

**The True Self vs. Superficial Levels of Personality;
Sin and Neurosis; Split Concepts Create Confusion**

Study Guide for Online Meetings on PL 94

Week 1: Real Self vs. Superficial Levels of Personality

Week 2: Tension and Anxiety result from the Superficial Self

Week 3: Sin and Neurosis

Week 4: Split Concepts Create Confusion

And once you are real, you can't become unreal again. It lasts for always.

The Velveteen Rabbit by Margery Williams

Week 1: Real Self vs. Superficial Levels of Personality

The more you work on this path and comprehend the nature of this work, the more will you understand that the aim is to find your real self, your true being, underneath layers upon layers of yourself which, at first glance, seem to be your personality.

But the more you proceed, the more do you realize that it is not your real self, but artificial trends and traits you cultivated for so long that they have **become your second nature** and therefore **appear** as you.

When we think of the real self, we know that it stands for the divine spark. Unconsciously, your concept of it is that this real self is so lofty and so holy that it is utterly foreign to the “you” with which you are familiar. This not only frightens you a little, but it also discourages you. This is one of the greatest stumbling blocks in finding your real self. The real self is actually so much nearer to you than you realize.

The real self is actually so much nearer to you than you realize. **In fact, there are areas in your life where you do act out of your real self, but you do not know it because it is such a natural process.** As yet, you cannot distinguish between this kind of action and the action coming forth from the superficial layers.

You assume the real, divine self to appear in the form of a rigid perfection with a standardized pattern. **This stands in your way more than your imperfections.** Your misconception about divine perfection leads you to rigidity and compulsion on the one hand, and to rebellion against it, on the other. You ignore the vital truth that **imperfection can lead to and, at present, can even be perfection.**

Perfection in the real divine sense is relative, and depends rather on one's attitude toward oneself and one's acts than on a perfect act as such.

It is never what you do, but how you do it.

The act that is deemed right by the whole world and in accordance with all spiritual laws may be dishonest. You may be divided in it and may have committed it out of fear, compulsion, and thus out of the greed to receive love and approval. Then it is not your real self that acts, regardless of how perfect the outer action may seem.

On the other hand, your deed may be condemned by the world. It may be contradictory to the final finished product of perfection. But in your present state, it is not just unavoidable, but even necessary. You show yourself as you are, in accordance with your nature, your inner way of growth. **If you are at one with yourself about it**, fully assuming responsibility for it, ready to pay the consequences, this imperfect act is more perfect, more according to your truth than the former. This is not easy to understand, and it requires a certain amount of insight and progress. It certainly cannot be approached lightly and irresponsibly. Childish willfulness (always wanting to get something for nothing) should not be confused with it.

Whenever you act out of your real self, you are in complete unity with yourself. There is no doubt, no confusion, no anxiety, no tension. You are not concerned with the appearance of the act in the eyes of others. Nor are you concerned about the principle or rule.

You **are** concerned, however, with the **effect of your action** on others and yourself, about the **consequences**. And you chose this alternative because, even though you recognize its imperfections, it seems less imperfect to you than another alternative. It corresponds to your innermost nature. This does not apply, of course, to destructive actions of a crass nature.

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Exercise 1: In your Daily Review, focus on your **motives** in any disharmonious acts or interactions. See if you can notice where your Real Self may have acted, and your personality that became upset. Or, where your personality may have acted, and it is your Real Self that is disturbed by the event. **This is a very subtle distinction to make, and may take several weeks of practice.**

Daily Review PL 28

Exercise: Keep a record of incidents that disturb you. Focusing upon subtleties may help us from becoming distracted by exaggerating or over-dramatizing a situation. Notice feelings of discomfort, where you suspect you may be uninformed, ignorant, unprepared, or unaware.

Each week, see if you can relate with the sub-topic.

All you need is a ½ page of lined paper per day. Create 4 columns. At some point during each day, jot down brief notes about each incident (limit:10 per day). Eventually, this can become a thought process. The Guide refers to Daily Review as 'spiritual hygiene'.

