

# The Personality, Ego Structures and Holes

## The Personality

The personality is a blend of authenticity and ego. Our true nature expresses itself through them both, in varying proportions (depending on our current mood and our overall level of development):

- **Authentic Personality** is the true and unlimited aspect of our personality – the parts that are not bound up in ego structures. It is Self-expressive, radiant, generous, compassionate and loving. It comes to the fore when we are relaxed, present, sincere and speak from our heart.
- **Ego Personality** is the inauthentic, limited aspect of our personality – the parts that are bound up in ego structures. It is self-centred, repressed, greedy, fearful and critical. It comes to the fore when we are tense, shallow, superficial and egotistical.

As stated earlier, different areas of our consciousness have different functions, i.e. the head, heart and belly centres are specialised for thoughts, emotions and instincts respectively. Each of these fields of consciousness has numerous sub-areas, each with its own specific abilities. We utilise the area of consciousness that is most appropriate for our immediate requirements. If the required area contains ego structures we will react with the pre-programmed behaviours and false qualities of the ego-personality, but if the area is free and clear we will respond with authenticity.

The degree of authentic personality we are able to express is proportional to the number of ego structures we have, and the degree to which we are identified with them. Our true-nature shines out from the core of our being through our personality. If the personality is full of ego structures the light of our true-nature is blocked, so our expression is inauthentic. If, however, the personality is clear of ego structures, the light of our true-nature radiates freely and our personality sparkles with authenticity. As our consciousness evolves, the ratio of ego to Self gradually shifts in favour of the Self. But the degree of authentic personality we actually express in any given moment also depends upon our mood, energy level, health and circumstances.



**Figure 4: The Continuum of Self**

So what exactly is the authentic personality? Our true-Self's field of consciousness (our soul) is pure awareness imbued with an array of essential qualities (love, joy, strength, will, peace, compassion, curiosity, creativity, etc.). These aspects of consciousness are called essential qualities because they are the essence of who we truly are. During our childhood, our soul's essential qualities gradually permeate down into our personality where they unfold and develop into a range of usable personal qualities that collectively constitute our authentic personality:

1. Mind-based essential qualities (wisdom, knowing, creativity, clarity, curiosity, etc.) unfold and develop into usable personal qualities in our mental body, primarily in and around the head.
2. Heart-based essential qualities (love, compassion, joy, courage, connectedness, etc.) unfold and develop into usable personal qualities in our emotional body, primarily in and around the chest.
3. Body-based essential qualities (will, vitality, stillness, groundedness, calmness, etc.) unfold and develop into usable personal qualities in our energy body, primarily in and around the belly.

Different areas within these three subtle bodies (fields of consciousness) have specialised functions. For example, we utilise a different area of our heart's consciousness to express compassion than we do to express joy, and a different area still to express courage, and so on. But each area of consciousness, irrespective of its location or function, contains all three types of personal consciousness (mental, emotional and physical).

Each personal quality unfolds at a different time during childhood; for example Strength starts to develop at about 9 months and Will at about 2 years. But the conditions must be just right for a personal quality to

develop optimally, otherwise its unfoldment will be adversely affected or blocked. So parents must provide a safe and loving environment for their children, set healthy boundaries with the right balance of freedom and control, and avoid sending mixed messages that might confuse the child's world view.

Our young and undeveloped personal consciousness needs verification that our understanding of reality is correct, so we seek validation from our parents and/or caregivers. If the feedback we receive contradicts or conflicts with our own innocent perceptions and conceptions, the emergent aspect of personal consciousness may not develop properly or fully. This is because the mental confusion and/or emotional turmoil interfere with the natural unfoldment of the personal qualities.

Here are some examples of common parental responses that contradict and invalidate a child's perceptions of reality. They negated our objective perception, our world view and our true sense of Self:

- Shouting at us for no apparent reason (because they are annoyed about something else).
- Saying one thing and doing another (it is natural for children to copy their parent's behaviour).
- Saying "everything is alright" when we are crying and everything is clearly not alright.
- Ignoring us, not listening to us, or not giving us the time and attention we deserve. This makes us believe "I am worthless", "I am not loved" or "I don't exist".
- Saying "don't cry" discourages us from feeling pain and sadness (negating an important aspect of life). It encourages us to repress our emotions and discourages us from releasing them in a healthy way. Note: if our parents attempted to soothe us with food or a toy, as adults we may self-soothe by eating or shopping.

If the distress is intense or persistent, that aspect of consciousness may freeze and stop developing altogether. Generally speaking, the more intense or prolonged our fear and confusion, the less our personal qualities will unfold.

