoulders. Ordinary people, including the millions and millions of people I've helped, haven't had to cope with the mantle of greatness that an arbitrary and demanding God has thrust upon You/Me. To be entrusted with the sacred messiah-like task of saving an ignorant population from completely screwing up their lives is surely an honour, and You deserve it. To Me (as I like to call Myself), I say, Thank You. You are my Guiding Light, My Best Friend, Companion, and Greatest Lover. You are perfect, just the way You are. Thank You, just for being You/Me.

The Big Fill

1. In the Beginning

As with so many great eventualities, it all began in a coal mine...

My father, a stout, sweaty, smelly, baldish man, laid aside his pickaxe and, in almost the same moment, swept up a steel-toed peasant work boot and kicked the foreman of his crew squarely in the testicles. Due to justice being against the blue collar man, and because he had acted without provocation, my daddy was escorted from the mine shaft and found himself blinking, mole-like, in the sunlight of his newfound and short-lived freedom.

That simple and pure act of rebellion, and the years of welfare, hostility, paranoia, and jail time that followed, is directly responsible for my being here, and for you to have the chance to learn from me about the completely right way to live.

Flash forward thirty years from that moment, and imagine a young man in a phone booth. Not ten feet away, baking in the heat of the Sahara, is his car—windows rolled up firmly to secure the safety of his brace of snow-white poodles, air conditioner off to keep them from catching a chill. His fingers tremble as he prepares to make a call. Several times, the dime slips from his hand and rolls about aimlessly on the floor as if mocking him for the misdirection of his life. He sighs (deeply). How many honours would he have to receive, how many people's lives would he have to save before he can win the approval of the man who towers above all of his achievements from whatever prison he happens to be in? And not for the first time, he asks himself if he is happy—truly happy—being who he is and with the life he leads. Were his poodles enough? Could there be more? Despite all of his professional acclaim, despite the recognition of his peers, and the undying gratitude of even his terminal patients, there is still that empty spot in his heart.

Oh that damned empty spot! It isn't like one of those empty spots in your lawn that you can fill with topsoil or triple mix; and it isn't like the empty

spot in a newborn baby's skull that fills in if you don't drop it. No, this is a spot like a black hole in space, sucking warmth and goodness from his life like a crack-starved, toothless hooker named Bawanda on her knees in the alleyway behind his house. Again he sighs, this time managing to slip the resistant coin into the slot. He hears it jangle as it drops, oddly bringing to memory a Christmas long ago.

Flash back twenty-five years to that time and see a young boy, slight for his age, sky-blue eyes tear-filled as he wonders why he is duct-taped to the Christmas tree. Flash forward ten years and see that boy, soon to become a man, fretting at the spike-filled chastity belt his mother has insisted he wear on his first date. Flash back five years from then and see the boy sleeping angelically in his kennel, legs twitching as he dreams of frolicking with his litter mates. Flash forward twenty years from then, back to the phone booth, and see the man wondering where it all went wrong. Why can't he be normal?

“Daddy? Is that you, Daddy?” the young man asks hopefully into the phone. In response, a shrill voice shrieks, “It’s that asshole son of yours!” and shortly after, he hears mumbling, the sound of glass breaking, and a fire alarm.

Looking over his shoulder he can see his poodles panting and scrabbling at the car windows. They know something is wrong. He meets their eyes. Of all the creatures that know him, they know him the best. He can’t fool them. He’s kept a clever charade, a veneer of happiness, acting as if everything was fine, just fine, while all along his heart was breaking. But every night, just before he’d go to bed, without uttering a word, they would challenge him. They’d stare him down, hackles raised, sharp teeth bared, ominously growling, and he’d submit, curl up on the floor, weeping himself to sleep, knowing that he was somehow letting himself down.

And now, as he strains to make sense of the drunken slurring coming through wires stretching hundreds of miles away, the young man knows he must somehow find out what he needs to end this empty nightmare of

a life filled with riches and fame. He makes himself a promise that no matter what, no matter how rich he is or how many houses and boats he owns, he will never forget why he is working in the first place—if only he can figure out what that reason is!

He listens a while longer. The voice on the other end seems to be saying something about money, Bengal tigers, and ice skating. In the background, the shrillness reaches a crescendo. There's a crash, as if a door had been kicked in, and then the sound of running water. Ordinarily, the young man would have tried hard to understand. He would have asked clever, open-ended questions designed to help him determine exactly what was on his father's mind. Oh, let's be honest; what he really wanted was to make his father say those magic words, "Son, I'm proud of you. You really aren't a fat, useless bastard!" This time is different; this time he lets the phone slip from his nerveless fingers, and walks away.

