

2Selves Theory Overview

Understanding Automatic Human Activities and the Critical Need to Transform Them Systematically

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Let's Look Inside to See What Makes Us Tick

Even before the 2020 pandemic hit, individual careers were derailing and businesses were failing at increasing rates due to something mysteriously called “soft” success factors, and covid-19 has greatly exacerbated that problem. We are experiencing a fundamental growing divergence between technology-driven changes in the business environment and our basic human-nature resistance to accommodating such changes at the rate they are occurring, and that *abilities mismatch* will inevitably increase as the Fourth Industrial Revolution crashes over us.¹ Most people trying to understand this human-nature problem focus on the brain, where science works so effectively.

The Brain

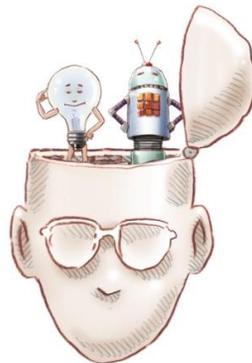


The *brain* is the 1.4 Kg (3 pounds) of *tangible*, convoluted gray and white matter that resides in our heads

Neuroscience continues to investigate brain functions with enormous success for their set of targeted applications.

The Mind

We Have Two “Selves” at the Mental Level



The *mind* is the *intangible* controller of who we are

2Selves Theory does for the *mind* what neuroscience does for the *brain*.

¹ See my 2Selves Theory analysis of the human-nature ramifications of Prof. Klaus Schwab’s penetrating book, *The Fourth Industrial Revolution*, [here](#).

A Mind-Centric Theory to Overcome Systemic Business Problems

Because of concentrating solely on the mind, the elements of 2Selves Theory are not such tangible brain objects as neurons, neurotransmitters, the amygdala, limbic structures, or the prefrontal cortex. Instead, they are such human entities as goals, intentions, assumptions, skills, habits, beliefs, behaviors, cultures, knowledge, leadership, and comfort. 2Selves Theory models the mind independently of how the brain implements it. This enables us to address a wide range of success-improvement topics without having to burden ourselves with the enormous complexity and functionally distributed nature of the brain.

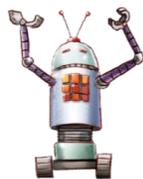
Because we ignore the brain, our improvement techniques are not such business-ineffective interventions as drug therapy, brain surgery, or genetic engineering such as CRISPR gene editing. Rather, they are business-effective mind-related interventions such as increasing self-awareness, setting grand goals, creating explicit behavior intentions, making unconditional commitments, logging behavior events of interest, constructing virtual consequences and rewards, training new skills, experiencing many repetitions of enacting your intentions, and distinguishing between your success and comfort priorities.

In order to understand how the mind works in sufficient detail so that we can achieve peak performance in business, we need to start by explicitly recognizing and admitting that we fundamentally operate in two distinct modes – we have a familiar thinking mode and a mostly opaque automatic mode. That is, we have two “selves”: a *thinking-self* and an *auto-self*, as indicated in the above illustration. I designed 2Selves Theory in such a way that it empowers us to understand and manage the rapidly escalating auto-self ramifications of our amazing computer and communications capabilities.

Four Distinct Types of Auto-Self Activities

Most of our complex involuntary activities are distributed within the brain, so modeling automatic human activities at the mind level produces a major advantage because we can now usefully segment our auto-self into four fundamental types, so we can understand and manage them separately and optimally. I have used the visual metaphor of the auto-self acting as our “robot within.” However, as we uncover the many types of auto-self activities, we can see that they act more like our “robots within.”

