

Excavation and Recovery of the True Self—The Nine Strata

First Stratum: *Our Habitual Self-Image*

This is your habitual self-image and the way you perceive yourself. It's the set of qualities that you think define you, the way you see yourself. We have a limited, habitual view of ourselves. Here we are unable to take in objective reality but see it through the lens of our personality and its limited subjectivity. You can be under sway of both negative and positive grandiosity, believing this is *you*. Can't see your actual behaviors or how you affect others.

Second Stratum: *Seeing Our Actual Behavior*

Here I begin to see that my *actions* do not always match my self-image and perceptions. I begin to discern between *what I am actually doing* vs. *what I think I'm doing*. There needs to be a *desire to tell the truth* to navigate this Strata.

Third Stratum: *Out Internal Attitudes and Motivations*

We begin to see what's shaped our actual behaviors. Good therapy aims to uncover this stratum. This is the level of *psycho-dynamics*, the history of why I developed certain behavior patterns. To see these patterns *you have to want to know yourself, you need to be curious*. We start to see overall patterns, how *habitual our type and our emotional patterns are*, that our habits are deeply imprinted in us, that we're deeply structured and run by our personality type. We begin to see our conditioning, our emotional reactivity, our Inner Robot that runs autonomously.

Fourth Stratum: *Our Underlying Affects and Tensions*

This is the level of psychological defense. You're bring the shock of Presence *into the moment* and you are able to *see your personality in action*. This is truly *catching yourself in the act*. It's one thing to notice retrospectively that when I come home and my wife is nice to me, I'm just kind of irritable. But here, I come home from work, I'm irritable, there's my wife just trying to be nice, *Hey, what's happening in me right now, in my body, heart, & mind*. As we go down the Levels, our fears and anxieties get more intense and the ego wants to vacate asap. Here we are learning to stay with the pain, anxiety and fear as we start feeling things all over the body but without *the story*. We just observe it, tolerate it, stay with the sensations, resentment, envy, sensing into them without acting them out to free up the body armor. Yoga, massage, exercise break up the body constrictions. We sense how we numb out, constrict or disassociate from ourselves to abandon our experience.

Fifth Stratum: *Our Rage, Shame, Fear and Libidinal Energies*

Here's where we encounter rage, shame, fear and all kinds of chaotic, primitive and libidinal forces. Here you break through to what you are defending against: 8,9, 1—rage and anger; 2,3, 4—hurt, shame, broken heartedness; 5, 6, 7—fear, terror, and panic. *It's serious business*. This is the **No B.S. Strata**. We feel the three Instincts directly. We get in touch with our scared, pissed off, rageful, hurt Inner Infant and all the raw animal needs at the root of every human being, the ego being window dressing to make it look more civilized. We experience intense hatred, resentment, and the passions in vivid color. We see how you are driven by your animalistic needs. It gets raw and nasty.

Sixth Stratum: *Our Grief, Remorse, and Ego Deficiency*

God's Waiting Room. The ego you've spent your whole life thinking was you, your whole life trying to improve you, you realize is an illusion. There's a feeling of grief and remorse and suddenly the bottom falls out. Whatever you were moving towards or away from is *gone*. Whatever you thought spirituality was is gone. You feel remorse, the arising in the heart of true contrition where you realize how much you've been given, how many chances you had to turn towards the truth. Remorse *is not guilt*. There's a great sadness for the whole human race, that we are not what we could be. We realize that whatever our Type's ego agenda is, it is never going to happen. We experience our real powerlessness.

Seventh Stratum: *Emptiness, The Shining Void*

The mercy of Spirit/God releases us into the vastness of who and what we really are beyond time and space. This is death for the identity, which is terrifying for the ego, but it feels like a return home to your true source, to what our hearts have been longing for. All aspects of life become precious. Everything belongs. We belong.

Eighth Stratum: *True Personal Being* & Ninth Stratum: *Nonpersonal, Universal Being*

We experience God in everything. We are at One with the Divine, connected with the bliss of our reality.