1. Two to three words to identify each incident (no details)
2. What feelings or emotional reactions came up
3. The judgments or conclusions you came to at the time
-- At the end of each week, read through your entries and complete the last column:
4. What do you notice today that you did not notice at the time? Are there patterns?
5. Using your preferred form of meditation (sitting, walking, or while doing 'mindless' chores) reflect upon your early childhood experiences.

Week 2: Tension and Anxiety result from the Superficial Self

Only as you discover your own unreality (wrong conclusions, pseudo-solutions, evasions, etc.) will you reach the core of your being. Slowly but surely, you will begin to act and react from out of this core of yourself rather than out of the superimpositions which are error and distortion.

Only when you act and react from this core of your very individuality will you reach and affect the core of others regardless of whether or not they themselves work on such a path. This follows the law of attraction of similar, and repulsion of dissimilar substance, the law of affinity.

My attempt is to guide you to this core of your nature, from various angles, through various approaches. With this, I can help you, but you have to do the work of recognizing, of facing, of changing. In short, it is your struggle. If you want to become happy, to lead a fruitful, rich life, you have to be whole, undivided. And this can only be if you are your real self. It is logical and reasonable that the struggle and the effort have to be yours if you wish to realize yourself.

Self-Alienation; the Way Back to the Real Self PL 95

The Illusory Fear of Self

Man's greatest joy and freedom is when he can give according to his potential. Conversely, the greatest pain is the result of not giving to life and to others according to one's inherent potential. All other pain and all other frustration derive from this pain of not giving out what is within, just as all other satisfactions and pleasures are contained in the act of giving of one's self to life without restriction.

When man does not do this and therefore involves himself in a pattern of compounded pain, it happens out of the fear of meeting himself. In the last analysis, all fears derive from the fear one has of his innermost being -- that part which he does not yet fully know and acknowledge. As long as an individual keeps a part of himself hidden and secret, he cannot possibly be free. He then must constantly be on guard, and he must pretend. Therefore where man has his distortions, he lives a lie -- a lie he need not live, but does due to his false fear of himself.

This fear of the self is the basic fear behind the fear of life and even the fear of death. Neither could the fear of others possibly exist if man were free of the fear of himself.

Fear of self cannot possibly end up other than in self-alienation. When man is alienated from himself because he is as yet unwilling, for better or for worse, to look to and expose himself, he, first of all, comes to a crossroad where he seems to be confronted with one good and one bad alternative.

The Illusory Fear of Self PL 136

Real Self vs. Superficial Levels of Personality

*God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change;
courage to change the things I can; and wisdom to know the difference.*

--Reinhold Niebuhr

On this path, you also learn to analyze what is really destructive and what is not. Often you overlook this consideration completely because you are so conditioned to accept ready-made rules. The rules stand in front of you, blocking the real issue, blinding you to factors behind the rules. **As long as you do not have the courage to examine the issues, while forgetting the rule, you cannot come into selfhood.**

For this procedure requires courage -- courage, because you take the consequences upon yourself. It takes courage because you cut the bond of dependency on rules and regulations and thus on public approval -- courage to make a mistake, if necessary; and wisdom because you know that the mistake itself is not so important, but rather your attitude toward it.

The superficial self may commit an act which is right by all known standards. Yet you feel confused. There is anxiety in you because of it. On the other hand, the opposite course is clearly destructive, and although you may wish to do it, you prevent yourself from doing so because you do not wish to bring harm to others. Therefore you are divided. This indicates that **both alternatives you face come from the view of the superficial self**. This may also hold true when two alternatives, which seem neither particularly constructive nor destructive, leave you equally dissatisfied. In either case, **you are confused because your real self is covered** and all alternatives at your disposal come from the outer layers.

