

Right and Wrong Faith: Occupation with Self

Study Guide for Online Meetings on PL 33

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Week 1: Right and Wrong Occupation with Self

There are many good, kind, and even spiritual people who say, when hearing these lectures, it is not good to think so much about the self, it would be better to think more about other people. They say occupation with the self leads to selfishness. Of course, it depends entirely on how the occupation with the self is done -- or in what way one thinks about other people.

If you think about yourself in a destructive way, in self-pity, complaining about your faith, and brooding unproductively about things you may have missed in life, things you cannot do anymore or circumstances over which you have no control and therefore cannot change; it is evidently the wrong way of thinking about yourself.

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Exercise 1a: Have you experienced this kind of criticism / comment, or have you accused yourself of being self-absorbed due to your exploration of inner thoughts, feelings, and values? How have you tested yourself, to find the truth?

On the other hand, occupation with others can also be practiced the wrong way, and, unfortunately it very often is! If you constantly think of other people's affairs, criticizing them, judging them, it certainly does not help you to become less selfish. The mere fact of thinking about others instead of yourself is no guarantee that you act spiritually, just as the mere fact of thinking of yourself (if done in the right way) is no proof of your selfishness. It all depends how.

In both wrong extremes, people so often deceive themselves. If they think about others destructively, judgmentally, they try to believe that this is good, holding on to a once-heard statement that occupation with the self is harmful. They use this truth in the wrong way to rationalize their wrong reactions. On the other hand, the unproductive and weakening kind of self-occupation is often hidden under the mask, "*I must get to know myself, I must analyze my feelings.*" But nothing of the sort is ever done. So be careful in what way you think about yourself and about others.

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Exercise 1b: Consider the 'wrong' ways you have thought of others in the past, and where you have only pretended to explore yourself. Do such reviews with compassion and empathy; becoming aware of limitations is the first step in the process of growth and transformation.

A spiritually highly developed person may use all his efforts in thinking and sacrificing about others, helping them to the best of their abilities and thus doing a great deal of good. However, even more is expected of just such a person, because his spiritual development would

warrant it. And that is the purification of motives, the deep self-knowledge that is an indispensable requirement to spiritual development. Such an individual may neglect this part of his task and escape the issue by the strong emphasis on help to others.

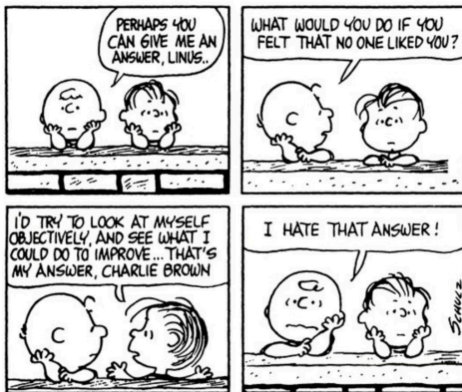
Again I say, this help to others need not and must not suffer merely because you know yourself better -- quite the contrary. **All of you who hear or read these words, my friends, are ready for the right kind of self-analysis**, which never needs to neglect the helpfulness to others.

You may already have the right actions and even the right thoughts in many respects, but as development proceeds, this is not enough, as you well know. It is necessary that your emotions be pure and without deceit.

And in order to accomplish this, it is imperative that you occupy yourself with self-probing and testing, severe self-criticism and analysis of your deeds, thoughts, and emotions with regard to spiritual truth and law. For he who does not know himself cannot know others; he who does not understand himself cannot understand others; and he who does not love himself cannot love others.

You can only respect yourself if you do the utmost spiritually -- in self-development, in sacrifice for others. And only when this well-founded self-respect is present can you truly respect others. The more you practice the right kind of self-occupation, the more unselfish you must become, and therefore the better you will be able to help others and do good works for them. Think critically about yourself, and be compassionate with others.

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Exercise 1c: Take in the words literally: “**All of you who hear or read these words, my friends, are ready for the right kind of self-analysis**”.

Having read that passage means that a new reality is *already* present within you, in the form of an ever-increasing capacity to explore this topic in greater depth.

Reflect on what this readiness means to you / for you.

Daily Review 2.0 PL 28

<http://www.janrigsby.org/files/PDF/028-DailyReview-Suggestions.pdf>

Track your daily experiences of disharmonies.