Even as adults, fear and confusion can cause us to temporarily freeze – physically or psychologically. When we were young and innocent the effect was much more intense, so even a relatively minor event such as being shouted at could have had an overwhelming effect. Mental confusion, emotional turmoil and physical distress reinforce and validate each other in a feedback loop (see Figure 5), thus increasing the overall fear and trauma. All three elements of the developing personality (Mind, Heart and Body) are affected, so the area of consciousness is traumatised by fear.



**Figure 5: The Vicious Circle of Fear**

The traumatised area of consciousness is literally frozen with fear. It is frozen in time and space, so it remains at the age it was at the time of the trauma, and it has a definite location within our body. The piece of consciousness is frozen at the peak intensity of the fear, so it "lives" in constant fear.

The ego-mind (the part of the mind that is controlled by the ego-self) creates a protective thought-form structure around the frozen piece of consciousness to protect our ego-self and the rest of our ego from being overwhelmed by its trauma, fear and confusion, but in doing so we exile that piece of us. The exiled part feels like it has been imprisoned in hell for eternity. It feels like hell because it is always experiencing the peak intensity of fear, and it feels like eternity because it is literally frozen in time.

A defensive ego structure may also be created nearby and programmed to act as a guard to prevent our conscious awareness from getting anywhere near the exiled part. The pain, fear and confusion have been repressed. They have been buried deep within our subconscious and may be completely forgotten.

We may have “successfully” repressed the trauma but we can’t forget about the essential quality that was unfolding into a usable personal quality at the time of the trauma. We need to utilise its functionality in our daily lives but it is not there, or is insufficiently developed. There seems to be a “hole” in our being, so the protective ego structure is programmed to take on the functionality of the missing personal quality, or support a poorly developed personal quality.

If the unfolding of our essential strength is blocked by psychological trauma, we will lack authentic personal strength. This makes us feel vulnerable, so we have to develop ego structures to provide us with false strength. If the unfolding of our essential will is blocked, we will feel anxious and have to develop ego structures to provide us with false will (will-power). These ego structures are coping mechanisms and survival mechanisms that help us to get through life without certain personal qualities. So psychological trauma changes our entire approach to life: from authentic experience and expression, to defending and surviving.

The functionality of an ego structure can never match up to the real thing because it is a crudely constructed inferior copy of an exquisite essential quality. This is not surprising because most of our ego structures were initially created when we were 6 months to 6 years of age. They were created by an immature and inexperienced ego-mind. So not only are they poor reproductions, they are often immature, inappropriate or even dysfunctional. As we get older, it is possible to refine and develop our ego structures. Ego structures build up in layers like the rings in a tree-trunk – it doesn’t matter how highly polished the outer layer is, the frightened infantile core remains buried within. Some people put a lot of time and effort into refining and polishing their ego-personality to help them succeed in life, but that is just masking over the symptoms and ignoring the root of the problem.

Ego structures also form in response to not being fully seen, being seen as inadequate, being ignored or being misunderstood. Such perceptions give rise to false beliefs that we are unimportant, inadequate or have to behave in a certain way to fit in. An ego structure is created around the false belief (to repress it) and programmed to compensate the false belief. If, for example, the false belief is “I should be seen and not heard”, we might create an ego structure that restricts our natural expression and makes us introverted. Our false and distorted beliefs are usually copied from our parents or older siblings. If, for example our father believed that people must work hard to succeed in life, and he regularly demonstrated that, or even just said it a lot, there is a good chance that we would have taken on that belief and become a workaholic later in life. We can also rebel against our parents’ beliefs and behaviours, in which case we will adopt the opposite belief or behaviour.

These processes occurred countless times during the development of our personal consciousness, so our ego developed in a modular fashion. As the number of ego structures increased they became interconnected and formed a complex super-structure. As the super-structure grew and became more stable, our false sense of self expanded into it – and our ego was born.

Since then the ego has grown, developed, adapted and evolved to help us cope with life’s events. Individual coping structures are often updated as we grow older and become more capable. The new layers build up like the rings of a tree trunk (refer to Figure 6). The more mature and capable outer layers often assume secondary roles of protecting the younger inner layers. Guarding structures don’t usually require updating, so they remain at the age when they were created.