Any way you turn, the alternative is always between your childish self-will and the rigid rule or principle (the principle, incidentally, may even be one of your own making and does not necessarily conform to public opinion). Each alternative would be dishonest in its own way -- the one because the greedy child wants to grab, the other because it simply conforms and obeys, rather than acting out of conviction.

Whenever you are in crisis and confusion, you find yourself in just such a predicament. The confusion is the greater when you are not clearly aware of these issues.

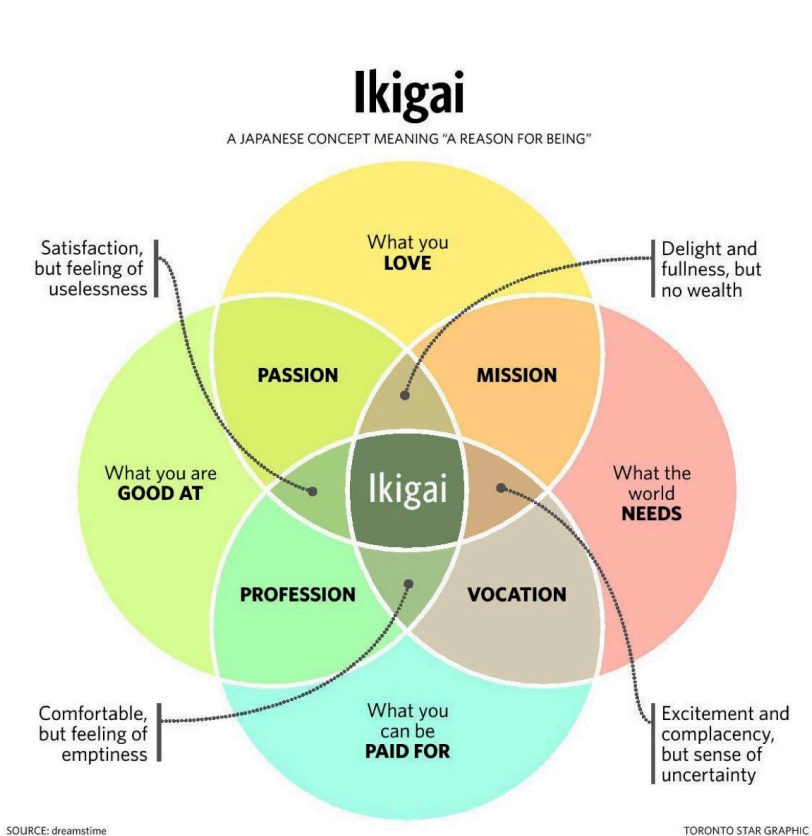
The first step is to clarify the issue as concisely as possible. Even before you can resolve this conflict because you have not as yet found the way out, you will find relief because now, at least, you clearly see what it is all about.

Where you are mature and whole, you will never be dependent on outer circumstances. You can cope with the situation, and even though a certain course may be difficult, you are fully at peace with yourself.

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Exercise 2a: What you would you need to put aside, desist from, or let go in order to access your Real Self? There must be some resistance, or you would do this solely out of curiosity! What do you feel you would lose control of? Who or what made the rules here? Notice any resistance – even to the idea of trying to identify your resistance.

Exercise 2b: What is your Ikegai?



The Japanese concept of Ikegai (A Reason for Being) suggests that while we do need to make certain compromises, it is important not to give up too much.

Diagram shows how we may have to juggle four overlapping qualities: what we love, what we are good at, what the world needs and what we can be paid for. Within the intersection of these four spheres lies your ikigai. Recognizing this intersection help you become more satisfied with your life.

