



The Ego-Soul Dynamics of Enlightenment

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Abstract

This paper suggests that we make progress towards enlightenment as we learn to master the seven stages of psychological development. The first three stages of development are about the development of the ego. The fourth stage involves aligning the motivations of the ego with the motivations of the soul. The last three stages are about the activation of the soul. We achieve enlightenment to the extent we are able to master every stage of development—the first four stages being a necessary foundation for the upper three stages.

What is enlightenment?

We tend to think of enlightenment as an end-state—a goal to be achieved. I prefer to think of it as process of learning. If you are a human being living on planet Earth, whether you are aware of it or not, you are involved in this process.

If enlightenment is a process of learning, the next question that arises is, what is it we, as humans living in a material universe, are trying to learn?

I believe what we are trying, not just to learn, but to embody, are the underlying principles that govern the operation of our universe: Not our three-dimensional material universe, which is a property of our perception, but the underlying four-dimensional energetic universe that is the container of our three-dimensional material universe. This four-dimensional energetic universe is the world of the soul.

We make progress in our journey towards enlightenment in our three-dimensional material world to the extent we stop identifying with our ego and start identifying with our soul.

The Ego

The ego is a field of conscious awareness that identifies with your physical body. Because the ego believes it inhabits a body and lives in a material world, it lives in three-dimensional reality and thinks it can die. Because it thinks it can die, it thinks it has needs, and because it thinks it has needs, it develops fears about not being able to get its needs met. The principal needs of the ego are survival, safety and security. The ego-mind is the creation of

the soul-mind. The soul creates the ego to protect itself from the pain (energetic instability) it experiences being present in three-dimensional material awareness.¹

The ego is not *who* you are; it is who you think you are. It is the mask you wear to get your needs met in the physical, social and cultural framework of your material existence. The ego represents your sense of identity in relation to others and the social context in which you live. Your ego identity begins to form during the first two-to-three years of your life, and if all goes well, it reaches a natural resolution during your early 20s as you become a viable and independent member of your community in the cultural framework of your existence. When you get to this stage in your life, you normally respond to the question "Who am I?" by stating your age, gender, role/occupation, race, religion and nationality. These are the things that define your ego identity.

The soul

Your soul is a field of conscious awareness that identifies with your energy field. It is who you are. You don't have a soul, you are a soul. Your soul and the soul of every other human being is an individuated aspect of the universal energy field from which everything in our physical world arises. Because the soul identifies with your energy field and not with your physical body, your soul lives in four-dimensional energetic reality. The soul knows it cannot die and consequently, has no fears. Not only does the soul have no fears, it also has no needs. The reason it has no needs is that at the energetic level of its existence it creates what it desires through its thoughts.

Because our souls are individuated aspects of the universal energy field, they feel a sense of connectedness to every other soul. Consequently, at the soul level, we live in oneness. There is no separation. When you live in a world of oneness, giving is the same as receiving: when you give to others, you give to yourself.

Even though the soul has no needs in the way that the ego has needs, it does have desires. The soul's principal desires are self-expression, connection and contribution. The soul incarnates into three-dimensional material awareness to fulfil these desires. The purpose of the soul's desires is to recreate its four-dimensional (4-D) reality in three-dimensional (3-D) awareness. When we are able to do this do we begin to reach enlightenment.

You know your soul's desires are being met when you feel your life has meaning; when you can connect with others at a deep level, and when you can use your gifts and talents to contribute to making a difference in the world. The only things preventing the soul from fulfilling its desires are the ego's fears about meeting its deficiency needs: our survival, safety and security needs. The ego's fears about meeting its deficiency needs keep it firmly attached to its physical, social and cultural identity and prevent enlightenment.

The soul incarnates into a human embryo by willing itself to be present in three-dimensional material reality. The soul's will to be present in three-dimensional material reality is the source of the ego's will to survive.