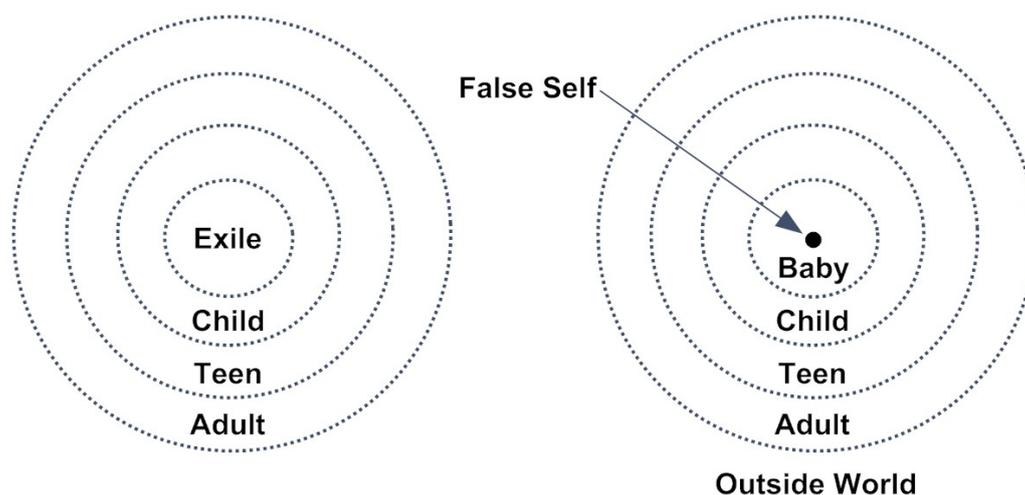


Figure 6: Layers of an Individual Ego Structure

Figure 7: Layers of the Entire Ego Super-Structure

Collectively, the entire ego builds up in the same manner as an individual ego structure, with the false-self at its core (refer to Figure 7). The false-self is self-centred; it is the centre of our ego and the centre of our inner-world. But its awareness is usually focussed at the periphery of the ego, because that is where the most capable coping structures are located, because it is far away from the deeply repressed exiles' pain, and because it can get external validation from the outside world.

Every ego is unique and utilises different strategies to help us survive and even thrive in the world we live in. So it is important not to think of the ego as a negative construct that must be purged from our psyche. Although when it no longer serves us it will begin to dissolve naturally. This book is about assisting this natural process, through conscious inner work.

Inner work is not like regular work that requires effort; in fact it is exactly the opposite. Inner work requires us to stop efforting, stop trying, stop seeking, stop grasping, stop clinging, stop resisting, stop fearing, stop over-reacting and stop doing. All it requires us to "do" is just "be". It requires us to become a Human Being instead of a Human Doing.

## Different Types of Ego Structures

Different types of ego structures require different approaches to healing and reintegration:

**1. Protective Structures** are not created to protect the distressed exiled parts of our being; they are usually created to protect us from the distressed exiled parts of our being. They protect the ego-self from becoming overwhelmed by stopping us from getting too close to the distressed exiled parts. The protection comes in two forms:

- a. **Locking it away:** Enclosing, suppressing and repressing the exiled part. Note: Repressing structures are also used to repress unwanted personal qualities and primal impulses (both of which are explained in the book).
- b. **Forgetting about it:** Guarding parts are programmed to distract or divert our conscious attention, often by triggering a reactive or compulsive behaviour (i.e. an addiction). Sometimes two or more guarding structures are created to protect one exiled part, and they may have very different strategies for keeping us away. If their strategies conflict, they can pull us (psychologically) in different directions. This forces each "side" to take more extreme measures, which can destabilise our entire psyche and lead to extreme behaviours such as alcoholism, drug addiction, violence and abuse.

**Origin:** Protective structures are created out of fear – either direct fear from a traumatic situation, or indirect fear because our concept of self was thrown into doubt by unempathic or invalidating feed-back.

**False Beliefs:** Protective structures are built on the false belief that we cannot cope with feeling the distress of the exiled part, so a protective part is programmed to (falsely) believe that the exiled part is a threat. While this may have been true at the time of the original trauma (when we were a young child), it is almost certainly not true now. The protective structure was created and programmed at the time of the original

trauma so it is made out of very young consciousness and it probably believes that we are still a young child and still unable to cope.

**Healing:** A protective structure won't relax or dissolve until the perceived threat is gone, i.e. until the exiled part has been healed and reintegrated. But the protective structure probably won't let us near the exiled part until we reassure it that we are a loving, caring and capable adult with good intentions.

**2. Coping Structures** are programmed to take on the functionality of undeveloped personal qualities (that were not transposed from the soul's essential qualities). They help us to function in the world without our authentic personal qualities.