After keeping logs for several weeks, see if you can find a common denominator.

Daily Review				
DATE	SITUATION	REACTION	BEHAVIOR/ RESPONSE	JUDGMENT
	Facts/Circumstances of Disturbance	Feelings, thoughts, emotions	How You Acted (Exaggerated/Minimized)	Affirmed/Negated My Belief That...
10/01/20	Late for work	Fear/anxiety about job	Yelled at kids	I'm a bad mom
10/01/20	Fight re dinner cleanup	Felt let down by family	Didn't speak for hours	People are inconsiderate

Graphic created by Shakila F.

Week 2: Three Facets (faces) of Faith

Facet 1: Accepting Imperfection as an Act of Faith

Only when you accept yourself in the proper way, will you be able to accept others as they are and live according to this one spiritual law that demands from you to use your efforts where they can bring results -- and that can only be yourself.

You are the only person over which you have the power to bring about a change. You can never, never change another; therefore your efforts are lost in this direction. Yes, you can help to influence another person inasmuch that he or she may then decide to change himself or herself in turn. This influence can only be truly productive if you set the example first.

As long as other people's faults bring you disharmony of any sort, this means that deep down you resent them as they are; you want to change them into different beings and resent it even more that you cannot do so. This inner reaction means the breaking of a spiritual law. PL 33

Law of Living in Truth (Facing Life) from [Spiritual Principles](#) PC10

- The more you try to deceive, the more will you deepen your feelings of isolation or loneliness. Realistic self-recognition is the foundation of development. [Shame](#) PL31
- Not living in truth sets you apart from God. [Finding God's Will](#) PL29
- To face life's reality means to face yourself as you are, with all your imperfections; embrace life wholeheartedly, without fear, without self-pity or being afraid of being hurt. [The Path; Initial Steps](#) PL 25

Exercise 2a: Explore your relationship with the Law of Living in Truth. Say to yourself, *'In order to become what I would like to be, I must first, without fear or shame or vanity, face what is in me.'* [The Path: Initial Steps, Preparation, and Decisions](#) PL25

Exercise 2b Part 1: Make a concise list of faults in others than you judge or condemn.

Outer Attitudes Stem from Within

The more serene you remain in the face of other people's faults, the more you have accepted yourself as you are and thus have a healthy basis in your soul, no matter how many imperfections there still are in you. This should be the best indication to you where you stand in accepting yourself as you are, in all humility.

But the more you fight inwardly against other people as they happen to be presently, the more you are not really accepting yourself. So you must learn to accept people as they are, to be tolerant of faults you yourself may not have.

But often you go even further than that. You particularly condemn in another person **the very faults you yourself possess**. You are not aware of this, of course, yet it is so. Only by getting to know yourself thoroughly, for instance, do you accept other people better, understand them better, love them better.

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Exercise 2b Part 2: Admit your relationship with these character traits; that your version is tiny / under control / hidden; or, that you are proud of having tamed such traits. Notice if the very existence of that trait in others triggers shame (for having it or being reminded of having had it).

In order to be tolerant, you do not have to be blind. It often happens that a basically intolerant person does not want to see another person's fault if there is a strong love or sympathy present. He does not want to see the faults in this case because deep down he is afraid that by having to notice them, he could not go on loving the person. This, of course, is nothing but intolerance. If you could accept the loved one as he is, you need not close your eyes to his faults.

In addition to this wrong reaction in itself, such a person will then be convinced he is extremely tolerant because he never sees the faults in those he loves -- another of these masks man so often takes on. Real tolerance, real acceptance is to be found in the person who clearly sees another's faults because he is not afraid to love and respect any less because of them. With such an attitude, you do not only help others around you, but you help yourself.

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Exercise 2c: Do you actually condemn others, even if you do not consciously think so? Yet your emotional reactions to other people may amount to that. Test yourself in this respect.