Redefining enlightenment

Based on this perspective we can redefine enlightenment as a process of

learning to live in soul consciousness (four-dimensional energetic awareness) while being in a physical body in a three-dimensional material world. We achieve enlightenment to the extent that we are able to overcome the illusion of three-dimensional material awareness created by our senses and embrace the principles that govern the four-dimensional energetic world of the soul.

The problem with perception

Even though the human mind/brain is surrounded by frequencies of vibration coming from a larger multi-dimensional energetic continuum, it is constrained in the frequencies it can intercept by the body's five physical senses. Like the dials on a radio receiver, the body's senses can only register a narrow band of frequencies, thereby preventing us from intercepting and interpreting the larger domain of our existence: the four-dimensional (4-D) energetic frequencies of the soul and the universal energy field. What we are not aware of is still there, it is just not in our conscious awareness.

Although mystics and shaman have been aware of the unity of the physical and energetic worlds for millennia, it wasn't until the early part of the twentieth century, with the development of the quantum field theory, that scientists began to acknowledge that there was a crack in our 3-D material interpretation of the world. Albert Einstein (1879–1955) was aware of this crack. He fully recognised that we live in a 4-D energetic continuum. He put it this way:

The non-mathematician is seized by a mysterious shuddering when he hears of four-dimensional things, by a feeling that is not unlike the occult. But there is no more commonplace statement than the world in which we live is a four-dimensional continuum.ⁱⁱ

Einstein was not alone in this way of thinking. Ervin László, a Hungarian-born philosopher of science, describes the two-world problem in the following way: he calls the observable, manifest, physical 3-D world the M-dimension (M for material or manifest), and he calls the unobservable, energetic 4-D world—the world of the soul—the A-dimension. The A-dimension (Akashic or energetic dimension) is a universal field of information and potentiality that is in constant interaction with the M-dimension.

... the A-dimension [energetic] dimension is prior: it is the generative ground of the particles and systems of particles that emerge in the M-dimension [material] dimension.ⁱⁱⁱ

Max Planck (1858–1947), a theoretical physicist, who was one of the originators of quantum theory, is quoted as saying: "I regard consciousness as fundamental. I regard matter as derivative from consciousness. We cannot get behind consciousness."

Even though we derive our sense of personal reality from focusing our attention on the 3-D material world, what we are observing is just a thin

sliver of a much larger energetic world.

One of the links we have too the energetic world is our thoughts. Our thoughts are energetic impulses of positive, neutral or negative intention. Consequently, whatever thoughts you are thinking not only influence the energetic vibration of your energy field (the body-mind) but the energetic vibration of the world around you.

Fear-based thoughts make things feel heavy and serious, whereas love-based thoughts make things feel light and cheerful. This is because the energy of fear has a low frequency of vibration and the energy of love has a high-frequency vibration. Love energy feels light because it connects (people); fear energy feels heavy because it separates (people), it goes against the natural state of energetic order. We feel "at home" in our soul when we love, and we feel "separate" from our soul when we fear. Feelings are the antennae that allow us to tune into the status of our ego-soul dynamic.

When the fear-based energies of the ego-mind are juxtaposed with the love-based energies of the soul-mind, you feel a sense of instability in your energy field and sensations of discomfort in your body. As you release the fear-based energies of your ego-mind and align with the love-based energies of your soul-mind, the ego-mind and the soul-mind come into energetic alignment, and your body feels vital and healthy. This following quote from Maslow describes the process:

...the powers of a person come together in a particularly efficient and intensely enjoyable way in which he is more integrated and less split.^{iv}

The key words here are "he is more integrated and less split". In other words, when we raise the frequency of vibration of the ego-mind by releasing our fears, we align with the frequency of the vibration of the soul-mind.

The journey of the soul

There are seven stages of human development that souls pass through from the moment they enter into our three-dimensional material world (the moment of conception) and the moment they leave our three-dimensional material world (the moment of death). Each stage represents a new and higher level of enlightenment. These stages are shown in the following Figure.

