

The Illusory Fear of Self

Study Guide for Online Meetings on PL 136

Week 1: Negative Chain Reactions of Self-Alienation

Week 2: The “Big Lie”

Week 3: Desiring to Feel Differently Changes Feelings

Week 4: Overcoming Deception and Pretense

Week 1: Negative Chain Reactions of Self-Alienation

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. Vaguely they hope that the goal can be accomplished without fully tackling every last bit of themselves, exposing all, hiding nothing. 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. This is the point where "the big lie" has to be given up. Inwardly everything battles to do so. It is exceedingly important at this point to discuss this fear of self -- where it comes from, what it does to man if it is coddled instead of overcome.

Fear of self cannot possibly end up other than in self-alienation. It therefore cheats man of his birthright to be a happy, free, fully living and unfolding, giving and receiving creature.

The result is that man gets more and more involved in inverted processes due to which he not only loses contact with his innermost being, but contact also with cause and effect within himself -- and contact with that mechanism within himself which affords him relaxed self-government and therefore a possibility to build up his life in a rewarding, realistic way.

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Daily Review PL 28: A tool for tracking your thoughts and feelings each day so that you can see them in a larger perspective. See outline at the end of Week 2 or download Self-Study aids at <http://www.janrigsby.org/files/PDF/028-DailyReview.Suggestions.pdf>

Negative Chain Reaction of Self-Alienation PL 136

Cause; fear of meeting the self. Creates:

- Illusion that one cannot determine what goes on in the self, caused by closing our mind's eye.
- Illusion of lack of self-government, "But I feel thus and thus".
- Lack of awareness about our decision to be passive or submissive.
- Sense of helplessness, feeling that we are in the grip of our feelings, emotions, attitudes – even thoughts or actions; and that we have nothing to say about it, and that negative emotions will control us or overwhelms us.

Effects seem disconnected from the cause, inviting misunderstanding:

- Illusion of not being in control
- Destructive feelings go unchecked
- Seek outer authority because inner authority has become dysfunctional
- Keep aspects of ourselves separate, secret, hazy, or vague because we don't know what is going on and we feel can't control ourselves

Search for remedies for the pain leads to Wishful / Dualistic Thinking:

<i>"I must be good"</i>	OR	<i>"I must be bad"</i>
Staying good requires:		Being bad requires:
Idealized Self Image PL 83		Negative & distorted self image
Covers up / hides imperfections		Exaggerates and distorts imperfections
Invested in positive viewpoint		Invested in negative viewpoint

- Both based upon FEAR that real self is not good enough / bad enough!
- Refuses to look at whole self or expose oneself
- Untruth requires a forcing current to sustain it, cannot tolerate spontaneity, soul movements of inspiration, love, desire.
- Withdraws from desires and expressing real needs Result = a flat, 'unlive' quality
- Cannot receive contradictory feedback = must edit life to fit beliefs
- Defensive mechanisms develop to protect self from life
- Despair that any desire could ever be fulfilled results in a self-willed greed to escape
- Becomes disconnected from reality, unable to discern actual cause and effect dynamics, trapped in illusion, afraid of life

How to exit the Vicious Circle / Stop the Chain Reaction:

- Create clarity. Become aware of who you are, what you do, and why you do it
- Take responsibility for what "is" = prior decisions,
- Develop inner authority, strengthen personal determination. willingness to make new decisions that are flexible and organic to our new sense of being.

Week 2: The "Big Lie"

In reality you are already all that you could ever wish to be. You already possess the states of consciousness you aim to attain. It is simply that only a limited part of your total self functions on this reality level of the world into which you were born. It is your task to gradually release those parts of you that fully exist on another level of reality, but need to be brought into this material level.

The Meaning of Faith PL 250

When man is alienated from himself because he is as yet unwilling to look to and expose himself, he comes to a crossroad where he seems to be confronted with one good and one bad alternative.