Ask yourself, furthermore, if you are not blind to some of your own mistakes -- while you are so busily fighting those of others. I can assure you, if you do that and react in the right way towards your findings, you will gain a great new peace by this change of attitude. PL 33

Facet 2: Accepting Doubt as an Act of Faith

First, there are many people who are sincere in their endeavors in spiritual development. Yet their faith is not whole. There is always somewhere the doubt hidden: *"Is it really true? Is it not imagination? Am I not deluded about all this?"*

It is not advisable to push this sneaking doubt aside. You are doing so, often in sincere good will. Part of you does not want to have these doubts. And somehow you think by hiding the doubts, they will disappear. But as you know, nothing that is pushed into the subconscious can be really successfully dealt with. If you once clearly understand that your doubting part is not the whole of your personality and that in spite of its existence, there is also another part in you that does believe, you will not fear that the realization of your doubts may lead you to give up your spiritual strivings.

In all respects the human soul is full of contradictory currents. The sooner you understand this, and will not despair when you encounter the negative part, the part that you do not want to recognize, the better it will be for you. The trouble to do this arises by your mistaken notion that either one trend is true, or the other. Both have their reality in your soul and fight with one another. This fight can never be successfully carried out as long as you lack the courage to acknowledge the side in you that you do not like to own.

It will be easier to do that, as I said, if you understand in principle that you can and do consist at the same time of two contradictions in one respect. Whether this concerns this question of faith versus doubt, or any other character problem, makes no difference.

Once you have acknowledged in yourself that doubting part, my advice to handle this is to know that it is also God's grace when this complete knowledge -- I do not even say faith -- and the experience of God's existence is given to a person.

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Exercise 2d: Try to develop your own humility in this lack of complete faith. Say to yourself,
"I have not deserved this grace yet. I am not the judge of what I deserve or not.

I have to fight my way through with my half-faith; the willing part in my being wants to develop and become a better and emotionally more mature person, so as to handle life better and love and help others more effectively. In this endeavor, I will patiently and humbly wait until the grace of God is given to me." PL 33

If you cultivate these thoughts and these feelings and if you continue to battle with your lower self that always wants to obscure the way and obstruct your path, one day, I can promise you, this complete faith must be yours. Because you will have experienced God in such a way that you will be utterly convinced.

But just as other people's experience and grace cannot be convincing for you no matter how hard they may try to tell you, so will it be when you experience God's truth and existence in your life. You will not be able to transmit this to others who are still battling for the attainment of this divine grace: complete faith. Each individual has to gain this major experience and change in soul development by his own efforts.

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Facet 3: Accepting incomplete faith as a transitional state of development

Perfect faith would mean no disharmony in your life whatever, no fear in any respect. None of you is that far. There are people who have complete faith, as complete as this is possible for the individual; yet every impurity of the soul somehow influences also the completeness of faith.

There are some in whom faith is stronger than others; yet often in people of this kind exists an unrecognizable feeling or trend that he (or she) is something special for God. This is a harmful feeling, and also a dangerous one -- dangerous because there is so much pride contained in it, and also because it is so very easy to deceive oneself. The self-justification is always ready at hand: that all this is wonderful and an expression of one's devotion and spirituality. Here we have one of those cases where good and pure motives (the desire to come near to God, the love for the Creator) mingle with the bad and impure ones (spiritual pride and separateness from one's fellow creatures). It is your task to test yourself, as to if and how strongly this may apply to you.

This feeling that you are something special for God can be considered as a transitory state in your development. Your longing and love for God is awakening before your pride and self-will have left you. And these two opposite trends combine in this temporary state. But you must be aware of it, and you should not believe for one instant that this is right and good. When you have discovered such feelings, even to a small extent, think that you are not any more than anyone else in the eyes of God.

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Exercise 2e: You will often find that there is a particular intolerance in people who feel themselves specially loved by God. Try in your meditations to choose a person you do not respect particularly, or perhaps even one you like least of all the people you know, or one that particularly irritates you. Then think how very much God also loves this particular person, just as much as He loves you -- even if the other person happens to be spiritually less developed.

This will be a wonderful exercise, exactly the medicine you need, my friends. PL 33

Week 3: Uncertain Confusions and Hazy Motivations

The human soul is a very complicated "machinery," if I may use this expression. Purification does not lie in the fact that you simply overcome your faults. That is not so easy and takes a long time. It is only possible after you have well understood many of your trends and reactions you are still unaware of. So your immediate goal cannot be perfection, even though it is the ultimate goal.