Diagram found at:

https://cdn.shopify.com/s/files/1/0718/3585/files/ikigai_1.jpg?v=1519182060

Link below to Washington Post article on the concept of Ikegai plus other unique words that encapsulate unique aspects of European and Asian cultures, such as the recently popularized **hygge**, the Danish lifestyle concept of cozy, comfortable and quality living:

https://www.washingtonpost.com/lifestyle/home/what-will-be-the-next-hygge-five-international-lifestyle-trends-that-may-be-the-next-big-fad/2018/05/29/8227a612-6076-11e8-b2b8-08a538d9dbd6_story.html?utm_term=.cae62be54087

Week 3: Sin and Neurosis

When I speak of actions, I do not mean only outer deeds. All thoughts, emotions, attitudes, inner decisions, and inner behavior patterns are also actions.

Actions coming from the outer self always put you into a trap. One may be outwardly right, while feeling wrong and leaving you confused, unhappy, and doubtful. Or both alternatives may be equally dissatisfying for all concerned. Therefore you feel helpless. You hope for and expect a solution that life might offer because you cannot cope with the issue. **This helplessness and weakness is a sign that here we are dealing with the immature, distorted part of the personality.**

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Exercise 3a: For a week, use your Daily Review to notice any situation where you feel helpless and weak. At the end of the week, see if you can correlate these moments with what you know about your character flaws or where you rely on outer vs. inner will.

(ref PL 64 <http://www.janrigsby.org/files/PDF/064-InnerOuterWill-StudyGuide.pdf>)

Point of Relinquishing

It takes considerable progress in this work and understanding about certain conflicts and distortions in you before you come face to face with this issue where, in particular, you feel helplessly trapped because you see only two dissatisfying alternatives, and you choose one because it seems the lesser evil. That such a situation creates tension, anxiety, hostility, and discontent is only natural.

To a degree, you may occasionally succeed in repressing these emotions, but with the result that they will come out in the most devastating way, when you least desire it, and when you no longer are aware as to why you really feel so unpleasant.

Before you choose, you may go through stages of battling with yourself. You try to find a solution by thinking processes, by intellectual deliberations that apply to the outer situation. But in this way, no matter how much wisdom and truth you hear and try to absorb from the outside, it serves no good. Inwardly, something remains locked. You are incapable of coming out of this confusion, this trap.

My dear friends, whenever you are helplessly trapped in a situation in which all available alternatives are dissatisfying, you are in such a situation because your real self cannot manifest and cannot guide you.

The only way to free your real self sufficiently is to find your particular **point of relinquishing**, which must be hidden somewhere right in the problem with which you are concerned. Once you find this **point of relinquishing**, gradually, two different alternatives will evolve:

- 1) adherence to a rigid principle, be it a general one or be it your own;
- 2) your own real self that sees a way that may be imperfect at present, but you are willing to undertake this venture with all it entails.

Suddenly this point of relinquishing will come into sight, clearly and strongly. It may be something very subtle. It may not concern an outer or material giving up at all, but merely an attitude, an emotional gripping of something.

But be aware of the fact that the peace, strength, and self-confidence deriving from selfhood can only be attained through finding the point of relinquishing.

Whenever you are gripped in the crisis of confusion, trapped in helplessness, you are bound to find there is something you hold on to tightly, something you think you must have. There is a strong need involved, be it real or false, substituting for the real. When you find this point of relinquishing, **you will not find that you sacrifice anything by giving it up**, but you will see that you give up only an illusion, a forcing current, a false need -- something you cannot have through inner forcing anyway. **So you will not sacrifice, but you will have a wise and realistic attitude about it.**

You will understand that by not relinquishing, you trap yourself, you make yourself weak, dependent, helpless. Therefore the true self cannot manifest.

So far, the price you have paid for holding on where you should have relinquished is a tremendous one. You forfeit the peace, strength, self-confidence making it impossible for you to pursue and fulfill a real need for the doubtful benefit of holding on to an illusion, to the desire to receive something for free. The unconscious resistance to relinquish is the strongest reason for inferiority, self-contempt, guilt, weakness, unfulfilled needs, and many outer frictions and difficulties which are a final result of it.