Auto-Behaviors



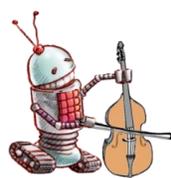
Our habits, compulsive actions, phobias, aggressiveness, timidity

Auto-Contexts



The “lens” through we see the world
Our deepest assumptions, certainties, beliefs
The foundation for problem solving, values

Auto-Skills



Our sports, musical, language, public speaking and interpersonal skills

Auto-Expertise



Our ability to see solutions holistically on types of problems we have solved repeatedly.
Intuition, “gut,” quick pattern recognition

Parameters We Will Investigate for Each Auto-Self Type

We can expand the above outlines of the four types of auto-self activities by listing a few specific parameters of each type:

- **What:** This explains the unique features of each of the four types of auto-self activities.
- **Importance:** This is the “why” – the reason you should invest time understanding each auto-self type.
 - The first two types will increasingly impact your successes in business and well-being in life.
 - We have reached the tipping point where our thinking-self-based technology prowess has created many technology wonders, and these technologies are driving changes more rapidly than our auto-self can naturally accommodate them – **we now have a fundamental *abilities mismatch***.
- **Recognition:** This outlines how much of each auto-self type we recognize while enacting them.
- **Scope:** This article focuses on business; however, the auto-self is part of human nature and therefore, as we should expect, it affects us all in many other areas of our lives.
- **Management Status:** How well do we do at managing each type of auto-self activity and what types of processes do we need to improve each auto-self type?

Auto-Behaviors

What: Our involuntary habits



Barriers to action

- Barriers to consistently taking needed actions
- Actions we fail to take that undermine our *own* “doing”: procrastination, avoiding giving robust performance reviews...



Dysfunctional behaviors

- Behaviors we exhibit that undermine the “doing” of *others*: intimidation, micromanaging...

Importance: Very high!

- Auto-behaviors are a major source of career derailment and a crucial mechanism that determines peak individual and group execution as compared with increasingly effective global competitors.

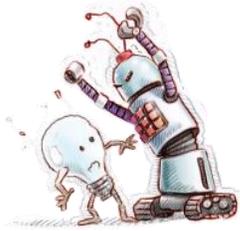
Recognition: Mixed

- *Self*: We normally don’t notice our own auto-behaviors.
- *Others*: Others easily notice and often painfully experience our auto-behaviors.

Scope: Broad

- Crucial for career successes
- Central to creating widespread socially acceptable behaviors in societies at large
- The resulting knowing-doing gap creates widespread dysfunction including in people's personal lives

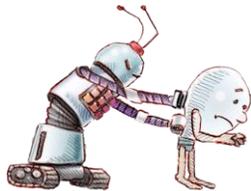
Management Status: Requires transformations



Unfair fight

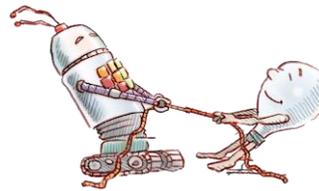
- No amount of information reliably transforms errant behavior habits.
- This is the main type of auto-self activities that transformation coaches must focus on, but many coaches, even with certificates, actually focus on advice and don't know how to reliably and systematically create habit reconstructions.
- Auto-behavior reconstructions create discomfort and require multiple attempts.
- Most self-helpers quit before achieving desired results due to the *unfair fight* between thinking-self intentions and auto-self resistance to change.
- This is not a *knowing* activity; rather, it is a *feelings* activity. Reconstructing an errant auto-behavior requires making the undesired habit become increasingly uncomfortable and the replacement habit become progressively more comfortable, and that takes many repetitions and usually requires outside help in the form of a transformation coach.

Discomfort push



Repeated discomfort extinguishes
old, undesired habit

Pleasure pull



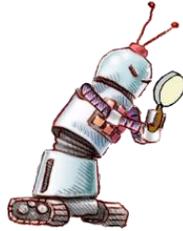
Repeated pleasure establishes
new, desired habit

- Transformation coaching is a difficult process:
 - It requires coaches to understand many details of how automatic human activities operate.
 - It benefits greatly from having deep experience in actually transforming bad habits.
 - It takes considerable skill including the ability to withstand vigorous pushback from clients while remaining tenacious but empathetic.
 - It relies on guiding clients through many repetitions of avoiding old habits and enacting new behaviors.
 - It works best when the coach has deep experience in the clients domain, in this case business leadership.
- As a result, many people attempting to transform auto-behaviors of business leaders fail to achieve the enduring results that their clients desire.