It's the first time he's ever directly or indirectly defied his father, and his hands are still shaking as he opens the car door. The sweet smell of

cooked flesh wafts unnoticed past his nostrils. He probably shouldn't be driving in this condition; his mind is a million miles away. He fumbles with the keys, manages somehow to start the engine, and begins to drive. Only a small part of him registers that his poodles, usually so attentive in their affections, seem as absent as his father's pride.

2. The Bagpipes of My Heart

The Sahara Desert is big—very big—and soon, the young man is lost. He’s been driving for hours, not paying attention, not following any plan, and certainly not asking for directions. Mostly, he’s numb. The miles roll by like toilet paper played with by kittens, and the only sound he occasionally hears is that of a small voice distantly screaming. It’s only after he woodenly stops for gas that he realizes the voice belongs to him, and he’s been screaming at the attendant who has cornered him at gunpoint up against shelves of dusty red licorice and tattered, turkey field guide magazines. He deals with the situation by throwing himself on the floor, sobbing and begging for mercy and, shortly after, his knees bruised and his mouth bleeding, he’s back on the road, raggedly humming the theme song from “Deliverance”.

More miles go by. The sun beats down, and it’s as if the world is beating him down with it. He’s never been so lonely and miserable in his life. “This is it,” he thinks. “I can’t take it anymore.” The next time the road

curves, he's not going to curve with it; he'll just drive straight—straight into a tree, or off a cliff, or into a cow, just as long as it's off this planet! For once, his thoughts are clear; it's a relief to be able to come to some conclusion, to feel like he has a sense of purpose and direction, if only for a short while. It's that clarity that gives him hope that things could be different for him in the last moments of his life, and it's likely that very same clarity that causes him to notice something very odd.

“The light... it's different somehow,” he muses. “There's something very odd about it.” For a long moment, he can't put his finger on it but then it hits him. It's been getting lighter as the evening has progressed. “How can this be?” he asks himself. “Doesn't it always get darker outside when the sun goes down?” After first considering and then rejecting the idea that perhaps this is a special part of the world where night is day and day is night, he naturally turns to doubting himself. It's probably just another indication of how messed up he is. Gripping the steering wheel even tighter, he yells, “Full Steam ahead!” A cackle straggles past his dry lips as he sees the long, sweeping curve of the road before him.

One moment, the car is hurtling forward, forlorn driver leaning toward his doom. The next, all is still. Cicadas, scorpions, rattlesnakes—and any other animal that might live in a desert—are hushed and confused. The car hangs slightly suspended in the air, rotating slowly like a Swiss Chalet chicken. Glittering dust motes float softly about like golden snowflakes, and the young man sees them and cries. It's all so heart-achingly beautiful, and the peacefulness of it tears at his troubled soul.

And then, the VOICE. From out of nowhere and everywhere it calls out to him like a clarion bell—a strident call to action, a call to arms. “WHO ARE YOU?” it demands.

The young man wails (like a bagpipe). The VOICE is so large, and he is so small. And the question; what kind of question is that? He's never even thought of that question before, never really thought once about who he is. He's always just been his daddy's beer fetcher, his momma's best friend, the owner of Fifi and Fritzie, and, in his professional life, a psychological healer, a therapist of enormous renown. But he knows

instinctively that those answers are not good enough for the VOICE. Helpless, the young man feels the urge to piddle and gives in.

Merciless, the VOICE repeats, “YOUNG MAN, WHO ARE YOU?”

He longingly looks out at the slowly spinning desert and wonders if he can just run, run away from the searing demands of that VOICE, run away from his pain, run away from everything until he runs himself into oblivion. In a mad rush of adrenaline-fueled panic, he kicks open the door and throws himself onto the ground. A moment later he is up, legs churning wildly, saliva streaming from the corners of his gaping mouth, the young man barges off into the horizon.

It's impossible to know how far he runs. He runs straight first, with army-like precision, but then, as time passes by, his running turns into a lurching shamble. He runs without regard for what might be in his path. He runs through cacti and over snakes and soon he looks less like a man than a staggering, frothing, upright porcupine. Filled with despair and rattlesnake

venom, he forces himself ever forward. He runs until his cut-off mesh T-shirt is soaked and his perky little pink nipples bleed. In a bizarre effort to cleanse himself from the needles in his skin and maybe free himself from the needles in his brain, he tears his ragged clothes off and staggers nakedly onward.