Know this ultimate goal, but work first towards the immediate one, which is knowing and accepting yourself as you are; having no illusions about yourself; attaining a healthy attitude towards your shortcomings; learning to live according to life's rules; not shirking from the sometimes necessary difficulties; and so on and so forth, in short all that you are learning here. Only after this is accomplished will you gradually begin to alter some of your wrong trends and begin to react differently, but only then. PL 33

Inner Obstacles to Faith

When you look deep, deep inside you after having removed your reluctance to do so, and you no longer justify and rationalize, and you see without any embellishment those aspects of you where you hate rather than love, where you separate yourself in your defense rather than openly trust, where you look away rather than face, where you deny rather than affirm, where you distort truth rather than are in truth, then you see the place where you create unhappiness and frustration. It cannot be any other way. *Faith and Doubt, In Truth or Distortion* PL 221

Practical Daily Exercises of Faith

Exercise 3a: Purify your motives first, clarify them. Separate the wrong ones from the good ones in one and the same action or reaction! That is your task at the present time. And when your faith is lacking, do not stop in these strivings. For you are a good person, and as a good person, you want to become better, wholer, purer, more loving so as to do more good around you. PL 33

Exercise 3b: So even if you cannot undertake this hard work at all times for the sake of God, because you are not always sure that He really exists, **do it for your love for others that is basically in you**. It often happens that he whose faith is still weak has a greater love for other human beings than those whose faith is strong and who feel, as mentioned before, that they hold a special position in God's eyes. Both are a transitory state and will one day even out and harmonize in perfection. PL 33

Exercise 3c: And when tests are coming to you, as they must, you should **pray that your thinking capacity will not be paralyzed too much**. For that is what usually happens to a person who finds himself in a difficult situation. Just hold on to this thought: *"Father, give me a clear outlook even though I find myself confused and unhappy and mixed-up at this moment. Help me not to forget what I otherwise know. Let me see Thy truth in this situation, not as it appears to me at present in my very limited outlook."* PL 33

We can often observe that when you are in a test, you see things completely distorted, while you are convinced that the negative outlook you have is the only truth -- and that is why you despair. You even forget in such moments what you otherwise know perfectly well. You become so paralyzed (by the forces of evil that you have drawn towards you) that you cannot think and see

what you would ordinarily think of at once and see quite clearly. It does not occur to you to ask for the truth of God because, even for that, your thoughts are too much encased in darkness.

Only after you come out of this darkness, will you be aghast how you could have been so blind. You can save yourself many a difficult hour by turning to God at once and by realizing this fact I am explaining to you. Fight this temporary blindness by training your thoughts and your subconscious to get a strong hold of this fact. Train yourself for that before tests so that you will meet them with better mental equipment. PL 33

One of the most important things in the course of this work is to realize when you are confused about a particular subject. Nine out of ten times, you are not even aware that a confusion exists in you. Whenever something bothers you -- be it merely a mood, an unpleasant inner reaction, or an actual outer happening apparently caused by other people -- that upsets you, try to find out the way you are confused; the way your thoughts are muddled; the way you are not clear about an idea, a supposed right reaction, about a principle of general conduct. Ascertain where you think a contradiction of right principles exists.

Uncertain Confusions and Hazy Motivations PL 74

Exercise 3d: Put this confusion down in writing. Make a concise thought of it: "*I am confused because I do not know...*" -- whatever it may be. Break it down into several questions. The more concise your questions are, the more aware will you become of exactly what the confusion is. That contributes most constructively towards eliminating the confusion even long before you are able to find out the exact answers to your questions.

Uncertain Confusions and Hazy Motivations PL 74

Communication with the World of Spirit

QUESTION: *Why is it that so few people are given these spiritual truths? Are we so much better than others who do not know about all this? What is the criterion for being elected to be guided to something like this?*

ANSWER: A communication with the spirit world of God is rare because it is extremely complicated. The criterion of who is destined to be led to such a communication, which is of course a grace of God, cannot be explained in a few words.

I might say that a great majority of human beings are not ready yet to make use of these teachings. They have many other things to learn first. They can fulfill their lives in other ways, wherever they stand. They will meet situations in which the decision with their free will determines whether they fulfill this incarnation or not, just as you have to do with the knowledge you receive. But what is demanded is simply on a different level.