Auto-Contexts

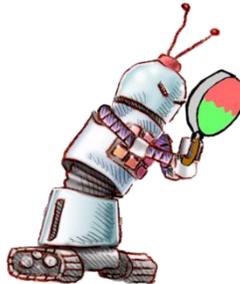
2Selfs Theory provides the greatest improvement in understanding auto-contexts since Thomas Kuhn's *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* a half-century ago, where he developed them as paradigms focused solely on science. Advances in understanding auto-contexts are the greatest breakthroughs in terms of practical knowledge and improvement processes from 2Selfs Theory.

What: The lenses through which we view the world



- The deeply embedded assumptions and beliefs that frame our realities
- The underlying mechanism that creates the “status quo” property of business cultures
- The foundation to support our technical and management problem-solving capabilities (extending Kuhn)
- The controller of our self-image and attitudes
- The source of our profound certainties that are often untethered to realities outside of our mind

Importance: Enormous



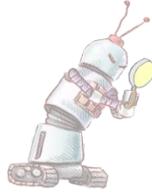
- This is a barely recognized and poorly understood auto-self type, yet it is immensely consequential
- An extremely potent property of auto-contexts is that they create untethered certainties:
 - **Certainty illusions:** basic assumptions, beliefs, certainties that have not been verified to correspond with realities outside of the mind – *misinformation* buried in an auto-context
 - **Certainty delusions:** basic assumptions, beliefs, certainties that have been verified **not** to correspond with realities outside of the mind – *disinformation* inculcated into an auto-context
- Auto-contexts impact our business performance in profound ways:
 - **Self-image:** overly rosy self-images block us from even wanting to attempt reconstructing our counterproductive behaviors.
 - **Attitudes:** sometimes our bad attitudes create dysfunctional habits that negatively impact others.
 - **Cultures:** this is why the “status quo” is so difficult to change even as technologies drive massive disruptions in our business environment, which require periodic systematic culture changes.

Recognition: Mixed

- *Self*: We normally don't recognize our own auto-contexts



- Auto-contexts appear to us as reality – as just the way the world is.
 - Auto-contexts create untethered certainties in us – certainty illusions and certainty delusions, so we normally have no interest in challenging or even examining them.
 - Most people have grave difficulty distinguishing between their thinking-self-managed thoughts and their auto-context-controlled beliefs.
 - As technology-driven change in the business environment accelerates, auto-contexts that start out aligned imperceptibly become misaligned quickly thus creating certainty delusions, and that is the underlying cause of the massive problem of *innovation deathtraps*.
- *Others*: Others can notice our auto-contexts better than us, but still not very well



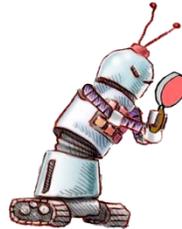
Scope: Ubiquitous

Auto-contexts are part of human nature, so of course they affect us outside of business:

- Certainty illusions and delusions run rampant in widespread aspects of our lives
 - **Certainty illusions**: the source of our deep certainties, even when these beliefs do not necessarily correspond to realities outside of our mind
 - **Certainty delusions**: the source of our deep certainties, even when these beliefs verifiably **do not** correspond to realities outside of our mind
- Thoughts vs. beliefs:
 - Most people do not understand this distinction at a level that produces self-control for them.
 - *Thoughts* are thinking-self activities and as such we can change them at will.
 - *Beliefs* are auto-contexts that imperceptibly emerge through repeated thoughts with associated feelings, and we cannot change beliefs at will – changing requires focused, uncomfortable, reconstructions.
- Pretending:
 - We all do way more pretending than we realize or would like to admit.
 - Short-term situational pretending is different from pretending that migrates to an auto-context belief.
 - Some forms of pretending are useful because they help us cope with the vicissitudes of life:
 - Rationalization pretending can help us get through setbacks over which we have no control such as losing a job or being jilted by a lover.
 - Sometimes pretending about achieving great successes can create motivation to action.
 - Other forms of pretending cause us to fall for seduction traps in the form of simplistic solutions that satisfy our *desire for a result* without producing the *result we desire*.
 - Politicians specialize in inducing this type of pretending

