

# **The Progression of The Ego Into The Self via The Law of Thelema**

The Ego is a topic of both metaphysical and psychological concern, and in many instances the line that separates these two fields of human study becomes quite blurred. This is especially true in present times where pseudo-intellectuals have reduced the spiritual reflex and the domain of the soul to simple but comfortable well-known psychological impulses without offering any real solutions to the problem of living a spiritual life in a world that demands selfishness and greed. Aren't we all better off now?

This article is by no means all-inclusive. There are many ways that a person's experience can go in trying to find spiritual freedom. The observation that follows is what I perceive as the ideal or best case scenario, and comes in part from watching people and reflecting on my own experiences on the path to self-discovery (as well as reading a lot of Jung), and the reader should be well advised to understand that I am far from reaching The Goal.

This article necessitates an explanation of how the term is being used. For the religious creature, the Ego signifies arrogance, self-importance, and unearned pride. For the psychologist, the Ego is the function in the human psyche that organizes the different aspects of the Self<sup>1</sup> in order to create a facade of wholeness and integration: it is a function of deception that serves to affect the individual and those around them. It is a necessary tool that should not be taken lightly. Both schools of thought are correct, but again, neither offers a clue as to how to use this information to create true method of gaining access to the Higher Self.

There is a false assumption in the religious types that the Ego must be destroyed. Individuals that have actually accomplished some success in this area find themselves having to go through years of therapy to get it back. In fact, the religious insistence of defining the Ego as an enemy may serve little more than the sinister desire to control people. The ego questions everything and insists on individual freedom. It will not readily accept unjust, destructive demands of religious groups. It is an ally of the Will. Destroying the Ego in order to achieve some resemblance of enlightenment is ludicrous because it is a characteristic of the Self that was created by the Self to interact with all other aspects of the physical universe.

For the purposes of this article I choose to define "Ego" as the narcissistic, automatic, habitual desire to see one's self as separate from the universe in which one lives and those people within and without one's sphere of influence. It isn't anything "evil," it can be problematic when it is immature. In our present state of evolution, the Ego is underdeveloped in most people. The Ego can often be so successful in identifying the "I" from the "not I" that it can become self-centered and behave in ways detrimental to its own self interests as well as the interests of other individuals.

The following stages are oversimplified for the scope of this article.

## **1. The unrestrained articulation of the Ego. "I do whatever I want."**

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<sup>1</sup> The archetype of personal totality; the governing nucleus of the psyche, and that influence that surpasses the ego.

The first stage the individual envisions his ego to be the whole of the self, and enthusiastically surrenders to every whim promising exhalation or pleasure, often times believing themselves capable of indulging in destructive behavior without consequence. Here we may find people obsessed with drugs, alcohol, sex, material, and financial gain without regard for how their actions affect the lives of others. During this stage of development there is little hope for the progress in the area of true love or understanding: even for one's self.

## **2. The awareness of the ego in relation to others. "Doing what I want causes unhappiness for those around me which may ultimately cut off my access to others."**

Here the Ego has come to realize others as intrinsic parts of its own existence and well-being. This realization comes as a result of trial and error, and various failed attempts trying to act without consequences. This is the stage of most adults. This realization may result in feelings of guilt, and often leads to a backlash where the individual immerses himself in religious or metaphysical practices in order to redeem himself. While on the surface this appears to be a desirable step in the process of development, we may begin to observe a psychopathology in the individual who begins to see himself as better than his fellows. In reality, at this stage, this is nothing more than another mask which is mostly composed of arrogance. One vice has simply been replaced with another much more palatable vice, since it pretends to espouse a higher more lofty ideal. One may be capable of seeing the Holy City from this stage, but it is an illusion projected by the Ego itself. Many religious people are inadvertently caught in this most direful trap. Sometimes the use of drugs is employed to escape, or one may simply stop here, feel sorry for one's self and blame problems on everyone else rather than to take responsibility and move on.

## **3. The subjugation of the Ego to the True Self. "I am more."**

After various attempts to achieve some relationship with the Higher Self, or to connect with something outside of its own delusions the individual may begin to see his Ego as an underdeveloped child and one becomes conscious of its capacity to deceive. Here the individual may offer up this false aspect of himself to some higher cause or deity. The emotional attachment to the Ego provides the necessary fuel. This cannot be done as an act of faith, but rather as a modest, cognizant, and intentional undertaking which adheres to the magical paradigm embraced by the individual. In our particular case, this must be a sincere and total sacrifice: an act of Love under Will.