When an individual fears himself, this fear amounts to the fact, in one way or another, that he cannot be what he wants to be. What he wants to be is an ideal that he pretends to be, or at least pretends to become. But this ideal is unrealizable and unrealistic because it is an ideal outside of himself, away from himself, as it were. This is apparently the "good" alternative. [ISI PL 83]

While the "bad" alternative seems to be that which he is at the moment. But that too is unrealistic because the way he sees or feels it is as exaggerated and distorted as the goal he feels he ought to accomplish.

Whenever man is crushed by what he is or fears to be, he has no realistic perception of himself. By the same token, the "good" alternative, investigated closely, is not always as desirable as it seems. This flat, unliving quality constricts both "good" and "bad" alternatives while diminishing reality, limiting scope, and deadening the rich life substance.

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There is always a way out of every darkness and therefore never a reason to despair. You will know that nothing happens without good cause and that you are always capable of using whatever you experience to heighten your blissful life.

Visualization Process for Growing Into the Unitive State PL 210

Links in the negative chain of reaction:

--**The Inner Lie:** refusal to look at the whole self leads to self-alienation.

--**Big Lie #1: The illusion of a narrow choice between good or bad.** Starting with the self, of course, and going on from there, limiting many other aspects of life into the same narrow mold. Almost every other issue turns into an either/or. This requires a decision which is impossible to make because even the "good" is problematic. Since it has always been unreal and unrealistic, it becomes unfeasible, unattainable, impossible -- or even undesirable in its desirability. The whole of life, starting with the self, seems to be divided between a stiff, rigid, unalive "good" and a flatly "bad" alternative. Everything that is undertaken follows this pattern. Not one of these two alternatives can ever be fully satisfactory in which the self feels comfortable and at ease. Both are a strain and both feel distinctly unreal.

--Big Lie #2: You become more and more confused. The apparently good versus bad alternatives turn into two equally undesirable alternatives. When you feel you are confronted with two equally undesirable alternatives, you are in distortion of truth and beauty. Even the most desirable aspects of life turn sour or hold elements in them you may feel as undesirable, although you may also feel that you ought not to feel them as undesirable.

How Desire and Fulfillment become Frustration and Stagnancy

Healthy Honest Desire leads to Fulfillment

These are one, without conflict or pain

Healthy desire = relaxed expansion, reaching for ever new possibilities.

In the eternal Now there is no end to bliss because there is continuous growing and unfolding of all universal forces.

One flows effortlessly from the other (cause and effect)

When the soul is in truth with itself and consequently with the universe, fulfillment is a vibrant, unending, deeply satisfying continuum, never an end.

Fulfillment is perceived as a new beginning instead of an end in itself; remains vibrant, open, free, unhidden, and unguarded.

Result: ever expanding circles of desires and fulfillments.

Desire and fulfillment become one as we become one with ourselves.

Unhealthy or Untruthful Desire is in conflict with Fulfillment

Since negativity results in pain and frustration, both become undesirable

In self-alienated person, both are perceived as negative:

Desire comes to represent frustration because it is never fully gratified.

Reaching out (desire) cannot be embraced, must be rejected

Person withdraws from desiring

Natural desire stagnates, becomes frustration

Fulfillment turns into stagnation, a dead-end street with no further growth.

Every activity has a beginning and an end since the self is felt as finite and not as infinite.

Finite fulfillment is not inspirational. It activates self-willed greed, must be fought for, grasped, strained towards. It becomes hardened, rigidified.

Fulfillment appears confusing and futile. Even when desires are fulfilled, they turn flat and unattractive, leaving the feeling 'what for?' or 'is that all there is?'

In finiteness, fulfillment is a flat accomplished end.

Result: constantly fluctuates between two equally undesirable alternatives (frustration and stagnation)

Chain Reaction of Self-Alienation Part 2:

Fear of meeting the self → Losing oneself in the illusion that one cannot determine what goes on in the self

It is the frequent phenomenon of believing oneself helpless in the grip of one's feelings,

emotions, attitudes, and even thoughts or actions. When you fear that your negative emotions are going to control you, you lose sight of the fact that **you have something to say about it.**

Your passivity and obliviousness to the fact that no act or thought can exist without your readiness and will for either one is the illusion of lack of self-government.