PL 94

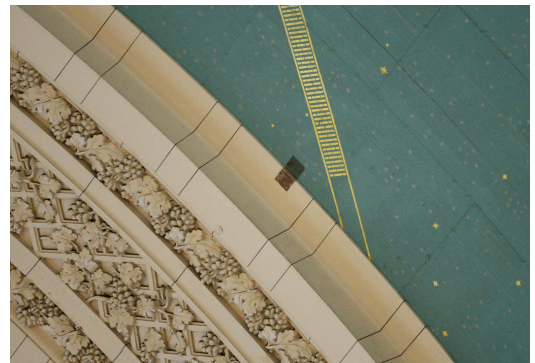
What is That Spot on the Ceiling of Grand Central Terminal?

<https://www.nytimes.com/2018/06/07/nyregion/what-is-that-spot-on-the-ceiling-of-grand-central-terminal.html>

(When the 'spot' starts to look like the rest of the ceiling, it's time to clean again!)

I saw the the NY Times article as a metaphor for keeping mementos of unconscious periods of our development. When checking the age of the previously replaced ceiling (not mentioned by the NYT), I found a second article – [5 Myths about the 1998 Restoration](#) – debunking the first!

The NEW lesson: Memories are selective, and subject to interpretations that can change over time. Like the analysis of archeologists and historians, new information and new methods of self-analysis can completely upend previous understandings and interpretations.



Observe your past life from the point of view where you were confused and dependent, and where you were free and at one with yourself. By observing the difference, you may find that whenever in life your real self must have been on the surface, there was something you relinquished. (con't)

Find it perhaps in the positive, and this may make it much easier for you to find it in the negative. It may also make it easier to give up the resistance to relinquish because by your own experience you will see it is something utterly good and favorable.

It is reality, while the illusion only breeds conflict. By finding where, through natural development in this respect, your real self was manifest in the past, you will also see that is not something far away and foreign. It is the familiar you in its very best sense.

PL 94

Exercise: 3b:

Using the anecdotal story of the Dark Spot on the Grand Central Station ceiling, practice the process that is described following it. Find evidence of a 'Dark Spot' from your own past unconscious behaviors! It may be an expensive, misguided purchase that you can't throw out, or credit card debt that you haven't been able to pay off yet. It may be a void that you feel – the loss of a relationship where you didn't behave responsibly, or an experience that you didn't have because of a fear.

Genuine Repentance through Self-Acceptance, Forgiveness, Tolerance

The area of your personality in which you are conflicted and immature, in what modern psychology terms "neurotic," in essence is nothing else than what religion and spirituality term as "sinful" or "evil." It is all the same.

We shy away from the crass term of sin. Your destructive guilt feelings on the one hand, your moralizing tendency and idealized self-image on the other, make the terms "sin" and "evil" an even greater obstacle than you encounter anyway on this path. Your often strong tendencies toward self-punishment and self-destruction made it necessary to foster for the longest time a spirit of self-acceptance and forgiveness and tolerance with yourself.

The desire to change can arise only out of true and genuine repentance. This is a strength and a courage which has, as a first step, to accept the blindness, ignorance, and imperfections that still exist, with the realization that all these, in essence, are character defects.

In your confusion, you see in each of the two alternatives -- self-acceptance and forgiveness versus the will to change -- a positive and a negative side, and therefore you cannot reconcile the two. You are afraid of forgiving yourself because you fear your own craving for self-indulgence. You also fear to face fully that which is harmful, also to others, because you fear the whip of your own self-hate.

Once you can truly perceive that this alternative is an illusion and exists only because of your confusion, two apparent opposites will become one whole without any negative involved.

Self-forgiveness and fully facing one's "sin," both derive from courage, humility, and the will to take on self-responsibility; while self-indulgence and self-hate both derive from cowardice, pride, the will not to change but to make the world change, and lack of self-responsibility.

