

## Masters Course September 2025

### Ego Activity: Hope Rejection Desire

### How We Get in Our Own Way

### Source Documents

In the The Technique Section of the Master's Manual Charles refers to the mind as follows – (main points in bold).

#### from Transmission of Truth “the Enlightenment Technique” Charles Berner

1. **The mind is generated when something is not communicated between individuals..** When something is completely received, it leaves the realm of the mind and enters the realm of knowingness.
2. The mind is filled up because it **is a storage of those things which are not understood, integrated, or fully experienced.** For example, someone may have been through a trauma in the past in which things were too intense for him and he had stored them in his mind for further integration or for later integration. He integrated part of the experience at the time it occurred but the part that wasn't understood, that wasn't experientiable given his current ability, is suspended in the mind. Did you ever have a desk with a “Pending” box on it? Well, that's the mind. So other people have not received your messages for them, and these also are stored in the mind.
3. When one tries to contemplate who he is, the mind gets in the way because of all these other ideas that are stored there that have to do with who he is. And there might be a lot of ideas about himself that he has not understood, ideas from the social environment which have made him think one way or the other about who he is. There may have also been a lot of things about who he is that he has not been able to get understood by other people. Therefore, **in the mind are all kinds of stored ideas, experiences, feelings, traumas, and memories, all about oneself.** So one tries to contemplate - who it is that he is and gets all these things in the mind instead of who he actually is.

4. Memories, impressions, fear of “What if I were this?” are all stored up in the mind and these impressions in the mind are not enlightenment experiences. They are impressions in the mind.
5. People have identified themselves not only with ideas in the mind but also personality traits in the mind. In other words, they’re being “a nice guy.” There are these various personality traits with which they have identified themselves. They are not those things in fact, but just like an actor playing a role who has forgotten who he is, these people have become identified with **personality traits which are contained within the mind**. They have forgotten that they are playing a role or personality.
6. They get a vested interest in certain states of being. They are trying to tell people something by being a certain way. For example, they want to be loved so they be a certain way in order to invite that love. So not only have they become unconsciously identified with something, they often have a vested interest, a use for being a certain way and thinking of themselves as that. And all of this masks who they actually are. This all interferes with the process of contemplation, and all of it is stored in the mind.
7. Our job is to help them to de-identify, give up their investment, and dissolve away or separate out the mind from who they are, so that they can experience who they actually are.
8. The most powerful means to dissolve the mind is through communication because the mind is the suspension of attempted communications which were not fully communicated between individuals.
9. When the things in the mind are communicated, they dissolve and vanish out of the mind to the degree that they are received and understood by another individual. That is the crux of this principle and the crux of the power of this technique.

All of this is true and it is a foundational principle of the Enlightenment Technique.

However there are other subtle dimensions to the mind, which we need to recognize and understand for contemplation and in order to be able to support others.

The mind is not only a “storage area” it is also an **activity and the source of activity**. If we ask “What does the mind do?” When we consider this a new dimension opens up. What is the mind’s activity, how does it function? How do we identify with its functioning? And how does the mind’s default activity affect contemplation and inquiry?

Thus the mind is not only content, it is also action and a way of being that determines both our motivation and the way we function.

Below are some readings that describe the mind in these terms. The principles here complement what Charles says about the mind. Understanding them will expand our appreciation of elements that get in the way of both contemplation and in the endeavor of serving others. What I am offering here is the tip of an iceberg. There’s a lot more.

## On Ego Activity

From Chapter 8 Point of Existence AH Almaas

### ***What constitutes ego activity?***

The center of the ego self, the center of its initiative, action and perception, is a psychic structure characterized by a specific pattern and by incessant psychological activity. The pattern, or the particular psychic organization, provides the direction of action, while the activity provides the drive to act. This gives the self a sense of orientation, center, and meaning. The psychological activity includes **hope** – the self is hoping, consciously or unconsciously, to achieve its aim or ideal. This implies that we project on the future the possibility of accomplishing a certain objective. The content of this objective is dependent upon previous experiences. We can hope only for something we have already had a taste of. The objective does not have to be identical to something we have experienced, but is shaped by many experiences from the past.

For instance, a person might have the objective of becoming a painter. Becoming a painter will involve many things he has never experienced, but the ambition is shaped by the way he believes he will feel, the responses he thinks he will receive, the impressions and influences he expects to make on others, and so on. These are determined or informed by his past experience. His objective and the values he attaches to it become an ideal.

He then experiences hope, which initiates **desire** for the ideal. This desire is an important element in the psychological activity. It is the actual manifestation of the psychological drive. In other words, ambitious striving includes desire, which implies hope. Without hope there would be no desire.

Both hope for a future objective and desire for this objective imply that we experience the condition of the self at the present as not completely satisfactory. This discontent, subtle or gross, conscious or unconscious, constitutes a **rejection** of the present state of the self. When there is complete acceptance of one's present state, there is no desire and no need for hope. **The subtle current of rejecting activity is based on the images which we have of ourselves, and the ideal images that we are trying to actualize. This condition can be conscious, but it is usually an unconscious and implicit undercurrent of the psychological activity of the self.**

**The psychological activity which is the dynamic center of the ego self is composed, then, of desire that implies both hope and rejection, and its content is determined by our self-images. Thus the main components of ego activity are hope, desire and rejection....**

We are not implying that all human motivation arises out of the flow of hope, desire and rejection, for we recognize that the self is fundamentally a dynamic wholeness. The dynamism of the self is an evolutionary force which has the *a priori* property of functioning as an "optimizing force". This force is recognized by many of the spiritual teachings of humankind. The student will try

anything to avoid awareness of the emptiness of the shell; Various reactions and object relations, images, memories, ambitions and ideals, hopes and plans.