How often do you exclaim, "*But I feel thus and thus,*" as though this were all there is to it and your prevailing feeling makes any way out impossible! You overlook the simple, immediately accessible fact of determining your thought and action, as well as the way you want to feel and react. This need not be superimposition or self-deception. It cannot be when the self is fully met.

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Exercise 2:

Suppose you find and fear hate or hostility. You are frightened of its force on you and on your actions. Simply state:

"I shall fully face these destructive feelings, which will not force me into actions, for I am master over all feelings. I determine actions. I now want to see what is.

I desire and intend to change these emotions into truthful and constructive ones.

I choose my attitude to meet these emotions.

If I encounter an inner distaste of giving up such destructive feelings, I shall neither deny this inner refusal by repression, nor shall I give in to it. I shall meet this too and not be vanquished by it. I determine truth in myself, and I choose constructive ways."

Such determination is the first step back from self-alienation.

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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 and how they relate to your feelings and experiences today.

Week 3 Desiring to Feel Differently Changes Feelings

If, by your development, you come to understand more profoundly, and your power and capacity to love truly unfolds -- not by force and compulsion, but in reality -- you have an effect on others, and therefore on the world, such as you cannot imagine. You are a spreader of light and truth by the very act of your search into your own soul. Your innermost self unfolds, freeing itself of all the layers and masks, and thus you are capable of affecting the innermost self of other people. You penetrate right through their superimposed layers and masks.

Q&A Session PL 61

You can desire to feel differently.

This desire has its effect. When it comes to the choice of your action, your attitude, for example, to what you find in the hidden chamber of your psyche, you need not even wait for an effect.

You have the possibility of immediately determining whether or not you give in to resistance; whether or not you will act destructively; whether or not you choose constructive ways of living, of meeting yourself, of desiring and determining whatever course is open to you.

You will then find that it is an illusion to believe that you must go on feeling destructively until something other than yourself liberates you from it. You can be instantly liberated from it by desiring that which is most constructive at this particular moment of your life.

But this constructive desire is possible only when you know what you are. As long as you are busy keeping a part of yourself separated and secret, the relevant constructive desire will not even be known. As your own secret part is hazy and vague, so must the relevant desires be at any given moment.

These are the mechanics by which immediate self-government becomes available, relaxed, realistic, truthful self-government -- and not strained superimposition, denial, self-deception, illusion.

It is possible to make this deep inner decision at any moment. But you labor under the illusion that you cannot help feeling as you do, or even thinking and acting as you do. When I say acting, this includes attitudes, such as the determination to remain passively controlled by resistance, by negative emotions. You labor under the illusion that you are at the mercy of what you feel, think, and will, stating it in almost these exact terms.

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The goal is perfection. The basis for this is to know yourself! This is indeed difficult. For knowing oneself means to face many a trait that is unflattering. It means a long, continuous, in fact, never ending search. **You cannot overcome what you do not know.**

Self-Knowledge, Inner Guidance PL 11

Deciding to desire change

"But this is the way I feel," you say, setting a period after this as though this were all there is to it, and there is nothing further to be done. You wait to feel differently in consequence of some miracle to take place from outside.

It does not occur to you that you must first want to feel differently before you can come out of the trap. And if you do not want to feel differently, **you must know that you do not want to**, instead of deceiving yourself with the pretense that you want to, but cannot.

Once you know that you do not want to feel differently, you can find out why you want to remain in a negative, undesirable state.

By denying the truth that you can choose your attitudes, thoughts, and actions, that you are not at their mercy, you lose the greatest power at your disposal, namely self-government. You confuse this, my friends, with a false control you constantly exert over your guards in order to keep the secret part hidden. Every vestige of energy is geared to the activity of controlling your secret. Thereby you lose control over that part which could determine a fruitful, constructive, expanding life.