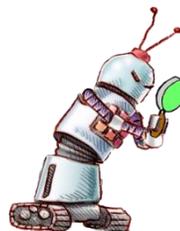
- The “sustainable success” books analyzed by Phil Rosenzweig in *The Halo Effect: ...and the Eight Other Business Delusions That Deceive Managers*² exposes the pretending belief that assuaged the discomfort of not understanding the underlying nature of crucial success factors that have been identified as “soft” because our elusive auto-self controls them.
- **Culture wars:** the reason we have such widespread and insidious culture wars is that they are based in beliefs buried in auto-contexts so they do not appear to us as preferences but rather as the way the world really is. Both sides harbor the certainty illusion that they are inherently correct, so they end up talking past each other.
- Auto-contexts opaquely occur in many guises:
 - Worldviews, which frame our view of the world about us
 - Problem-solving foundations, as in Kuhn’s paradigms
 - Construction and maintenance of values
 - Organization cultures
 - Patriotism
 - Self-images
 - Product, service, political (through propaganda) branding
 - Attitudes:

Prejudices



Dislike or even hatred of “other” groups, including races, religions, political parties, sexual orientations, countries, different values

Affinities



Like of “our” group, including political party, family, clan, compatriots, religions, social groups, shared values

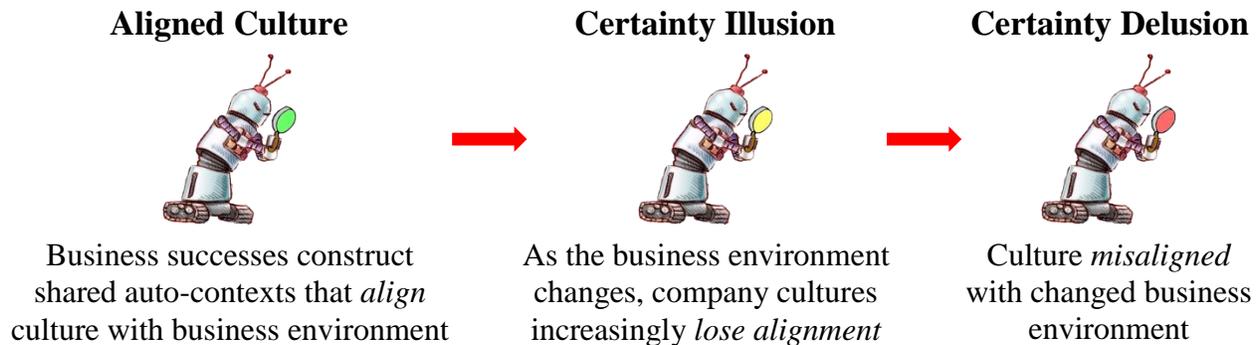
Management Status:

Auto-contexts routinely happen to us, are poorly self-managed, and increasingly manipulated through technology-enabled communications mechanisms.

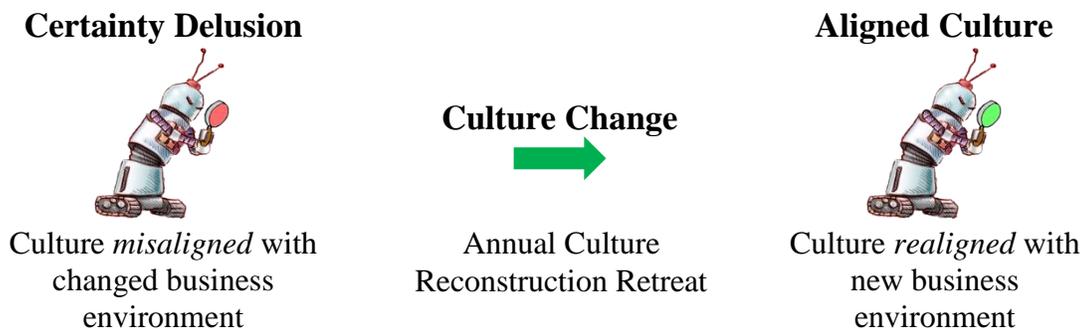
² You can find my 2Selves Theory analysis of the *Halo* book [here](#).