The first three stages are about the development of the ego, and the last three stages are about the activation of the soul. The fourth stage involves aligning the motivations of the ego with the motivations of the soul. The seven stages of psychological development are also shown in the following Table along with the approximate age ranges when they occur and the developmental task of each stage.

Figure: The Seven Stages of Psychological Development and three evolutionary stages of the ego-soul dynamic.

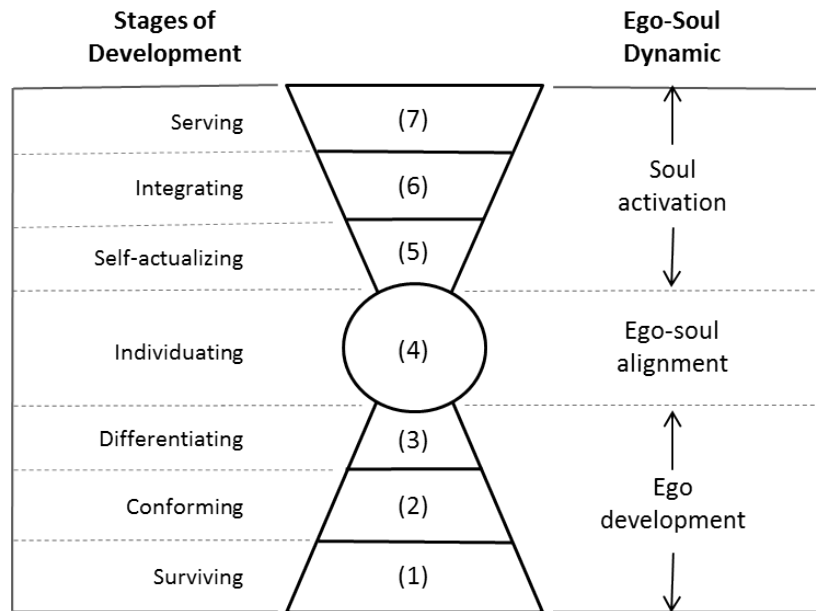


Table: The Seven Stages of Psychological Development, the approximate age ranges when they occur, and the developmental task at each stage

Stages of psychological development	Age ranges	Developmental tasks
Serving	60 + years	Contributing to the well-being of future generations, humanity and the planet.
Integrating	50 – 59 years	Connecting with others in unconditional loving relationships to make a difference.
Self-actualising	40- - 49 years	Expressing your true nature by embracing our soul's values and purpose.
Individuating	25 – 39 years	Discovering your true identity by letting go of your fears and your dependence on others.
Differentiating	8 – 24 years	Feeling recognised and respected by establishing yourself in a community that values who you are.
Conforming	3 – 7 years	Feeling safe and protected by staying close to your kin and your family.
Surviving	Conception to 2 years	Staying alive and physically healthy by getting your survival needs met.

Before restricting its consciousness so it can embark on a journey into 3-D material awareness, the soul is fully centred in 4-D energetic awareness—a world of abundance and love. By choosing to incarnate—restrict itself to 3-D material awareness, it enters into a very different world—a world of limitation and fear.

Material awareness

The fundamental properties of 3-D material awareness are time, space and matter. By conjoining time and space, we experience the illusion of separation; by conjoining time and matter, we experience the illusion of death and decay; by conjoining space and matter, we experience the illusion of

physical forms and mass. Together, taken as a whole, all of these concepts align with the interpretation of reality explained by Newtonian mechanics and the First and Second Laws of Thermodynamics.

Energetic awareness

The fundamental properties of the soul's world—4-D energetic awareness—are timelessness, omnipresence and energy. Because the soul has no awareness of time or space to give the illusion of separation, the soul experiences a sense of oneness and connectedness. Because the soul has no awareness of time and matter to give the illusion of death and decay, it experiences a state of being (present moment awareness). Because the soul has no awareness of space and matter to give the illusion of form and mass, the soul experiences shifts in energetic vibrations (emotions). Together, taken as a whole, all of these concepts align with the quantum mechanical interpretation of reality, which is explained by Quantum theory.