The imagined need to keep a part of yourself secret is a result of your not believing in your real self with all of its qualities. Yet, as long as you do not commit yourself wholeheartedly to exposing that which you fear, you cannot convince yourself of that part of your innermost being which is utterly reliable, trustworthy, wise, and good. When you do that, you must find out that there is nothing to fear.

Your fear, first of all, is your doubt and suspicion that there is no reliable, rich facet of your inner being from which you can be nourished, from which you can draw. Therefore you fear that the ultimate in you is that which hates and which has destructive wishes and desires. You begin by hiding it from others but end up hiding it also from yourself. Therefore you lose contact with yourself. All of you have to comprehend this mechanism thoroughly.

This is the great human struggle. It is a struggle for life or death, but it is as illusory as death itself. For no matter how many destructive, undesirable facets you may find in yourself, the fear of them is illusion.

And the fear of them builds up more fear, more guilt, more pretense, more neurosis, more loss of healthy control over that in you which can be controlled, namely the decision as to what you desire to think, to feel, to do, to be, the determination of the inner course, the inner direction to take.

And since you and life are one and the same -- they cannot be different -- you can fear life only to the exact extent that you fear yourself. You can fear others only to the extent that you fear yourself. You can fear nothing if you do not fear that in you which you keep secret -- secret even from yourself, or half so.

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Life does not lie. Life is a manifestation of our own beliefs.

The vague feeling of hiding something can easily be determined if one sets out to ascertain it. You jealously defend this secret, and in this defense, you alienate yourself more from the vital live energy and meaningful presence within yourself, which alone can inspire you and guide you to fulfillment.

QUESTION: For the longest time, I had difficulties with meditation. Now that I have overcome some difficulties, the results have been nothing short of miraculous. I would like to ask the question what this miracle is?

ANSWER: The miracle is a law of life, a law that you just discovered. This law is that whatever concept you hold must manifest in your life. The truth of life, the reality of life, is unlimited good. To the extent you can embrace, even questioningly, honestly questioningly, this possibility, to that extent this truth -- in whatever area you conceive it -- must unfold itself to you. This then appears miraculous to the person who has hitherto only embraced negative possibilities and therefore could not experience or see beyond these negative possibilities.

Man cannot experience more than his concepts of the possibility of experience. If he believes that happiness is impossible, how can he experience happiness? This is as logical as any physical law. For instance, if you find yourself in a dingy, narrow little room, you need not remain therein. You cannot convince yourself of this fact unless you walk out of it and discover that there are a lot of nicer places outside this little room. If you resist any attempt to help you out of it on the grounds that maybe there is no other room or space for you, you cannot come out regardless of how long you argue about it.

You must make the actual move. This is what you must do with your mind.

When you discover the room beyond, that it actually exists, it will appear miraculous. Spiritually, mentally, emotionally, you so often remain in a dingy little hole with no possibility to stretch, to unfold, to experience beauty. When you finally test it and discover the beautiful world outside the room, how safe and satisfying it is, you must experience it as a miracle. You then stretch and stretch your mind to more and more possibilities to unfold and experience good, to give and receive good.

That is the miracle of creation, as natural as your moving from one place to another. As long as your limbs are healthy, that possibility is given to you. And if you have allowed your limbs to atrophy too long by the unnecessary incarceration, through exercise and treatment they will heal. This is what you do with your psyche after it has lived too long in a climate of negativity and exclusion; you limit your view and your ideas, and this is the result of your hiding from yourself, the result of the false fear of yourself.

Realize that whatever area you are most fearful of and unwilling to look at, that is where you need to focus most and where you will feel most rewarded and liberated. The freedom and safety you will experience cannot be conveyed in words. These are not empty promises.

Week 4: Overcoming Self-Deception and Pretense

You soon come to the point when you must pretend that you do not believe in the existence of that part in you which you have every reason to trust.