**Origin:** Coping structures are created out of a perceived deficiency – to replace a missing or undeveloped quality.

**False Belief:** Coping structures are built on the false belief that we have lost a part of our soul essence ("soul loss"), but actually we have just lost awareness of it. When we lose awareness of an essential quality it stops unfolding in our personality, so we create an ego structure around the "hole" in our being and program it to take on the functionality of the "lost" part.

**Healing:** When we stop defending against feeling a hole and actually allow ourselves to feel it fully, we discover that it doesn't feel like a deficiency at all; it feels like spaciousness or pure potential – not unpleasant at all. When we allow this spaciousness to be (i.e. accept its existence and feel it without any resistance), we re-discover the "missing" essential quality and realise that it has been there all along. This reactivates the process that transposes the essential quality into a usable personal quality, so the "hole" fills up with the authentic personal quality.

### More about Holes

We create all sorts of reasons to explain the inner pain, anxiety, anger, depression and discontent we feel about these holes in our being. We (incorrectly) believe that we are anxious about a job interview or depressed about a relationship breakup, but we are not. These are not the real reasons; we are just projecting our inner suffering onto an external event because the ego needs to justify its negative feelings. Blaming our suffering on an external cause absolves the ego of any responsibility and diverts our attention away from the true cause. External events don't actually make us anxious, angry or depressed; they just trigger the deeply repressed emotions we have about the "lost" parts of our being and our "lost" connection to Self.

We attempt to avoid feeling our pain and discontent by:

- **Doing:** overeating, alcohol, tobacco, drugs, sex, TV, internet, computer games, exercise, work, etc.
- **Objects:** fashion, cosmetics, houses, cars, gadgets, partners, babies, pets, etc.

We believe we are trying to solve an external problem, so we think these external solutions will work. But the real source of our discontent is internal, so only an internal solution will work. The real source of our dissatisfaction is our lack of wholeness – we are full of "holes" so we don't feel whole. The only way we can find lasting fulfilment is to fully feel our holes and allow the "missing" qualities to manifest. This cannot happen while we keep "doing" things to avoid feeling our holes, or keep trying to fill them with "objects".

When we experience the loss or separation of a loved one, we don't feel sad because we miss them; we feel sad because our relationship with them has ended, and the relationship helped to fill a "hole" in our soul essence. The relationship helped to mask the pain of our "lost" essence. Now that they are gone, the relationship can no longer fill the hole or mask our pain, so we feel our inherent pain, sadness and grief. The same thing occurs, to a lesser extent, with the loss of objects.

As previously mentioned, the only way to effectively "fill" a hole is to feel it as fully as we can, without any resistance; i.e. fully surrender to our pain, sadness or grief.

### **Another Type of Hole**

The self can move around our field of consciousness (which extends beyond the physical body) at will. When it moves out of our body we enter into a state of trance. The self is not present, so we feel absent, detached, dissociated, spaced-out, sleepy or dreamy. We can use this as a subconscious defence mechanism to avoid feeling psychological pain or distress.

The same process occurs, but much faster, when we are startled or shocked. Our self “jumps” out of our body (to protect us from the peak intensity of the anticipated trauma) and immediately back in again. When a psychological trauma is accompanied by a sudden shock, the piece of traumatised consciousness is not only frozen; it can also be ejected from the body. Our self’s fear freezes the piece of consciousness and simultaneously carries it out of the body when it “jumps”. The self returns to the body a fraction of a second later, but the traumatised piece of consciousness can get left behind – floating in our aura, just outside of our body – the ultimate place of exile. The ejected exiled part leaves a noticeable hole in our psyche (mental, emotional and energy bodies), so the ego’s standard coping mechanism comes into play. The hole is encased in an ego structure which is programmed it to take on the functionality of the “lost” part.

Ejected exiled parts are responsible for some of the “voices” that people hear. These free-floating exiles can be healed and reintegrated in one of two ways:

1. If we can sense the presence of the ejected part in our aura, we can move our awareness to its location and consciously merge with it. This intimate connection between our soul’s conscious awareness and the ejected exiled part heals the wounded relationship and allows the ejected exile part to return and fill the hole in our psyche.
2. If we can sense the hole, we can move our awareness to its location and consciously merge with it. The intimate connection between our soul’s awareness and the hole heals the wounded relationship and allows the ejected exiled part to return and fill the hole in our psyche.