PL 94

Week 4: Split Concepts Create Confusion

To the degree pain is avoided and denied, refuted and rebelled against, repressed and projected onto outer circumstances, pleasure cannot be wanted for its own sake, but only in order to avoid the pain. In that way it is impossible to come out of the wheel of suffering and of painful struggle with the opposites.

[The Way to Handle] Alternation of Expansive and Contracting States PL 187

Because of the split of both the positive and the negative trends [such as calling distortion and immaturity 'sin' and attempting to separate ourselves from it], confusion is the result in the same manner as the split of the original whole entity, with all its confusion and darkness, brought about by the fall.

This rebellion has a positive aspect too. It suffers the same split as the concept of self-acceptance and the will to change.

-- If you rebel against rigid principles, against perfectionism, and against conformity, it is compatible with acceptance of the inevitable, with humility and with healthy interdependence.

-- On the other hand, appeasement, obedience, and dependence derive from the same greed as childish rebellion and hostility.

It is always the same. When a truth is split, incompatible aspects appear on the horizon as a consequence and create a confusion.

Every trend or quality in existence experiences this twofoldedness. Even an unquestionable quality like love, the most potent force in the universe, is often misunderstood and rejected because it is taken in its distorted form of false sacrifice, possessive domineering, greedy craving, and dependency.

PL 94

Example: Compassion vs. Pity as aspects of Charity

There are many aspects to charity: the charity of the spirit, manifesting in tolerance and understanding; the charity of giving material things; the charity of feeling with and for another person, termed compassion.

Let us consider the aspect of compassion. As it happens, in the English language you actually have another term, designating the negative aspect of it -- and that is pity. But you do not have it in all languages. In the English language, this just happens in this respect, but for many other trends or qualities, only one term exists so that confusion is more apt to exist. But even when two terms are available, it is still so easy to be confused as to which is which.

How often does it happen that a person feels pity while he is convinced that he has compassion? **It is always tempting to pride oneself with a positive attitude, thus covering up a negative one.**

Why is pity destructive? It is destructive because it paralyzes you. In compassion, you are strong and capable of helping, of doing something for the other person.

In pity, you can do nothing but weep for the other, while in reality you weep for yourself due to your unwillingness to accept life and death, to take responsibility upon yourself which makes you capable of coping with life's hardships.

In pity, you merely project your own weakness onto another, your own cowardice and hidden rebellion. Therefore it is an utterly selfish emotion.

The way to determine whether you feel compassion or pity is to see **whether the feeling gives you strength for the other person or persons involved, or whether it weakens you.** If the latter holds true, you now know the procedure of looking beyond it and seeing what you can find. Where do you hold a misconception? Where are you trapped into confusion? Where do you repress?

Compassion makes you feel and understand, but it is strong enough not to paralyze you, to help, if need be, and, if it be for the good of the other person, even with a momentary bitter medicine.

In the future, you will come across other trends confusing you because of a split in the concept. If you have sufficient awareness of your confusion and conflicts, this will appear on the surface. Before the confusion is cleared up, you will already feel a liberation because you are then fully aware of the problem and see it.

PL 94

From the Q&A section of the unedited version of PL 94:

QUESTION: With regard to what you said before, I'm just about to lose my closest friend. And I would like to be able to get to the point of having compassion and losing any kind of pity....It is more the loss I feel than identification?

ANSWER: It is also an identification.

The grief of losing a dear one is a pain that has to be borne. In itself, it is a healthy pain that cannot weaken the soul, provided it is gone through.

But the additional element in your pain is fear. And where the fear is, identification occurs. The quality of these two pains is different if you probe your emotions.

The quality of pain of loss does not contain the fear, bitterness, self-pity, struggle, and hardness contained in the pain of identification -- pity.

PL 94

Exercise 4: Notice an aspect of yourself that causes you confusion, where you alternate between inner or outer rebellion and appeasement.

Find a word that describes your feelings. Use a thesaurus or dictionary to find synonyms or related phrases. Which ones give you a feeling of strength? Which ones give you a sense of being weak and helpless?