

## **Supplement III - Finding the Real You**

Self-knowledge is elusive. Just when you believe you finally know who you are, something surprises you. A strong emotional reaction seems to come from out of nowhere. A forgotten part of yourself pops up in a dream. You find yourself thinking exactly the opposite of the way you used to think about some subject.

No wonder you are an enigma to yourself. The sheer complexity of the human soul makes genuine self-knowledge a real accomplishment. You are a jumble of attitudes, feelings, beliefs, and behaviors. Often times, as the famous saying goes, "You can't see the forest for the trees." Caught up in all the competing demands of life, it's hard to get the big picture of who you really are. One moment you feel like you are a certain person with clearly defined values, plans, and ways of acting in the world; an hour later you may feel like you are someone else. Don't feel embarrassed or inadequate if you get confused about your identity. That's the human condition. Unless a person is self-realized and enlightened, he's only kidding himself to pretend that he never experiences these moments of bewilderment.

However, we don't want to glorify confusion. It may be the common state for modern men and women, but it's not the ideal for which we strive. Authentic self-knowledge is possible if we will invest the time and effort required. We never fully erase the periods of confusion about our real identity, but little by little these times of perplexity become less frequent. We begin to grow sure of a genuine character and individuality that lives within us.

In the philosophy found in the Edgar Cayce readings, self-examination is a key element. It's one of the starting points in the spiritual growth curriculum called "A Search for God." Over an eleven-year period, Cayce gave 130 special readings that outlined a program for soul growth. Twenty-four steps were described, the first three being cooperation, self-knowledge, and the choosing of ideals. Cooperation was first because no further development is possible unless we learn how to act in harmony with God, ourselves, and others. Since the twenty-four step program was especially designed for group study, cooperation is a prerequisite.

Self-knowledge comes second. We're reminded of the admonition of the Delphic Oracle in ancient Greece: know thyself. Anything else we try to do on the spiritual path rests on shaky ground unless we have some beginnings of authentic self-knowledge with which to proceed. Total self-realization isn't demanded at this early step—simply an emerging understanding of who we really are. An initial insight about one's true nature is like a seed that will sprout, grow, blossom, and give fruit as the other steps of the program are applied.

Once we start to have some revelations about our true character and individuality, then we can effectively choose values, goals, and ideals that will lead to spiritual growth. The Cayce "A Search for God" readings on this third step warned how easily we can go wrong. Even with the best of intentions, it's easy to set ideals that are based on mis-perceptions of ourselves. For example, we can mistake an ordinary part of the personality for the Higher Self. The side of us that is nice or polite or friendly is not necessarily the deepest spiritual identity. Today's world is full of New Age novices who are quick to claim, "I am God," but are they actually in touch with such a depth of reality or have they settled for an appealing slogan that is a shortcut? Only when we have first made some progress in self-study can we begin to see with any clarity which goals and aims are truly worth shooting for. Otherwise we slip into self-delusion that merely reinforces and deepens our misunderstanding of life.

It is sad to observe just how many so-called spiritual seekers are actually looking for a way to glorify their own egos. Perhaps they are not aware of what they are doing, but an unwillingness to invest time and effort in soul development leads only to self-deception. The problem is one that has been around for a long time, not just during the modern New Age movement. Cayce's readings often chastised people for trying to take shortcuts, for trying to get around the sacrifices that are necessary in order to uncover our real spiritual being.

Sincere self-examination is a key element to Cayce's approach to finding meaning and purpose in life. In fact it is seen as the central challenge facing all of us in contemporary society. As it was said in one reading: "*The greater study of self . . . should be the great study for the human family*" (3744-4).

The trick is to keep self-study from turning into a preoccupation with oneself. How can an individual sincerely try to discover the true self without falling into the trap of narcissism? This is a crucial question for any spiritual discipline that claims to lead its followers to self-realization. It's the ancient problem of true and false pathways for the soul. The riddle is particularly important in these times that offer so many New Age philosophies, each one promising dramatic outcomes.

The Cayce readings addressed this problem. The search to find one's true self is presented as a dynamic tension between two poles. On the one hand is the inner life of reflection, self-analysis, and meditation; on the other hand is the life of relationship to the outer world and service. A true pathway for the soul—that is, one that leads to honest, objective knowledge of one's real nature--follows a balanced course. "The study of self" is looking both inward and outward.

We expect that our true nature can be discovered by looking within, but why is an outward orientation of equal importance? The answer is the spiritual life is one of connections and relationship. Remember what the Cayce readings

suggested as the purpose for which God created us as souls: companionship. That impulse for companionship is not merely with the Creator; it's for relationship with each other and even the earth.

What does that mean in practical terms? How do we gain self-knowledge through connections with other people or with the natural environment? As strange as it may sound, you can sometimes recognize your own authentic self—your own Higher Self, as it is often called—living through the words or deeds of someone else. Or you may feel the presence of your own Higher Self living in the earth itself.

You probably have this experience from time to time and don't really know what it means. It may come when you are in some natural setting: walking in the forest, weeding in your garden, sitting by the ocean. You may feel a presence that seems to communicate with you through the beauty or power of nature. That presence is something you recognize to be yourself, not your ordinary self but something that seems to come from a deeper and more genuine place within you.

The same thing may happen in relation to another person. A friend will say something profound to you, something that speaks to the deepest levels where you are struggling, yet that friend won't realize what wisdom has just come out of his mouth. For just a moment it's as if that friend were acting as a channel, as a mouthpiece, for your Higher Self to communicate with your normal consciousness.

