



# This Time It's NOT Personal: Why Science Says Get Over Yourself

*Sam Hicken Ph.D.*

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## **This Time It's NOT Personal: Why Science Says Get Over Yourself** Sam Hicken Ph.D.

If you've ever wondered how you came to be peering out of your singular set of eyeballs, enjoying (or not) your unique existence, science has answers. Evidence stretches from the Big Bang to the here and now, and what it shows is that personal identity is a gene-induced sensation, an evolutionarily advantageous self-narrative, a fake ID. It's a misperception that Einstein labeled "an optical illusion of consciousness."

Although we may not act like it, each of us is made of stardust. Supernovae blasted every one of our atoms into space, where some congealed into life-spawning planets. On Earth, brute matter stumbled over two critical thresholds, from inorganic gunk to organic goo, and from organic goo to living glop (you and I are proof enough). At that point, evolution via natural selection took over. Whenever organisms propagate in differential number based on expedient attributes, some will preponderate while others fade. What else could happen? A conga line? We're here because our ancestors were good at reproducing.

An earthworm's sense of self registers slim to none, and though dolphins can recognize themselves in a mirror they rarely write memoirs. Only among humans is self-fascination a number one pastime (social media is proof enough). **THIS TIME IT'S NOT PERSONAL** lays out how and why that happened, where it might lead, what we can do about it, and why we should. It's a scientific self-help book packed with humor and scholarship.

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