But still, there is the VOICE. No matter how far he runs or how raspy his breathing, he hears it. He begins to imagine that he can *see* it. It comes to him from the sand particles now lodged painfully in his white wing-tipped loafers. It searches for him from the ends of the prickles puncturing his soft, pale skin, and it finds him—every cell of him—via the poison coursing through his indigo-blue veins.

And always, that infernal question, “WHO ARE YOU?” It haunts him in every droplet of sweat. It mocks him when he tries to answer it by stating WHAT he is. He knows the emptiness in those answers, has really always known it. There is no “you” in “what.” Technically there isn’t one in

“who” either, but he senses there should be. In the end, he collapses, tries halfheartedly to burrow his head into the sand, and then faints.

3. The Wisdom Frog

It's an interesting moment, that first one people have upon waking after thinking they were dead. In his case, the young man's disappointment was mitigated by the frog who sat calmly watching him, apparently oblivious to the fact that it was a wetland animal in a desert. It was a colourful frog: lime green skin speckled with purple polka dots, accentuated by bright orange stripes around its legs. It looked deep and wise and it had bushy black eyebrows, and it sat on the sand a foot from the young man's nose.

For a long moment, the young man and the frog stared wordlessly at each other, the young man unsure of what to say, and the frog seemingly happy to remain mute. It became a staring contest; the young man, intuitively knowing he was being tested, became determined to win. His mind, still reeling from the battering onslaught of the question, sought to redeem itself by overcoming the will of the amphibian before it. Seconds, then minutes, passed with the speed of a kidney stone.

Who knows how long that epic battle would have waged had not the frog, eyes still unblinking and fixed upon the young man's face, reached down and, to the young man's horrified dismay, pulled off one of its own legs. The leg came off with a tearing wet sucking sound and the young man had just enough time to howl before the leg struck him in the face.

“Eat it,” the frog said.

A bit of the young man's mind registered that the still calmly speaking frog spoke with a drawl while the rest of his mind recoiled from the command. “Eat it,” the frog demanded again and, as it did, the question returned, “WHO ARE YOU?”

It was too much. If that was what he had to do to stop the VOICE, he would do it. Tears streaming down his face, rivulets of snot pooling on his chin, the young man succumbed. Peeling the leg from his left cheek where it had stuck, the young man popped the slimy appendage into his mouth and quickly swallowed, just barely beating his gag reflex.

He awaited taste. There was none. He awaited wisdom, and there was none of that either. What there was was the VOICE again, and this time it was laughing. It mocked him, that shrill high laugh. It denigrated and chastised him. That laugh pierced through to the young man's bones. It taunted and chilled him.

“YOU THOUGHT YOU WERE EATING A FROG LEG OF WISDOM, DIDN'T YOU,” the VOICE mocked. “YOU THOUGHT THAT IF YOU ATE THE LEG, YOU MIGHT LEARN THE ANSWER TO MY QUESTION. WORSE, YOU BELIEVED IN AN IMAGINARY TALKING FROG AND, EVEN WORSE THAN THAT, YOU LET IT BULLY YOU!”

“LOOK,” the VOICE commanded. “LOOK! WHERE IS YOUR FROG?”

Shamefully, the young man looked. Not surprisingly, there was no frog.

“THERE WAS NEVER A FROG. THERE HAS ONLY EVER BEEN YOU,” the VOICE continued. “YOU HAVE BEEN RUNNING TO GET AWAY FROM ME. YOU HAVE BEEN RUNNING FROM YOU!”

“YOU HAVE LET YOUR FATHER BULLY YOU AS IF HE WAS A GIANT FROG. YOU HAVE LIVED YOUR LIFE THINKING THAT OTHER PEOPLE’S NEEDS ARE IMPORTANT. YOU HAVE TRIED TO MEET THEIR EXPECTATIONS AS IF THEY WERE AS IMPORTANT AS YOU, AND WHERE HAS IT GOTTEN YOU?”

“I’LL TELL YOU WHERE IT’S GOTTEN YOU,” the VOICE continued rhetorically. “IT’S GOTTEN YOU SNOT-FACED, NAKED, AND POODLELESS IN THE SAHARA DESERT!”

How many of us ever truly know the moment when we come into our own? Can we ever know for sure when wisdom finds us and we leave the

diapers of ignorance behind? For the young man, it all became so very crystal-clear. All of his running, all of his seeking, all of his doubt—it was all because he was looking externally for wisdom frogs rather than internally for the amphibious truths of his own. Picking himself up from the desert floor, he walked back to his car and into his new life.

To read the rest, please order your own copy at
www.SelfishnessMatters.com

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