This, my friends, in a very subtle way, is a pretense because it somehow seems easier to doubt this vital energy than to admit the fear of the secret and to give up the lie of your life. Even if that lie exists only in a small part of your being, it has the pervading effect on you that somehow everything seems a lie -- even that which you happen to be truthful about -- truthful not only with yourself and others, but truthful per se.

Your very being alive can only be a truthful phenomenon when there is nothing to hide, when you make the great decision not to be ruled by your negativity, by your fear and cowardice, by your misconceptions and destructiveness, regardless of what emotions, thoughts, and desires you secretly harbor.

If you state and restate the desire to, above all else, give up this inner secret, you meet the whole of you. If this is cultivated day in and day out and you mean it, you cannot feel lost, confused, stagnant, disturbed, or disharmonious with yourself or with others. There will be no anxiety, no befuddlement, no bitter hurt.

All this can be avoided only with the simple procedure outlined here -- meeting the whole of yourself without further hiding. To the degree that you were willing to do this in the past, you did experience its effects but you forget it. You allow yourself to be ruled by unreasonable defenses against the truth in you.

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Exercise 4a: Noticing Self-Deception and Pretense

Watch your evasions.

Notice how busy you make yourself with other issues that have nothing to do with this great question; see how you would rather deal with inclement issues even within yourself.

Notice if you overlook telltale reactions and opportunities for clarification and liberation.

You thus do not make use of an important key that shows you the way.

Your life could be the most dynamic, rich, and blissful experience imaginable, but you can determine life in this sense only when you do not allow yourself to be a victim of your negativity and your destructiveness.

The simple formula of declaring your vigorous intent of not letting this be, of not letting cowardice and fear defeat you, will set those powers in motion which must bring you out of this trap. All your fears must then dissolve like fog in the sun.

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Facing your fear

My dearest friends, the fear of your negativity and destructiveness is so heavy only because you believe that it is final, that it is a static thing, like a hard and fast object, indissoluble, compact. It seems to have an unchangeable substance.

You see, this fear is justified in a way, but differently than you feel. It is justified only as long as you cling to it and allow yourself to be controlled by it. For that length of time, you cannot come out of it. The negativity and destructiveness you fear in yourself is substance and unchangeable only as long as you do not wish to change it; as long as you avoid looking at it in detail from up close; as long as you decide (inwardly and often not quite consciously) to keep a secret department.

It is always your choice.

As long as you choose to say no to looking at what is and giving up what is destructive, this, as all choices, must be honored. But once you decide for the positive alternative, whatever negative exists in you will no longer feel disastrous because then you know that it is not final. No matter how bad it is, it will not seem so bad because you will get to understand cause and effect. This will make a drastic difference in your inner experience and its climate and will determine the course you take. You are not willing to let go, to give up; therefore the worst is not one-tenth as hard to bear as a tiny imperfection would be when the self keeps it secret and is unwilling to give it up.

So what is bad about the secret, hidden self is not the actual measure of badness, if there were such a thing, but the extent of refusal to expose it and to see it and the willingness to let go of it.

Exercise 4b: Reveal your fears

Renew forevermore the intent of unguardedly revealing yourself to yourself, where nothing needs to be hidden, feared, avoided. And to those who still struggle at this point, regardless of how long ago they started this Pathwork, I say, try it. Mean it!

Realize that whatever area you are most fearful of and unwilling to look at, that is where you need to focus most and where you will feel most rewarded and liberated. The freedom and safety you will experience cannot be conveyed in words. These are not empty promises.

And when you discover the fear, work on it. Expose it for what it really is. Stop denying it. For only then will you discover that there is nothing to fear, that all your distortions and contortions are in vain and are useless. For being what you really are, right now, even in this most secret chamber, is so much better than what you inflict upon your psyche.

PL 136

Each emotional reaction, each thought, each opinion and tendency, and every minute facet of your personality are invisible ray-threads belonging to you and you alone. If you want to be happy, you have to find these faulty roots within. This digging for faulty roots is the path of perfection or purification or healing of the soul, whatever you may call it.

Decide! Perfection. Bliss. Fear. Trouble. PL 7

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