The Ego experiences an inner struggle during this stage of development since it is only concerned with its own survival and fears its own demise more than anything else. This is where our mettle is most severely tested, and courage and perseverance are useful keys. Some people have associated this struggle with "The Dark Night of The Soul."<sup>2</sup> To succeed is to embody the Law in the flesh and achieve an inner peace during tribulation that so many mystics have written about throughout

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<sup>2</sup> Often encountered in magical work, this is a non-pathological condition marked by depression, lack of mental and physical energy. The energy that is not available to the conscious is re-routed and used in other areas of the mind: usually the imaginative functions of the brain. It is symbolic of the decent into Hades; it is an immersion in the unconscious. The experiences of Osiris, Christ, and Dante are examples describing this state. This condition is normal and even desirable, since it often leads the individual to a break in neurosis.

the ages. One becomes a Lover in the Sufi sense, as the absence of the Ego<sup>3</sup> makes it possible for the first time to see one's self in all things, and the way to the Higher Self is opened. The longer that one continues to hold this position, the greater the reward, and the clearer the road to the Holy Land. This reward cannot be talked about since language is not capable of conveying the tremendous release.

This is important: The actual act of questioning something greater (as well as the actual act of sacrifice) does not originate with the Higher Self, or God, or whatever you choose to call it, because "It" already knows. It is the Ego itself that is doing the questioning. Remember: The Ego's function is to question, and now we are seeing it exert itself in order to become self-aware. In this stage, we are seeing the Ego in its most active part of this evolutionary process toward enlightenment.

#### **4. Union with the Higher Self. In Western Hermeticism, "I who am most like himself" or "I am that I am" - in the Sufi tradition: "I am the Truth," "I am Love," or "I am the Law."**

This may appear as a contradiction, and a similar condition to what is explained in stage two. The difference is that the Ego (having been completely immersed in the Law of Thelema) is in fact an integral part of that Truth which is the Higher Self. The deluded Ego described in stage two can only make these statements while thumping his chest like a frightened gorilla: this individual states them in humility, realizing that his Truth belongs to All.

To explain the differences consider these different approaches, since they serve to illustrate the two stages very well.

"I am God" - One doesn't become one, or come to full realization of this in the Gnostic sense by simply saying it. It doesn't matter how often one repeats it. Whether "God" is really in there or not, the host will never really know it because he or she is trying to assume something without knowledge. This is faith.

"I am not God." - By beginning here, one is forced to separate those parts of his or her makeup which are made of "god stuff" in order to examine them objectively. After one has externalized the entire idea, one can go about assimilating it as one's own attributes. When one finds themselves one and indivisible from the Higher Self the Ego sees no reason to cheapen the experience by broadcasting it.

Here we approach the gates and stand before the pillars flanking the door to the Temple: Love and Law.

#### **5. The Ego is assimilated by The Higher Self. "There is only Truth."**

This stage marks Freedom in its ultimate sense. One is an agent of his own Divine Force and moves through the world confidently, without fear and completely trusting his newly found Divine

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<sup>3</sup> The use of the word "absence" is misleading, since the Ego hasn't really gone anywhere, it has simply transcended its home in the lower places. Also, this stage is what the Sufi calls "mystical love."

guidance. The individual has been reborn<sup>4</sup> into an existence where every experience is an encounter with the Divine. Here, and only here, can a person say of himself: “There is no God but Man.”

There is an idea that has become quite popular with pop-occultists which espouses the concept of absolute happiness once one reaches this stage. I believe that there is a tremendous joy which comes from being able to view the universe beyond the veil of illusion and deception. Suffering and sorrow, however, are still there, but you may now appreciate them (and isn't experience what Nuit calls us to do?) without the necessity of being emotionally involved with them because you will know that these experiences only have meaning in the duality of the physical universe. Existence is Existence, and tears of joy are no less salty than tears of sorrow.

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<sup>4</sup> A process usually experienced following The Dark Night of The Soul whereby an alteration of the personality has occurred. Examples of rebirth appear in the world's mythology in the form of The Transmigration of the Soul, Resurrection, and Reincarnation.