On the other hand, there also exist people who are so highly developed that they do not need such help -- or even who should not have it. To find answers in themselves is expected from them, because of their higher development. So people of higher development than your own, as well as people of lower development, can find what they need in this particular life in any of the existing religions. They can find the essence in it, and build up on the truth that can be found in any religion, while disregarding the human errors. PL 33

Exercise 3e: How did you become aware of Pathwork materials, group(s), facilitators? Notice how easily you could have chosen a different path, or disregarded your inner voice / intuition.

Intuition as a Form of Divine Guidance

Intuition is never wrong. It is a message from the superconscious into consciousness. Subconscious forces help to bring it about. The subconscious direction you are taking (as a whole) influences you to be able to have certain intuitions.

Three Cosmic Principles: Expanding, Restricting, Static PL 55

He who listens into himself will find intuitively what he needs for this life, what to cultivate, where to stress his development most. Whoever strives for spiritual development will ultimately reach contact with the divine world, whether this happens through mediumship or in other ways.

And it is the aim of the spirits of God's divine order to bring you all so far that you have a personal contact in one way or another, not necessarily through mediumship. But where the need for the type of help and instruction as can be given by the spirit world is recognized, guidance will come forth to afford the person this possibility. And whoever has been guided to a group like this, it means there is a good reason that should not be ignored. It happened because it was planned that way, because for you this is the best way to develop and fulfill your life.

I will not go as far as to say that it is your only chance and if you do not take it, you will be damned. But I say when such guidance has taken place in your life, do not dispose of it lightly. Do not consider it a coincidence, that you just heard about it, and then look at it as you would view anything that might just take your fancy. Try to see there is a little more to it than that. Go a little deeper.

There is a good purpose of your being here. Through this help you will find answers in yourself and solve problems you could otherwise solve only with infinitely greater difficulties, if at all. Not that this is the only way to solve them, as just said, but if you are blind to this help which is greater and directed help than many other ways, it is likely that you will be even more closed up to other means that may show you the way out. The way the spirits of the world of God show provides a possibility for giving you the tools you need in order to gain a victory over your lower self and free you from your inner chains that other ways do not show quite so clearly. So the fact that you are brought here is not necessarily because you are a "chosen one" and higher than everyone else; but for your present development, this is the best way.

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Avoidance Increases Karmic Debt

QUESTION: Are people with emotional difficulties, or even with a split personality, born with it -- have they brought it with them or have they always acquired it in this life?

ANSWER: Any personality problem, if it is serious, is bound to be the product of many evasions and flights of the self in former existences. What is caused in the same life can never be so strong and severe. A severe problem must have its cause not only in one former incarnation, but probably in many. It is a chain reaction. The longer you evade your own problems and inner difficulties, the more they will twist in you. And in the next incarnation you will bring this problem with you.

So karmic law is the most merciful there is, even if at the time, with the little you see, it seems cruel, it seems hard. But it is not, my friends, because you always tend to judge with the tiny detail and outlook you have at your disposal out of a very huge picture. PL 33

Week 4: A Spiritual Perspective on Suicide

QUESTION: I would very much like to know what happened to a friend of mine who committed suicide.

ANSWER: I will need a little time to see if I can get the information now. If not, I would have to ask you to repeat the question next time, but I will see. I need a little time. Yes, I can get a picture that has been relayed to me. There is in this person a psychological twist that is quite complicated and not too usual. I could not possibly go into this at this time, and I would not be allowed to do so. It would be against spiritual law to divulge all this.

Exercise 4a: Such pauses happen often when personal questions are asked. Consider what it means that personal spiritual histories (often referred to as Akashic records) are not immediately available to the Guide. What spiritual law(s) might govern this knowledge?

Ref: [Spiritual Principles](#) PC10 & [Spiritual Laws](#) PL 171

I can only say that in this person are two very strongly conflicting trends -- and strangely enough, my dear friend, very much in the sense that we have just discussed a little earlier. Namely, there is a strong tendency for spiritual life, and an equally strong tendency for spiritual death. Both are very strongly developed. They exist side by side, so to speak. To that degree, this is not a very common phenomena. But it had its origins in many previous incarnations. Knowing all this, what led to it, makes it very clear and understandable. Now he has to go through what I have explained. He has to go through it all the more because he has the spiritual understanding.