Your true self also reveals itself through interpersonal relationships when you act lovingly in service. Think of a time when you reached out to help someone simply because you cared. There was no ulterior motive. You expected nothing back from that individual. In that act of service and loving relationship, you probably discovered something about yourself. You awakened to a side of who you are that is easily forgotten or ignored in the modern, competitive world. That moment could never be created solely by inward reflection.

The essential point to keep in mind is Cayce's central theme about self-study. The way that we come to know who we really are is a twofold pathway. Without a doubt methods such as self-analysis, dream interpretation, and meditation are invaluable. And the other side of the coin is just as crucial. Through involvement in material life, through relationship and service, we also come to know ourselves.

## **PERSONALITY AND INDIVIDUALITY**

If we honestly and sincerely follow such a balanced approach to self-study, we are likely to make a discovery that the Cayce readings mentioned

frequently. Each person fundamentally is made up of two parts: personality and individuality. Personality is the mask that you wear in daily life. It's the way you appear to others, and it includes your mannerisms, your likes and dislikes. Personality is the product of imitation. From the moment you were born and began to observe the world around you, personality began to take shape. You learned from your parents, television, and teachers, just to name a few of the most likely influences.

Over time your personality took on a particular set of qualities that are unique to you. However one characteristic of personality is the same for everyone: the habitual, involuntary way in which it operates. Personality runs on automatic pilot; it reacts to life situations in very predictable ways. For example, think of someone you know very well, perhaps a spouse or child. You can probably imagine a specific kind of problem situation for which you are sure you know how that person will react. You've seen the habitual attitude, emotion, or behavior so often in that sort of circumstance that you are positive it would happen the same way again. And, so long as that person is operating from the level of his or her personality, you're right—the routine response is predictable.

Personality is not inherently good or bad. Some of the strong habit patterns we have developed are nice, and others aren't so nice. What characterizes personality is the way it operates rather unconsciously.

This idea is carefully described in the writings of P. D. Ouspensky, a Russian teacher of consciousness transformation whose work was recommended in the Cayce readings. Ouspensky wrote about the automatic, mechanical personality in his autobiography, *In Search of the Miraculous* (an account of his studies under G. I. Gurdjieff). Both Gurdjieff and Ouspensky taught that humanity in its normal waking consciousness is in a kind of sleep state relative to genuine spiritual consciousness. In other words, we move through physical life sixteen hours a day erroneously believing that we are self-conscious beings. We imagine that we frequently make free-willed choices; but the truth of the matter is just the opposite. We usually operate as a personality self and merely react unconsciously to the demands of life.

Perhaps the theory of Gurdjieff and Ouspensky sounds discouraging, yet it's found in the Cayce readings too. There are references to how our spiritual qualities are usually "slumbering" when the soul is in a physical body. Watch someone carefully; or better yet, watch yourself. What you're likely to see is how readily you fall into automatic routines. You'll find you think the same old thoughts, replay the accustomed emotional patterns, spout the same familiar words, and move with consistent mannerisms. Recognizing this can even be humorous, although laughter comes more quickly when it's someone else's mechanicalness and not our own that is pointed out.

A favorite technique of comedians is impersonation. Audiences howl with delight to see the personality traits of a famous person imitated. Sometimes the joke comes from exaggerating an obvious fault in that well-known individual; but maybe there is another side to our amusement. Could we be laughing at ourselves too? Maybe something in us wakes up for just a moment when we clearly see the typical human condition.

These descriptions of the personality make it sound at best worthless and at worst an unavoidable obstacle to spiritual growth. However it's probably necessary to have a personality to function in the world, simply because we need to be able to do certain things automatically. Driving a car, washing the dishes, or tying your shoes would be laborious if you had to make every movement with full consciousness.

The personality side of our being isn't necessarily bad or wrong; it has an important role to play if it is used properly. The key to using it properly is getting in touch with our individuality.

This forgotten part of ourselves is our spiritual core. Many labels can be used—Higher Self, Real I, or Higher Ego—but the word individuality nicely captures its essence. To get a better feeling for this side of ourselves, let's look at five of its qualities. They're simple to remember because each one ends with the letters i-t-y: unity, continuity, sensitivity, creativity, and activity.

The individuality of the soul bestows a profound sense of uniqueness, but paradoxically it is also in touch with the oneness of all life. The individuality is conscious of the unity of all creation. It directly experiences its connections with God, other souls, and the natural environment.

The individuality has continuity and permanence. Think about how you are in many ways a different person from who you were fifteen years ago, or fifteen years before that. And yet, in the midst of all that change, something has stayed the same. Despite all the identities that have come and gone, there is a thread of continuity. It's a dynamic continuity because even the Higher Self is in the process of development and growth (a key point to keep in mind). In the theory of reincarnation, the personality dissolves soon after death, but it is the individuality that lives on.

The individuality is sensitive not just to physical influences but to the non-material realm as well. It has innate intuitive abilities and can perceive things from invisible, spiritual dimensions. This natural psychic gift often operates quietly, almost behind the scenes by gently guiding us with hunches and feelings. It presents us with a special kind of wisdom: knowing something without being able to explain how we know it.

The individuality is creative. Whereas the personality is caught up in routine and habit, the individuality is original and inventive. It sees life with fresh eyes and creates new responses to old difficulties. It is imaginative and able to perceive novel approaches to life. Inspired individuality brings the qualities of the infinite down into individual, finite expression.