Managing Auto-Contexts in Business

- Most transformation coaches focus on auto-behaviors and don't understand how to reconstruct auto-contexts in the form of business cultures.
- The business environment now changes increasingly rapidly due to technology innovations, emerging global competition, and new business models – however, auto-contexts, once established, remain stubbornly fixed – the “status quo!”



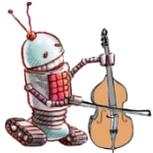
- Annual Culture Reconstruction Retreats provide a reliable mechanism to reconstruct business cultures commensurate with escalating technology-driven and global-competition needs.
 - Annual corporate strategy retreats should not focus on incremental progress because each operating unit and functional area can achieve those well on their own.
 - The real purpose of gathering senior management for an annual retreat should be to identify and force transformational change in the company’s culture to accommodate the wildly evolving business environment.



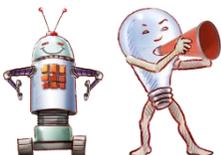
Auto-Skills

What: Those automatic activities we can learn to perform very quickly

- This auto-self type is quite familiar because it is equivalent to what we already call “skills.”



- Sports auto-skills
- Musical auto-skills
- Language auto-skills – reading, writing, verbal abilities



- Interpersonal communications auto-skills
- Public speaking auto-skills
- Nonverbal communications (body language, persuasion, charisma)

Importance: Mixed

- High language auto-skills needed and acquired broadly – at least for mother tongue
- High interpersonal and public speaking auto-skills needed for business leaders

Recognition: Segmented

- We and others notice the outward manifestations of our auto-skills.
- We cannot notice our internal mechanisms that produce our auto-skills.

Scope: Broad

- Language auto-skills needed and acquired very broadly outside of business
- Moderate sports auto-skills helpful for most people; high sports auto-skills needed for athletes
- Moderate musical auto-skills desirable for some; high musical auto-skills required for musicians
- Very high interpersonal, public speaking, and persuasion auto-skills helpful for business leaders and essential for other professions including salespeople, politicians, and preachers

Management Status: Excellent

- Auto-skills emerge through high repetition with positive feedback.
- This is the auto-self type currently managed the best.
- As with thinking-self intelligence, natural abilities create ceilings on specific auto-skills attainment.

Auto-Expertise



What: The ability to see solutions to familiar complex problems quickly

- This creates a mysterious capability to see solutions to complex problems holistically
- This is the ability that legendary business executive Jack Welch referred to as “gut”
- This is also the source of what people commonly refer to as “intuition”
- This is the ability to see quickly solutions to complex problems of the form that have been solved repeatedly through thinking-self analyses

Importance: Critical for top leaders

- This is one of the main mechanisms of what we often refer to as “experience.”
- Business leaders become more effective as they gradually accumulate auto-expertise in specific areas such as reading financial statements.
- I suspect one of the mechanisms responsible for Warren Buffett’s ability to see value in acquisitions and investments is that he can see patterns holistically – he has business-value auto-expertise.

Recognition: Very poor

- When we observe somebody solve a complex problem very quickly, we just assume that person is extremely smart and can solve problems faster than everybody else.
- The person with auto-expertise does not have a clue about how he or she arrived at the solution.
- Because people with auto-expertise do not understand the mental processes involved when they see a solution quickly, they often assume that those who don't see it are mentally slow, but nobody can solve such problems that quickly with thinking-self linear analysis.

Scope: Narrow?

- It is difficult hard to know how widespread auto-expertise is outside of business because it is so poorly understood and quite hard to recognize.
- I suspect it is more widespread than we realize including in such areas as the military and team sports and in other areas that require solving a common type of complex problem repeatedly.