Prayer always helps. It is a light that these unhappy and poor spirits -- whether they have committed suicide or whether they suffer in other ways -- feel as a sort of relief and hope. I will not say that the prayer will change the law and the fate that they have to go through. They simply have to go through it, and no prayer can change that. But the prayer brings momentarily a light that gives them hope and relief, and that may even give them a little strength to think and to find themselves. And that is why it is very good to pray for poor souls.

I have often said to you that all religions contain truth and error. In the Catholic religion prayer for deceased and unhappy spirits is commonly practiced. It actually brings help and light to suffering souls. On the other hand, Protestant religions have completely done away with prayer for the so-called dead. This also contains a part of truth, because the realization was made that prayer cannot change what a soul has sown and has to reap. In that respect, there is also truth in this very same opposite idea. This [is true] for many other subjects as well, where different religions say contrasting things about one and the same subject. And truth can be found in both opinions. You cannot save a soul merely by praying for it. That is true. But you can help it a great deal.

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Exercise 4b: Consider that your thoughts and feelings about someone who is no longer alive. How might the passage above affect your reaching out to them / for them?

QUESTION: Would you elaborate on the problem of suicide?

ANSWER: The motive to commit suicide is again the same basic problem I have mentioned before, at least in the great majority of cases: to evade and flee the difficulties one has really created himself, either in former lives or in the same one. And this is of course a grave violation of divine law. One has to pay for it.

Mitigating circumstances are taken into consideration. But that does not mean what has been evaded does not have to be gone through to the very end. For no one is given more to bear than he or she is able to. And every hardship is but the effect of a cause that was created by the self and, therefore has to be solved and gone through by the self. So even in such a mitigating circumstance, the suffering that has been avoided must be gone through in another form, perhaps in the world of spirit, perhaps in another earth life. It depends **and cannot be generalized**.

The only exception is when a person is obsessed. Obsession is, as you know, a karma. In obsession, one's spirit is out of the body, and an unclean spirit takes possession of the body. In such a case, the deed of suicide will be attributed to the spirit who has taken possession, and not to the spirit who is by that time helpless and looks on in great anguish without being able to do anything about it. This is a suffering both have to go through, which is just and for the good.

I think you all know that one of the main factors in suicide motives is shame. It is much rarer that a person commits suicide out of physical pain than out of shame. Even if the superficial motives appear to be different, in most cases the underlying factor will prove to be shame. And what is shame other than a form of pride? One is ashamed to face other people with something that causes acute embarrassment. Of course, the motive is also frequently the unwillingness to shoulder life's responsibilities and pain. And the motive of shame belongs also into this category, but flight from life can have many facets.

To a smaller degree, every one of you experience the same in your daily life. When things go comparatively well, it is easier to turn to God, to re-evaluate your own attitude than when you are in the midst of certain types of pain and confusion. Therefore, I say to you, prepare yourself for these times of tests when it is not so difficult. PL 33

Connection Between The Incarnatory Processes and the Life Task

The outer personality may indeed be, on the whole, in a very favorable direction in which every possibility exists for the task fulfillment. However, there may be aspects of that outer personality that cause so much trouble, so much struggle, so much resistance in your terms that in spite of the very propitious circumstances, the outer personality does not want to live. The outer person may ignore and not feel the favorable direction because it is so deeply enmeshed with aspects of the problem that the whole view is blurred. Part of the dishonest "game" may be to aggrandize the suffering just so as not to "give in" and look for new approaches of the mind to view the self and life. The self-perpetuating principle increases the psychic nuclear point into such acceleration that the personality finally believes in the truth of hopelessness.

Thus the outer person finds himself unwilling to move although it could move, has every possibility of moving. The inner, real, divine self knows of the very favorable circumstances and is totally in favor of a continued life. But the outer self willfully destroys this life, acting out its worst impulses, acting out its most destructive aspects against all the favorable manifestations of its life. When this is the case, the personality fragments itself so much that extremely destructive manifestations will take place. In extreme cases, this may lead to suicide. In less extreme cases it leads to all sorts of other negative and destructive manifestations.

[Connection Between The Incarnatory Processes and the Life Task](#) PL 216

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