Finally, the individuality displays activity. The Higher Self is not passive or hidden. Every day it is involved in life, even though the personality self may ignore its presence. The individuality constantly takes the initiative to influence conscious awareness and to provide helpful support for spiritual growth. The personality self may not want to change and may resist these overtures, but it doesn't deter the active, involved Higher Self.

Do these five qualities sound familiar? Are you in touch with the individuality side of yourself from time to time? One good way to clarify your personal awareness of the Higher Self is to think about the very best in yourself. Take a moment to remember instances that reflected your own excellence. They are times when you were functioning at the optimum. Don't be concerned with how frequently you have been in touch with this side of yourself; just re-experience the reality of your "individuality identity." Then think about this principle: the truth about a person is that person at his or her best. Another way of saying it is that your most authentic identity is your individuality. The other sides of you exist too, but they are more temporary—like a piece of clothing you wear for a while and then remove. The best in you is what lasts. It is the essential, spiritual core that the Cayce readings called your individuality.

## **INDIVIDUALITY AND FREE WILL**

One other characteristic of the individuality should be examined in order to get the full picture. Whereas the personality operates by routine and habit, the individuality expresses its free will. One of the most important insights from the Cayce readings about individuality is the broad and rich way in which the will is described. Nine functions of free will are described: active principle, individualizer, chooser, agent of obedience, changer, opposer of mind, developer, motivator, and guide. Let's look at them briefly, one by one. As we do, keep in mind that all of them are features of your individuality self.

1. Active principle. What's a good way to describe the will? Is it a special state of mind or a particular kind of energy? Or is it something so fundamental it cannot be defined in terms of other basic elements? The will is best understood as one of the three basic building blocks of the human soul. It's analogous to one of the three primary colors—red, blue, and yellow—from which other colors can be created. Together spiritual energy, creative mind, and the will form the essential trio of elements making up of the soul. Therefore we cannot call the will a kind of energy or a particular state of mind. Instead the Cayce readings used the phrase "active principle" to describe its nature.

2. Individualizer. Free will makes each soul a unique creation. Without the will we would be robots. Just as the Cayce readings referred to "mind the builder," they also mentioned "will the individualizer." Exactly how does the will produce this uniqueness? We might wonder if the will bears the imprint of some special code that makes one person different from another, like the serial number on a dollar bill. The Cayce readings offered a different answer. The key rests with how the will makes self-reflection — knowing ourselves to be ourselves — possible. Conscious self-awareness is the mark of an individualized being who has free will. As one reading put it: *"The will is that birthright which makes each individual entity an individual soul; thus with the ability to know itself to be itself."* (2520-1)

3. Chooser. This feature of the will is familiar. We make decisions using free will. However the process of choosing among various behaviors isn't the whole story. Obviously a person may use the will by deciding to stand up rather than continue to sit down. What may not be quite so evident is the way that we constantly make choices with our inner world. Every waking moment of the day we make decisions about where to place our attention. There are always choices to be made among different attitudes and feelings. As the philosopher and psychologist William James put it, the fundamental faculty of the will is the capacity to direct attention. As we choose to put attention on a particular state of mind, we feed our souls a kind of "psychic food" whose quality is based on the nature of that thought or feeling.

4. Agent of obedience. No doubt the word "obedience" is one of the least popular today. Everywhere we look the emphasis is on freedom to "do your own thing." Obedience sounds limiting and old-fashioned. And yet, one feature of the will is its ability to follow a Higher Will. This characteristic is a counterbalance to the previous one that stressed self-determination and personal choice. The will empowers us to choose freely and select our own life direction, but simultaneously it offers us another possibility: willingness to follow God's Will.

We'll see later how important this paradox of the will is. To find and live your highest purpose in life requires that you make use of both sides of your will. On the one hand, you'll need to be receptive and obedient to the mission your individuality self has accepted for this lifetime. On the other hand, that mission leaves considerable room for creative choices and decisions about exactly how you will fulfill your purpose.

5. Changer. Anyone on the spiritual path knows that he or she must make certain changes in order to progress. It's the will that allows changes to happen. In fact, we can alter anything about ourselves if we make a commitment to use the will in a constructive way. However when we claim this potential for change, we should combine it with patience. Some changes cannot be accomplished immediately, and this is where much misunderstanding about the will arises. Sometimes we

try to force a change according to our own timing rather than see some patterns are deep-seated and may take a while to be transformed.

6. Opposer of mind. This feature of the will may sound peculiar, but it's basic to human psychology. Our minds are an extraordinary resource with talents including logical analysis, imagination, and intuition. However, the mind is also the storehouse of memory and it tends to operate in the familiar grooves etched by those memory patterns.

Our mental nature has a strong inclination to repeat the familiar and slip into predictable routines. It is only when the will comes forth to resist those habits that the higher functions of the mind — such as imagination and intuition — can emerge. We can observe one example of this process when dealing with a repeated failure. If we keep losing in some endeavor, it's easy to slip into self-pity. Feeling sorry for oneself is powerful and before long it can lead to a paralyzing depression. Only if the forces of will are mobilized is there hope. The will can oppose this trend of mind; and if it is successful, then creative, imaginative aspects of mind can surface to deal in a new way with the failure.