The soul's desires

The soul's purpose in incarnating is to attempt to recreate its 4-D reality in a 3-D material awareness by a) fully expressing its unique character and gifts, b) by connecting with others in unconditional loving relationships to make a difference, and c) by contributing, through acts of self-less service, to the good of humanity. These three "desires" are the motivations of the soul that drive the 5th, 6th and 7th stages of development.

However, before these desires can be pursued, the soul must establish itself in 3-D material awareness: it must learn how to survive—keep the body alive; it must learn how to be loved so it can feel safe and protected; and it must learn how to be admired and recognised so it can feel secure in its 3-D material reality. The soul delegates these tasks to the ego.

The ego's needs

These three sets of "needs" are the motivations of the ego. They are the drivers of the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd stages of development. Only when we have learned how to master these three stages of development are we in a position to find the freedom and autonomy we need to enter the 4th stage of development. This is the stage of development where we begin to align our ego's motivations with our soul's motivations by letting go of the ego's fears and dependencies developed during the first three stages of development. We should become a viable independent human being before we can begin to align with the motivations of the soul.

The journey begins

The soul's journey into 3-D material awareness begins when it restricts its awareness to material existence by taking possession of the energy field of a human embryo during the first few weeks of pregnancy. This is when the baby's heart starts to beat. The heart and the soul are intimately linked: The energy field of the heart is the access point of the energy field of the soul. At this stage, you are totally heart-centred and the soul mind is the centre of conscious awareness of the embryo.

The body-mind

Around five weeks later, towards the end of the first trimester of pregnancy,

the reptilian mind/brain (body-mind) which has been forming in the background, takes over from the soul mind as the dominant centre of conscious awareness.

The period from conception to the age of 18 – 24 months, while the reptilian mind/brain is the dominant centre of conscious awareness, is known as the surviving stage of development. The job of the body-mind is to keep the body alive and functioning so the soul has a vehicle through which it can experience 3-D material awareness. The body-mind keeps the body alive by controlling the homeostatic regulation of the body.

When the body-mind takes over as the dominant centre of conscious awareness, the soul mind becomes the subconscious of the body-mind. From this point on, the primary motivation of the fetus and baby is to stay alive.

The emotional mind

The limbic mind/brain (emotional mind) takes over from the reptilian mind/brain as the dominant centre of conscious awareness when the baby reaches 18 – 24 months. This is when the ego begins to form. The period from 18 – 24 months to about 2 to 7 years, while the limbic mind/brain is the dominant centre of conscious awareness, is known as the conforming stage of development.

The job of the ego-mind at this stage of development is to keep the body safe and protected in its family/social framework of existence. The ego mind does this by attempting to build relationships which allow the child to feel loved, accepted and protected.

When the emotional mind takes over as the dominant centre of conscious awareness, the body-mind becomes the subconscious of the emotional mind, and the soul mind becomes the unconscious of the emotional mind. From this point on, the primary motivation of the infant and child is to keep safe.

The rational mind

The neocortex mind/brain (rational mind) takes over from the limbic mind/brain as the dominant centre of conscious awareness around the age of eight and keeps on growing and developing until around the age of twenty-four. The ego continues to develop during this period and remains dominant for the rest of our lives or until the soul mind is reactivated. The period from around 7 or 8 to about 24 years, while the neocortex mind/brain is still growing and developing, is known as the differentiating stage of development.

The job of the ego mind at this stage of development is to keep the body secure and comfortable in its cultural framework of existence. The ego mind does this by attempting to become a recognised and valued member of a group or community.