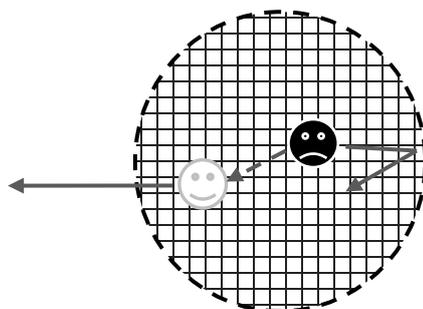
### **Freedom from the Ego**

Thought-forms are typically short-lived; without concentrated effort and energy to sustain them they quickly dissolve. The same applies to our ego (which is just a very elaborate thought-form); without energy, effort and constant reinforcement it will gradually dissolve. However, we (falsely) believe that we are our ego, so we will do everything we can to prevent it from dissolving.

When external events conflict with or invalidate an aspect of our inner model of reality, our psychological structures weaken because the foundations they are built upon (our false or distorted core beliefs) are thrown into doubt. We fear that our sense of self may collapse so we have to strengthen our position and defend against the perceived attack. We zealously defend our position as if we were defending our life, because we absolutely believe that we are. The ego that started out as a safe new home to protect us from the distress of the real world has been defended and reinforced so many times it has become a castle. But it is a castle that we cannot leave, so in that respect it is more like a prison.

The false-self (ego-self) cannot permanently leave its castle/prison because it is an inherent part of the ego super-structure. The ego is the prisoner and the prison, and both are made of the same “material”. The ego-self is an ego structure – it can move all around our body and even out into our aura, but it can never escape from being an ego structure.

The true-Self is different; it is made of a subtler “material” (pure-awareness) which is not bound by the mind and mental constructs (ego structures). The true-Self can easily pass through the prison walls of the ego (like a ghost) because pure awareness exists at a higher/subtler level than the mind. So the true-Self is, always has been, and always will be free. To be free, we only have to shift our awareness from the false-self to the true-Self, which is represented graphically in Figure 8.



**Figure 8: Freedom from the Ego**

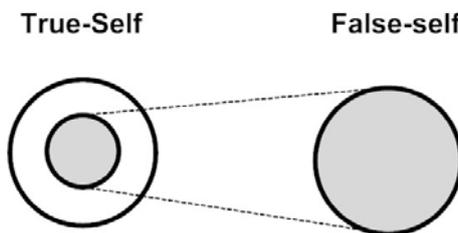
Our journey to freedom is not an outward one; we cannot escape by pushing outwards against the walls of our prison. Our journey to freedom is an inward one; towards the true-Self. Our journey to freedom is a journey of Self-discovery. We must first get to know our true-Self and then realise that that is who we are and always have been. It is like waking up from a dream; or perhaps nightmare is a more appropriate term? It is like stepping out of a virtual world into true reality. It is like stepping out of the darkness into the light.

Shifting our awareness from the false-self to the true-Self is not easy. The false ego-self has a powerful hold on us because we have been identified with it for so long – we have invested an entire lifetime in being our false-self. So even though we want freedom, we are afraid to leave. The ego’s primary objective is to get us through life without feeling the pain of our repressed psychological wounds (exiled parts). The inner work of awakening goes directly against the ego’s objective because it requires us to feel into our old hurts and inquire into our false core-beliefs, so we need to proceed gently. Only when our desire for freedom exceeds our fear are we truly ready to enter the path.

### **The Truth about the False-Self**

Up until this point I have described the false-self as a highly elaborate thought-form, and it is, but that is not the whole story. A thought-form does not possess enough self-awareness to convince us that this is who we are, and it does not possess enough processing power to run our entire life. So what else is going on?

The true-Self can directly, intimately and fully experience everything its field of awareness (soul) makes contact with. It literally becomes one with everything it makes contact with. So when the true-Self meets the false-self, the part of the true-Self’s awareness that makes contact with the false-self becomes one with the false-self. It is this piece of the true-Self’s awareness that vivifies the false-self and literally brings it to life. The true-Self’s at-one-ness with the false-self is what makes the false-self appear “real”. The true-Self has invested part of its self-awareness in the false-self, so the false-self exists within true-Self, and the false-self’s field of awareness exists within the true-Self’s field of awareness (as depicted in Figure 9).



**Figure 9: The true-Self perceiving the false-self**

The part of the true-Self’s awareness that is united with the false-self became identified with the false-self when we were about 6-8 months old. It then forgot that it was part of the true-Self and believed it was the false-self. However, only part of the true-Self is “asleep” in believing it is the false-self; the rest of our true-Self is awake, unlimited and free. The part of the true-Self that believes it is the false-self is so identified (at-one) with the false-self that it is blind to the vastness of its being. If its perception wasn’t so limited, it would realise that it is unlimited and eternal. We just need to “wake up” and realise that we are, and always have been, our (entire) true-Self.