7. Developer. One Cayce reading claimed that the totality of soul development rests with the will. What a bold assertion! If everything in spiritual growth depends on the right use of will, why isn't more attention paid to this characteristic of the individuality? Perhaps it's because most people don't have as broad a definition of the will as they should. Too quickly we suppose will means willpower — that negating, suppressive impulse to force and manipulate things. Obviously willpower has little to offer spiritual development; but, as the old adage warns, let's not "throw the baby out with bath water." In this case, we must be careful we don't ignore the key to soul development just because many people misuse it.

8. Motivator. The will gets us moving in life. It's fine to have the right intentions and attitudes, but they're useless unless we actually **do** something with them. One of the purposes of life we all share is to bring spiritual qualities into individual expression in the earth. That requires application and action. Getting motivated with the will is the starting point.

9. Guide. The will directs the mind. The creative potential of the mind is immense; but unless an enterprise is headed in the right direction it will cause only difficulties. The will is the feature of individuality that keeps the mind focused in purposeful directions. As one Cayce reading put it: "*Bring self to that way of applying will wherein the Builder (the Mind) may be guided aright.*" (2904-1)

## **A MODEL FOR UNDERSTANDING THE PERSONALITY**

We've just taken a close look at the features of your most authentic self: your individuality. It's the most significant factor for living your highest purpose. Nevertheless your other side, the personality, has a role to play too.

It's important to remember the distinction between personality and individuality is not equivalent to the difference between bad and good. Calling the individuality the Higher Self doesn't mean that we should label the personality the lower self. A better contrast would be Higher Self and familiar self. Personality is the ordinary identity we use in most life experiences.

Let's review some of the characteristics of the personality as they were outlined earlier. Then we'll arrange all these attributes into a model diagram that illustrates how the personality operates.

Your personality is the side of yourself produced by imitation. Over the years you have taken on patterns of thinking, feeling, and acting that you have learned from a variety of sources. It begins in earliest childhood with your parents and siblings, but the process continues into adulthood. In this sense, your personality is your acquired aspect, in contrast to your individuality which is more genuinely you. Some parts of your personality are constructive or nice; other parts are weaknesses and faults.

Both personality patterns — your good side, which you're proud of, and your bad side, which you'd like to hide or change — live mainly by habit. You have little conscious control over them because they surface automatically as a reaction to events around you. If you watch your personality self closely, you'll see you are often like a finely tuned machine. Push certain buttons and you get a predictable response. Sometimes this mechanical trait is useful — for example, when you have to do some complex behavior like driving a car without having to think about all the details. However, more often your mechanicalness is a serious impediment. It keeps you stuck in the same old hassles; it turns your life into an unfulfilling routine.

In order to see clearly how your personality self operates, you must notice how it is really made up of many little personalities. They might be called subpersonalities or separate "I's". Each "I" is an aspect of your personality that has its own way of thinking, feeling, and acting.

Subpersonalities are like roles you play in life — parent, employee, spouse, and so forth. The number of your different identities is even greater because each role has many versions. For example, if you are a parent you probably have several different "I's" that might be labeled with names like "the proud parent," "the frustrated parent," and "the demanding parent." Each one of these identities has its own strong habit patterns.

At any given moment, one of your "I's" has your attention. You identify with it; it's "on-stage," so to speak. In that moment, all the other "I's" are forgotten, and the one on-stage claims to answer for the whole self. However, the appearance of that sub-personality may not last long. Life conditions change and automatically a new identity grabs your attention. All day long different "I's" come on-stage, a steady supply of shifting ways to experience yourself. One problem this condition creates is inconsistency. **It's hard to follow through on any small resolution or commitment — let alone a soul's mission — when no reliable thread of self-definition runs through your life.**

Gurdjieff used the following parable to illustrate the typical human condition, one that makes it hard to find and live your true purpose: Imagine a large house with many servants. The master of the house has temporarily departed. From time to time the telephone rings in this house and whatever servant is nearby answers. One time it may be the maid, another time the butler, the cook, or the gardener. Whoever answers the phone pretends to be the master of the house. That servant claims to be able to speak authoritatively for the entire household. However, each servant has different opinions. Someone who repeatedly calls on the telephone will no doubt be confused because each time the one claiming to be in charge has a new point of view. In the same fashion, the various "I's" within us try to assert authority, each one imagining itself to be more important than it is.

Perhaps the best analogy for the personality and its many "I's" is a wheel. Visualize a wheel with its three principle features: rim, spokes, and hub. What would it feel like to be on the rim of a wheel as it turns? You would have the sense of movement, a perception of proceeding in a particular direction.

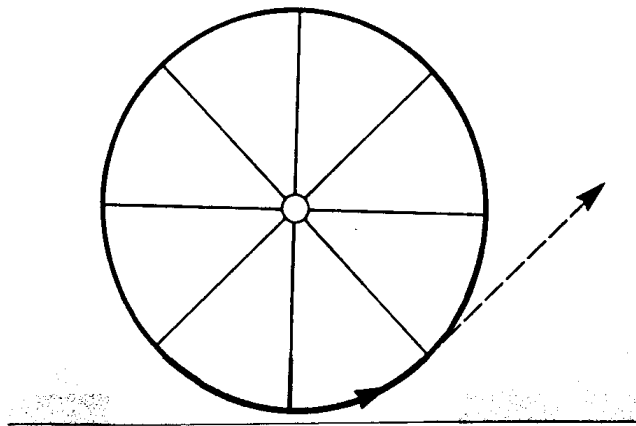


Figure 1

However, what feels like linear movement toward a goal turns out to be an illusion. From your point on the rim of the wheel, you would always come full circle back to the very point from which you began. In other words, the nature of a wheel is to bring things back time and again to the identical position. In exactly the same way, your personality self continually recycles the themes of your life. It unceasingly recreates the same familiar issues with which you have to struggle.