When the rational mind takes over as the dominant centre of conscious awareness, the emotional mind becomes the subconscious of the rational mind; the body-mind becomes the unconscious of the rational mind, and the soul mind becomes the super unconscious of the rational mind. From this point on the primary motivation of the teenager and young adult is to feel secure.

The suppression of the soul

During the first three stages of development as the ego's needs assume greater prominence, the soul's desires get pushed further and further into the background. If the ego's motivations are strong and deeply embedded because of difficulties it had in getting its safety and security needs met, the ego's motivations may stay dominant for the rest of your life.

Accessing the soul

The fourth stage of development—the individuating stage—is the stage you must master to reactivate your soul awareness at the 5th, 6th and 7th stages of development. The goal at the individuating stage of development is to find freedom and autonomy—to let go of your social and cultural dependencies—so you can become responsible and accountable for every aspect of your life.

The ego is not *who* you are; it is who you think you are. It is the mask you wear to get your needs met in the physical, social and cultural framework of your material existence. The ego represents your sense of identity in relation to the physical, social and cultural context in which you live. You must remove your ego mask to find your soul self.

Activating the soul: self-expressing

The last three stages of psychological development represent various stages of soul activation. If you have been relatively successful in mastering the individuating stage of development, you will begin to feel the pull of the self-actualizing stage of development in your early 40s. Your challenge now is to fully embrace your soul's character and purpose by accessing your inborn gifts and talents and thereby give your life meaning.

If you failed to master your survival needs, the fears you developed about being able to exercise control over your environment will make it difficult to master your soul's desire for self-expression.

Activating the soul: connecting

The next stage of soul activation—the integrating stage of development, which usually occurs in the 50s—involves connecting with others in unconditional loving relationships so you can use your gifts and talents to make a difference in the world. Your challenge now is to develop your social intelligence and empathy skills so you can connect and collaborate with others and thereby use your gifts and talents to make a difference in people's lives.

If you failed to master your ego's safety needs, the fears you developed about forming relationships will make it difficult to master your soul's desire for connection.

Activating the soul: contributing

The last stage of soul activation—the serving stage of development, which usually occurs in your 60s—involves living a life of self-less service focused on future generations and the good of humanity. Having learned how to connect, what you are now tasked with doing is making a contribution to the common good. Your challenge now is to develop your compassion skills—to embrace the deepest aspects of your soul's intelligence and wisdom to help those who

are suffering, disadvantaged or are less well off than yourself.

If you failed to master your ego's security needs, the fears you developed about being able to become a valuable member of a community will make it difficult to master your soul's desire to make a contribution.

Progress towards enlightenment

How well your parents, guardians and teachers support you during the first three stages of development—surviving, conforming and differentiating—not only affects your physical health and mental well-being, during your early life, it also significantly affects your physical health and mental well-being, during the latter stages of your life.

Only when you have learned how to master your survival, safety and security needs and are successful in mastering the individuating stage of development, can you move to the self-actualising stage where you begin to activate your soul-mind.

Mastering the self-actualising stage of development brings meaning and purpose to your life. Mastering the integrating stage of development enables you to make a difference in your world. Mastering the serving stage of development enables you to find fulfilment in your life. By this time, your soul will be fully activated and you will be leading a life of selfless service for the good of humanity. Mastering these three stages of psychological development enables us to embody enlightenment.

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ⁱ For more information on this topic, consult, Richard Barrett, *A New Psychology of Human Well-being: An Exploration of the Influence of Ego-Soul Dynamics on Mental and Physical Health* (Fulfilling Books: London), 2016.

ⁱⁱ R. W. Clarke, *Einstein: The Life and Times* (New York: World Publishing), 1971, p. 159.

ⁱⁱⁱ Ervin László, *The Self-actualizing Cosmos: The Akasha Revolution in Science and Human Consciousness* (Rochester: Inner Traditions), 2014.

^{iv} Abraham H. Maslow, *Toward a Psychology of Being* (second edition) (New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold), 1968, p. 97.