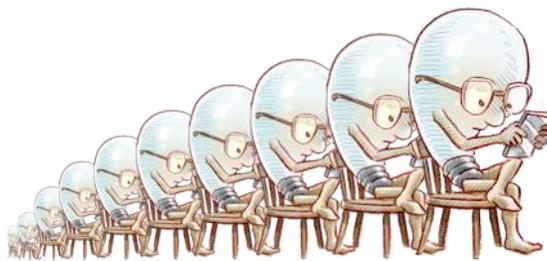
Management Status: Nonexistent

- After many successful thinking-self based analyses on a particular type of problem, the pattern of the solution imperceptibly migrates to auto-expertise and the person with this capability proudly proclaims a solution without having a clue about how she/he arrived at it.
- Currently, auto-expertise emerges through practice – we would benefit from explicit construction, which is a topic ripe for research.
- Chester Barnard had keen insights into auto-expertise, especially in financial analysis, and wrote about it in his book *The Functions of the Executive* eight decades ago, but the business community has sadly neglected his book and his insights.
- Most high-level financial leaders and general managers eventually acquire auto-expertise in quickly seeing problems in complex financial statements.
- It could be a great benefit if we could learn how to train in auto-expertise explicitly for different crucial business domains.

Become a Transforming Organization to Establish a Hidden Source of Competitive Advantage

To achieve repeated successes in the future, individuals and organizations must add to the existing process of *continuous learning* the new process of *periodic transforming*.

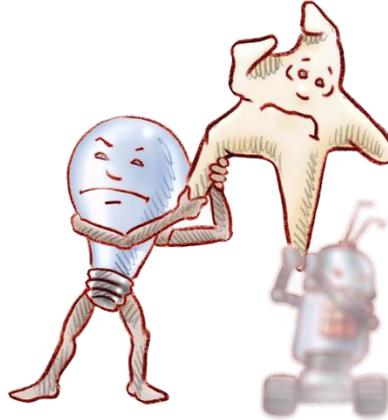
Continuous Learning



- Learning is a thinking-self process that consists of reading, watching, or listening to information sources to accumulate explicit knowledge.
- *Continuous learning* has been a helpful mantra for a long time as a method for sustainable success.

- *Sustainable success* books received enormous publicity and were widely read and praised, but as you already saw, Phil Rosenzweig identified critical weaknesses in their arguments.

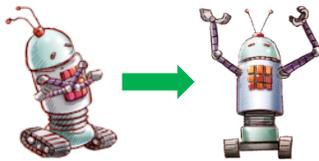
Learning Can No Longer Produce Star Performance



**Maximizing our thinking-self effectiveness is no longer sufficient.
We must now also conquer our auto-self.**

Thinking-self-centric learning can no longer produce star performance at the individual, leadership, or business levels. We have reached the transition point where we must learn to explicitly recognize, comprehensively understand, and systematically manage a broad spectrum of our automatic activities.

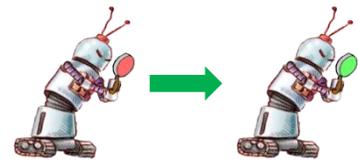
Periodic Transforming



Reconstruct barriers to action



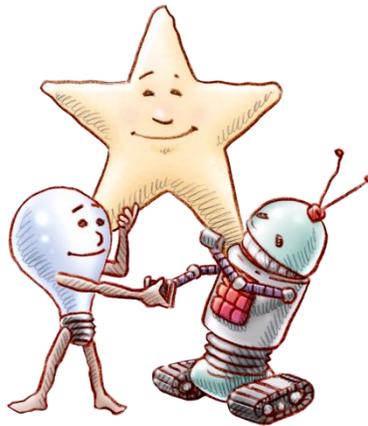
Reconstruct overbearing behaviors



Change obsolete cultures

- Transforming is an auto-self activity that no amount of knowledge will create.

Learning Plus Transforming Creates Star Performance



Star individual and leadership performance, periodic promotions, and repeated business successes now require that we combine continuous thinking-self-based learning with periodic auto-self-based transforming.