For example, suppose that a man is having a hard time at his job. He feels unappreciated, he is always bickering with his fellow workers, and he's unproductive. He grows restless with this job and starts looking for another one. Assume that he puts all the blame for his problems on other people. He sees no need to change anything about himself.

Soon he finds another job and is delighted because he feels like he's really taking a step forward in his life. Has anything actually changed? The state of his inner being — his level of consciousness—attracts his circumstances. So he finds himself at a new place of employment with a new boss and coworkers. However, within a few months he will be right back in the same problems he had before. Different people will be involved, but identical issues will arise. His personality wheel will rotate and bring him back to a familiar spot simply because he has made no changes in himself.

Think about your own past. Do you recognize any times when this happened to you? Can you see recurrent themes created by your personality? Perhaps you'll notice these repeating patterns usually don't make you very happy; they are detours from your true calling in life.

However, you can do something to change this situation. It begins with understanding the makeup of your personality wheel. Think of your various subpersonalities, your many "I's," arranged at positions around the rim of the wheel. Each sub-personality is associated with a spoke of the wheel, and that spoke symbolizes the strong, habitual traits of that particular "I": its automatic ways of thinking, feeling, and acting.

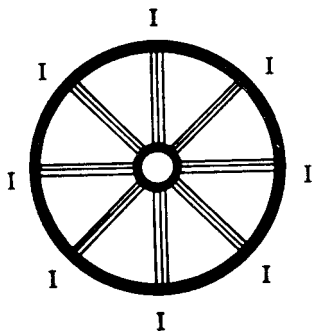


Figure 2

The way to free yourself from the control of this personality wheel is with a specific technique. In the Cayce readings it was called "learn to stand aside and watch yourself go by." The method is the same as the one described by Gurdjieff as self-observation. According to both of these systems of thought, the exercise is indispensable for those who want to truly know themselves and fulfill their destinies in life.

How does this technique work? Basically it is a way of waking up in life. Remember the notion that we are usually "asleep" in our daily affairs. Our eyes are open, but we are actually reacting like machines to the events around us. The wheel of personality is slowly turning and keeping us caught in habits.

Self-observation — standing aside and watching oneself go by — introduces a new kind of consciousness. It involves the development of an extraordinary type of attention that focuses on two things simultaneously. With one aspect of attention we continue to be involved in events and situations around us; with another part of our attention we are acutely conscious of what we are thinking, feeling, doing, or saying. A side of ourselves stands apart from the personality wheel and looks back at it. Through self-observation we can wake up and begin to see clearly our various subpersonalities.

Maybe self-reflection is already something you try to do. However for most people it's done after the fact. Hours or even days later, we may look back at something we did and observe the thoughts and feelings that led up to some behavior. That kind of self-analysis is valuable and leads to important insights, but it's not as potent as self-observation that occurs while a sub-personality is asserting itself.

Let's examine a simple example of how self-observation can work. Suppose a woman makes a firm decision to get her life on track with her authentic spiritual purpose. She's not yet clear exactly what that purpose is, but she knows where to begin: greater knowledge of the personality side of herself. She makes a commitment to try standing aside to watch herself go by. It's not an easy discipline. The first day she remembers to do it only once and that period of objectivity lasts for only ten seconds. The next day she totally forgets to use this technique, but on following days she becomes more consistent.

Driving home from the office she suddenly remembers to practice self-observation. A part of her mind and attention immediately separates from the automatic self and looks back at it. The "observing I" sees that her posture driving the car is a familiar slump, a position her body habitually takes whenever she is feeling discouraged or fatigued. The "observing I" also notices an inner dialogue going on in her mind. Two subpersonalities are arguing, each one vigorously defending its own point of view. Even though the dispute is clearly a waste of time and energy, "observing I" doesn't intervene. That's not its task

during self-observation. Neither does "observing I" suppress, criticize, or judge one sub-personality or another.

She is able to sustain this unusual sort of attention for a minute or two. It ends when one of her "I's" comes forth and is so convincing that her sense of identity is suddenly and totally captured by it. Even though she maintained this discipline for only a brief time, important spiritual work was accomplished. Another small but crucial step in self-knowledge was taken.

Over time what does she see about her personality self? She first notices how many different characters she is. Many "I's" live on the rim of her personality wheel. Some of the subpersonalities contradict others in their attitudes or actions. Some of her "I's" are rather nice or well intentioned. Other subpersonalities are more negative or disruptive. But the quality they all share is their place on the wheel of personality — their automatic, mechanical nature.

Self-observation gives tremendous self-insight, but it offers something even more valuable. Not only do we begin to see clearly the habits and routines that keep us from creative, joyful lives, but our self-observation also can start to free us from the control of the personality wheel. How does that inner freedom arise?

The key is dis-identification. You rarely can change anything about yourself by fighting your faults at their own level. That sort of struggle only adds energy to the sub-personality that is giving you trouble. Change happens when you withdraw your feeling of identity from a habit — when you dis-identify from it. That's exactly what happens with self-observation if it's practiced properly. Look at what happens when your "observing I" can stand aside and watch another "I" go by and do it in a loving, objective, non-judgmental way. Your "observing I" creates a remarkable feeling that says, "I have an identity apart from that troublesome habit." In other words, **the fact that you can step aside from some part of yourself enough to look back at it while it is expressing itself must mean the habit is not truly who you are.**

How does self-observation help you free yourself from negative habit patterns? Don't expect success by cutting them off or trying to defeat them with willpower. Self-observation makes a more effective strategy possible. By using this method to remember your true self, you stop feeding negative habit patterns. You cut off the source that sustains them: your attention and identification with them. They slowly wither on the vine.

Let's look more closely at the goal of self-observation: to remember your authentic, spiritual self. Certainly the technique provides useful insights about the personality wheel, but even more significant is the way it can awaken the remembrance of your individuality, your Higher Self. This doesn't come immediately. It may take months of practice before one of these special

moments occurs. However, with patient application you will have experiences of remembering a deeper reality about yourself. Your identity as a free, creative, spiritual being with purposes and a mission will emerge.

Those moments will have the same feeling you get whenever you remember something. Think about a time when you forgot someone's name and tried hard to remember it. You searched and searched your memory and then suddenly, there it was. You remembered. A particular feeling came with that flash of recollection, of getting back in touch with something that you knew. That same feeling is likely to come in self-observation when suddenly you get back in touch with who you really are: an individuality whose awareness is not caught up on the personality wheel.

For this powerful technique described by Cayce and Gurdjieff to work, it must be done properly. It promises great rewards, such as a reconnection with the part of yourself that can direct the fulfillment of your purpose in life. And yet, the method is easily misunderstood or misused. One error is to assume that your "observing I" is the same thing as your Higher Self. That's not the case. Instead, it's the "observing I" that can lead to the remembrance of your individuality.

Another potential error comes from making accurate self-observations, but then becoming judgmental, ashamed, or guilty of what you see in one of your "I's." Certainly it's true that parts of your personality wheel are negative and need to be transformed. However, judgment, shame, and guilt aren't the way to do it. That is merely a way of re-identifying with a sub-personality, and it doesn't lead to an awakening of the Higher Self. Self-observation should be practiced only with a loving and objective point of view. That's the attitude that leads to the rewards it offers.

You may feel like you're ready to give self-observation a try. Start with some little steps. Try to stand aside and watch yourself go by just once or twice a day for a minute or two at a time. Some days you may forget to use the method, but don't become discouraged. It's difficult to break the "spiritual sleep" that everyone is caught up in. On the days when you do practice the exercise, make some notes about what you observe. At first you shouldn't expect moments of remembering and directly experiencing your Higher Self. Initially the results will be useful insights about the nature of your personality wheel. You'll recognize more and more of your different "I's" and you'll see the habits of thought, feeling, and action that often block you from moving on to your higher purposes. Be sure to keep in mind the proper way to use this method. Observe yourself lovingly and objectively because criticism and guilt can undermine the goal of this approach.

After considerable practice you may also discover something else about your personality wheel: you may discover the characteristic that lies in the center

of your wheel. For each person this "hub of the wheel" is somewhat different. Gurdjieff called it the chief feature of the personality. In the ancient Greek tragedies, it was depicted as the fatal flaw of the hero or heroine. Whatever it may be called, it's the central misunderstanding of a person's life that lies at the heart of the personality wheel. It is a mistaken notion of life around which the various "I's" of the wheel revolve.

As significant as your "hub of the wheel" may be, it's still not very easy to see. A wise spiritual teacher who knows you well might be able to see it and describe it to you. After many years together, one spiritual mentor revealed the nature of a student's chief feature: an attitude of extreme individualism. Perhaps what the teacher meant was that a fierce insistence to always be his own man had become a central flaw for this person — the ingredient that more than anything else could divert him from his destiny.

But what if you don't have a wise, spiritual teacher? With time and persistent self-observation, you may discover for yourself the characteristic that exists in your personality like the hub of the wheel. Remember the spokes of a wheel always converge at the center. As you become more and more skillful in recognizing subpersonalities and their habit patterns, you are collecting clues that may help you to eventually see your own chief feature. It's something that you keep hidden from yourself, so it may not be easy to see. Probably it's a point in your psyche that will feel tender, even painful, when the light of conscious understanding first touches it.

Here are descriptive phrases written by several people whose serious use of self-observation finally led to breakthrough insights about the hub of the personality wheel. Each description defines an attitude or belief that controls the personal array of "I's":

- life is made up only of one disappointment after another;
- anticipation—I always have to be one step ahead of life;
- control—I must always be in charge of what's going on.

The fatal flaw is essentially that which is most directly false in your personality. Most of the "I's" of your personality are neither good nor bad and have the potential to be useful if they are directed by the Higher Self. However, at the core of your personality wheel is something fundamentally false, something that can never lead to your real purpose in life.

It's natural to wonder, "How can I get rid of my chief feature?" Self-observation, practiced over a lengthy period, can reveal this personality flaw to you. But can you eradicate it? The best response to this discovery is to awaken your more authentic identity, your individuality. As you become clearer and clearer about who you really are, the chief feature will gradually lose influence. Maybe we can never fully destroy this false aspect of personality. Perhaps it

continues to be a potential that can lead you astray, but you can free yourself of its control.