Auto-Self Characteristics and 2Selves Properties

To understand and manage automatic human activities, our auto-self, we need to identify two distinct types of parameters.

Auto-Self Characteristics

Each individual and affiliated group has specific auto-self *characteristics* that define their own idiosyncratic profile.

We don't normally have adequate access to our own auto-self characteristics due to the opaque nature of our auto-self activities. Accordingly, we normally become aware of auto-self characteristics through external help – often in the form of a multi-rater, or 360°, survey that provide us with a *static* self-awareness of our auto-self characteristics. However, to transform undesirable auto-behaviors, we must learn to notice them as we exhibit them. That *dynamic* self-awareness requires that we observe in real time our auto-self activities that we want to transform. Expert transformation coaches can greatly aid this process.

2Selves Properties

To empower us to understand and transform specific undesirable or dysfunctional auto-self characteristics, we benefit greatly by improving our understanding of human nature through identifying, comparing, and contrasting a suite of thinking-self and auto-self *properties*.

Auto-self properties describe how our automatic inner-workings operate when contrasted with thinking-self properties. If you are a professional transformation coach or if you are a leader who wishes to acquire the ability to transform those you lead, you should understand these 2Selves properties in detail. If you are a leader who wishes to secure the services of a transformation coach, you should scan through these properties and then check to see if the coaches you interview understand most of them. Since 2Selves Theory is not yet widely understood, coaches you interview may use different language, but to coach systematically, they should understand most of these properties in some form.

List of 2Selves Properties

Primary Properties

- 2Selves Property #1: General Control
- 2Selves Property #2: Awareness
- 2Selves Property #3: Behavior Control
- 2Selves Property #4: Thinking Possibilities/Constraints
- 2Selves Property #5: Simultaneity

Emergence/Complexity Properties

- 2Selves Property #6: Automatic Emergence
- 2Selves Property #7: Complexity
- 2Selves Property #8: Problem Solving

Knowledge Properties

- 2Selves Property #9: Types of Knowledge
- 2Selves Property #10: Believing vs. Thinking

Feelings Properties

- 2Selves Property #11: Induced Feelings
- 2Selves Property #12: Action Control
- 2Selves Property #13: Channels of Communications

Transformation Properties

- 2Selves Property #14: Improvement Mechanisms
- 2Selves Property #15: Event Detection
- 2Selves Property #16: Progressive Detection
- 2Selves Property #17: Thought-Stream Control

To receive a brief explanation of each of these 2Selves properties, email me at Barry@2Selves.com and ask for my Properties PDF.

Businesses and many other aspects of life have now hit a wall:

- **Abilities Mismatch:** The fundamental abilities mismatch between our thinking-self-based technology progress and our auto-self's natural ability to accommodate the ramifications of those technologies is causing increasing failures on grand scales.
- **Indirect Efforts:** As the importance of automatic human activities has relentlessly increased over the last few decades, business leaders have been putting forth heroic efforts to try to manage these emerging crucial success factors indirectly by identifying them through metaphors and managing them through empirical processes that have proven to work but lack a mind-level theoretical foundation.
- **Increasingly Inadequate Solutions:** We have now reached the point in the maturation of Western business, and of Western social systems in general, where these indirect approaches are leading to widespread failures because the technology-driven changes in our social environments increasingly overwhelm these approaches.
- **Direct Solutions:** Long-term repeated successes in business require that individuals and organizations become *transformable* – that is, they must learn to understand automatic human activities explicitly and manage them directly.
- **A Specific Solution:** Over the last decades, I designed 2Selves Theory specifically to accomplish that crucial advance in how we manage careers and businesses. 2Selves Theory will enable you to understand the auto-self and empower you to manage it at a level commensurate with the escalating need.

If you want to understand more about how automatic human activities can provide an immediate competitive advantage for leaders and businesses and a long-term necessity for repeated successes, you can contact me at Barry@2Selves.com. I can also help you jumpstart the process of transforming counterproductive auto-self activities within your organization and can launch you, your team, and your business on a path to becoming transformable.