### **THREE SEEKERS**

Let's look at the lives of three people who have successfully used ideas from the Cayce readings to find their purposes in life. We'll follow these individuals throughout this book. They will serve as case studies of how to apply Cayce's strategy for finding your mission in life. Now we'll simply meet the three people and see what they discovered about themselves through self-observation.

Kate was twenty-four when she began to work with these ideas. After graduation from high school she attended a professional school of cosmetology for two years and then got a job as a hair stylist and beautician. Unmarried and having no serious romantic relationship, she still hoped eventually she would have a family. When she started looking for her mission in life, she was generally happy with the way her life was going. However, she wondered if she was in the right profession, and she hoped to gain a clear vision of her purpose in life.

Practicing self-observation for several months, she recognized many different subpersonalities. One she labeled "the savior." It was a part of herself that felt a compulsive drive to straighten out other people's lives. Whenever she made a new friend who had some problem, she automatically assumed the role of knowledgeable helper. Even if the person didn't particularly want the assistance, this sub-personality of Kate's took the self-appointed role of counselor, worrier, and problem solver.

Another "I" she observed was "the talker." This side of herself often leapt into stream-of-consciousness talking. This sub-personality was well known to her family members and work colleagues. In fact this identity was prominent in her reputation among people. However, until she used the technique of self-observation, she had never seen just how automatically she could slip into this pattern. The most valuable insight about "the talker" that came through self-observation was the inner process that triggered it. To her amazement she observed that moments before "the talker" sprang forth, there was always a feeling of discomfort or embarrassment. "The talker" was an avoidance mechanism. There was nothing bad or wrong about her natural talent for conversation, except that it was being used to cover up something that needed to be confronted and dealt with: her own insecurity and need for a greater sense of self-worth.

A third prominent sub-personality she labeled "the unadventurous homebody." This side of herself preferred to stay in familiar surroundings. Whenever the opportunity to do something new was offered, this "I" would

automatically jump out. It always had logical excuses why it was best to stay with what was customary.

Kate sensed these three "I's" weren't wrong—just parts of herself that were often misused and kept her stuck in patterns that might block her highest purpose and mission. She was able to observe those subpersonalities without becoming overly critical of them and without feeling guilty for their behavior.

Our second person is Rudy, who was fifty-nine when he began the systematic use of ideas from the Cayce readings to clarify his mission in life. He had already spent many years studying and applying several approaches to spiritual growth. A conscious search to define his life's mission may have seemed unnecessary to many of his friends. He already had a very successful career as a physician, he had been married to the same woman for more than thirty years, and they had three healthy, bright, creative adult children. Those are extraordinary achievements for any man in today's world. Yet something in him felt a need to see more clearly the essential meaning of his life.

Like Kate, he began with the work of self-observation. He consistently remembered to stand aside and watch himself go by in several different daily life settings. One of his significant subpersonalities was "the slave to deadlines." This side of him was driven to finish tasks on time: reports, meetings, appointments with patients. It had its good side because it made him very reliable and competent; but it also created obstacles. Running his life like a Swiss railway schedule often blocked spontaneity — his own and that of his friends. Relationships were sometimes damaged by his sense that whatever had a deadline had top priority. He could see certain talents and strengths that lived in that "I" but they had become servants to the fear of chaos or disorder.

Another "I" Rudy labeled "the compulsive nurturer." This sub-personality felt compelled to help people. Its root lay in an attitude of wanting to give rather than take from people. However, this admirable impulse had grown into certain habits that sometimes weren't very productive for Rudy or the people he tried to nurture. He observed himself repeatedly taking patients, friends, and even organizations by the hand, like a father, and leading them like children. He would make himself available day or night to those he adopted in this way. He also observed if they rejected his support, he felt terribly hurt.

A third prominent "I" was "the wise man." As a highly educated and experienced man, it was easy for him to slip into such a role. On occasion this sub-personality was a vehicle for some of his best talents. Nevertheless, Rudy was able to see how unhealthy habit patterns had also developed within this part of himself. It was quick "to get on a soap box" and expound upon the truth. This "I" also had the tendency to ignore other wise men, or even fear that his own wisdom wouldn't be recognized and respected. His "wise man" wanted to be admired as a knowledgeable expert.

Our third person is Carol. A talented, multifaceted woman, she had a varied background: writing, stage directing, psychology, and university teaching. Living now in rural Oklahoma and commuting to jobs in a big city nearby, she thought of herself as "the creative, spontaneous country woman." She was in her mid-thirties when she finally clarified a wording for her purpose in life, but that discovery was preceded by several years of searching.

She described herself as someone who had made it a habit to practice self-observation. What did she see? Among her subpersonalities was "the storyteller." This "I" tended to exaggerate and embellish the truth. It never invented a story from scratch, but simply stretched things a bit. For example, "the storyteller" was observed to say, "I listened to over three thousand speeches when I was teaching Public Speaking," when the truth was closer to two thousand. This "I" said, "He said he almost committed suicide," when in truth this friend really said, "I was very depressed." On the negative side this sub-personality could be seen as skillful at stretching blame and guilt, even creating major accusations out of minor infractions. But on the positive side, it was playful and often a good entertainer.

Another "I" Carol labeled "the poor baby." This sub-personality was almost totally caught up in itself. It always had words to elicit pity. It was observed to recite a litany of troubles for everyone it met: I have so much to do, I have suffered so much. Sometimes this "I" was in charge for days at a time, but it would fade if someone would merely listen and say "poor baby, what a hard time you're having."

A third sub-personality Carol identified with the words "my mother's voice." This "I" was mean to and critical of people she said she loved. She had a strong sense of how things should be done and could use humiliation or guilt to punish a difference of attitude or belief. This sub-personality was often seen to be a source of hurt to someone, and Carol was trying to understand it better so that she could free herself from it.

We can see from this small sampling of subpersonalities from three people — Kate, Rudy, and Carol — that we all have many roles that we switch into in the course of a day. Some of our "I's" are pleasant and useful; others are more troublesome. However, all the subpersonalities suffer from a common characteristic: they operate automatically. Self-observation is the first step in the process of freeing ourselves from habits that block or limit our talents and strengths

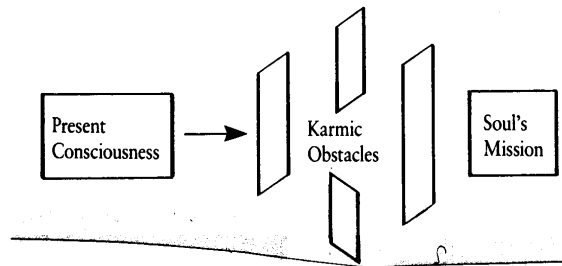
## **DEALING WITH NEGATIVE KARMA**

As mentioned earlier, reincarnation is an optional point of view for working with the ideas in this book. You can follow Cayce's strategy for finding your purpose in life whether or not you believe in rebirth. However, since the theory is a part of the Cayce readings, it's useful to consider one more point about reincarnation in relation to self-knowledge and your mission in life.

Some people who accept reincarnation believe the purpose of life is to atone for past misdeeds. They think they are here to clean up negative karma. They suppose their missions in life involve straightening out bad relationships, suffering through physical ailments, and putting up with assorted misfortunes — all because of misdeeds from past lives.

What did the Cayce readings say about this? On the one hand we are each responsible for what we have created in the past. Part of life, seen from the reincarnationist point of view, is to deal constructively with the karmic patterns that create our problems. On the other hand, that is not the essential mission for which each soul is born. Every one of us comes into this lifetime with purposes that go far beyond merely working on our own karma. We are here to serve and create.

Nevertheless, the two — negative karma to be transformed and positive missions to be fulfilled — are linked. Unless we recognize the patterns that control and limit us, they will block us from claiming the positive work of service and creativity for which we were born. This principle can be depicted in a diagram.



*Figure 3*

In our present state of consciousness we are seekers who want to find and live our deepest purposes. Certain patterns of attitude, emotion, behavior, and ill health can get in the way. Cayce called them karma, but we could just as easily admit that these stumbling blocks exist without resorting to a theory of past lives. These obstacles must be dealt with so we can be free to see and live the missions we came to do; but we shouldn't assume our purposes in life stops at the point of trying to purify or perfect ourselves. The relationship between self-healing and one's mission in life can be illustrated with a story taken from the Cayce files.

A thirty-eight-year-old teacher and homemaker was searching for greater understanding about her purpose in life and received a reading from Cayce. Several key talents were described, some of them with stories of past lives where they were developed. In a lifetime before Christ, she had a male incarnation in which she lived on Mt. Carmel as a priest, one who even came to be regarded as a sage. Long periods of meditation were a regular part of this lifetime, and the carryover effect into the twentieth century incarnation was a strong imaginative ability.

In another incarnation — this time as a woman — she lived in a pioneer settlement along the Monongahela River. Her job was teaching the children of the community, and she was especially skilled in language instruction. This talent for teaching and words carried over into the current lifetime.

Two other aptitudes were mentioned in her reading, although not accompanied by past-life stories. One was communication skills, particularly speaking; the other was the ability to encourage or discourage people.

The reading defined this woman's central life mission: to share with others through writing about her imaginative inner experiences. The reading promised she would help many individuals in this manner. However, it went on to describe a karmic pattern in her soul that could potentially undermine that mission. From yet another incarnation, certain tendencies often arose that blocked her ability to express what she was gifted to do.

Living hundreds of years ago as a man in Northumberland, England, this soul rose to leadership in times of war and turmoil. However in that lifetime, doubt and *"the desire to be assured by others oft prevented the entity from real activity."* (2520-1) We get the image of someone who was frequently paralyzed by uncertainty and overly concerned by the opinions of others. The thread of this psychological pattern was also woven into her current lifetime. Cayce characterized her this way: "at times too easily does the entity listen at what people will say, rather than to the promptings within and to that it innately knows."

This is an excellent illustration of the difference between a karmic pattern to be overcome and the soul's purpose. Certainly this woman needed to work on her doubts and over-dependence on other people. But that alone was not her mission in life. Failure to deal with this character fault could have blocked her from fulfilling the mission. She needed to always keep her eye on the deepest purpose for which she was born: to share with others through writing her imaginative inner experiences.

Inner self-study is an ongoing process. Soon you'll start looking more directly for your mission in life. However, the job of staying in touch with your real self — the task of distinguishing between personality and individuality influences — continues throughout your lifetime. Discovering and living your

soul's purpose proceeds along two parallel tracks. One is the persistent need to "stand aside and watch yourself go by," self-observation that helps you get free of limiting habit patterns by remembering your real identity. The complementary path is one that you're now ready to start in the next section: using the resources of your soul to fulfill what you were born to do.