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## Acceptance from Diamond Heart 2

AH Almaas

The personality can do only one thing: it can only say “no.” If you look at the movement and the actions of your personality you will observe that there is basically a rejection of your own experience. The personality's main function is to say “no” to your sensations, feelings, perceptions, and experience. It can do other things, such as act in the world and so on. but if we look at what it does in relationship with yourself it is mainly rejecting, and even when it seems to be saying “yes” it says “no.”

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The basic movement of what we call ourselves or our personality is desire for something different, and that desire makes us effort toward fulfilling it. But that hope and that desire and that effort are all a rejection of what is there. They are all a rejection of the present, of reality. They say “no” to what exists at that moment. This is the constant movement of personality, no matter what the activity is: working on a job, doing a task, sensing yourself, having sex, eating food, driving your car. All imply desire along with a rejection of what we are at the moment. So we see that the personality doesn't even know how to act without rejection. Any preference, every preference of one thing you experience over another is a rejection of something you experience. When you say “no” to a part of you, isn't one part of you setting itself against another part and saying “I don't want it”? So rejection creates division and conflict in you. That conflict creates resistances, blocks, and defenses. You don't want to feel the conflict so you don't feel as much, you cover it up, defend against it, resist it. Then you don't like that either so you reject rejection; in trying to move away from the conflict more conflict is created. This is a vicious cycle of rejection, division, conflict, discord. There is a war, in a sense, going on within us.

When we see these conflicts and rejections, what do we do? Usually we can't help but try to get rid of the conflict, which is more rejection. At each moment there is either a "yes" or a "no," nothing in between. It doesn't matter what it is you are rejecting. Even if you are rejecting rejection, it is still the same thing, rejection. We are not saying this so you'll be hard on yourself but to understand the situation. First we need to see that the basic movement of our mind, of personality, is a rejection, mainly self-rejection. One might reject other people or circumstances, but it's mainly a rejection of oneself, a part of oneself.

What makes us do that? One way of seeing it is that your internal critic, your super ego is rejecting your experience. We have learned that the superego comes from identifications with our parents, especially our parents superegos. We might say we took on rejection from our parents. My father didn't like me when I was angry, so now I reject my anger. My mother didn't like me when I wanted her, so now I reject my wanting. Thus one of the ways that an attitude of rejection develops is through identification with the rejecting attitude of the environment in early childhood. This is why early in our work we learn how to defend against the super ego. At the beginning, and for a long time, we need to defend against the superego so that we are able to experience ourselves more objectively. We need to defend from superego attacks and judgements not only because the attacks are painful but more importantly to be able to look at what's there. If you are in a battle, it's hard to pay attention to the subtleties of your consciousness. When no one is attacking you, you might let yourself more freely explore your experience.

**Rejection:** From "Unfolding Now" Chapter 8 Finding True Acceptance

For me to hold and embrace what I think is there, it has to be what I think is supposed to be there, what I think is best, what I think is preferable, what I think is ideal, what I think I'm looking for.

The deadly thing about comparative moral judgment is that it leads to the rejection of experience, but the experience is part of us so the rejection is inherently a self-rejection. The more you reject something in yourself the more you tear yourself apart – because that something is you.

Rejection, disapproval or looking down on something that we think doesn't measure up, are not just detached positions we take about our experience; they are violent destructive behaviors we use to harm ourselves... After a while if we keep doing this we're not aware anymore of what's going on inside us. That awareness is not even possible for us because parts of our experience are so suppressed that they don't even come up to be seen. Or if they do arise they're so camouflaged or defended that we can't become aware of what they really are. We can't be real if we reject ourselves.

So, what can we do instead of rejecting our experience? The practice is to be aware of the rejection, to hold it, to recognize it, welcome it and invite it to show its true quality. We need to be aware of the ways we were rejected, who rejected us, and how we internalized the rejection. How do we experience ourselves when we feel rejected?

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from Point of Existence

AH Almaas

However, that direct encounter with black spaciousness magnifies a more subtle barrier against full awareness of the chasm. It reveals something ordinarily too subtle to see and too implicit to apprehend. It exposes, in clear

relief, the activity through which this filling occurs, especially the activity through which the familiar identity perpetuates itself. In other words, **the stillness of the inner spaciousness reveals the agitation which characterizes the activity of the familiar identity, what we have termed ego activity. In fact, experience of the imperturbable peacefulness of the endless night sky not only exposes this inner psychic activity, but tends to intensify it. The self reacts to the stillness as a death, and intensifies its activity by which it generates its sense of self recognition. The ego activity becomes furious agitation and feverish inner obsessiveness.**

The self identity structure is a dynamic structure comprised not only of self-representations, but also inner activity. The main components of this activity are rejection, hope and desire. **Repeated experience of the stillness of black emptiness exposes this activity as mental agitation, which now intensifies and reaches feverish proportions as an obsessive inner activity whose ultimate purpose is to perpetuate itself. It becomes increasingly obvious that the details of this activity, the content of what the self rejects and what it hopes for, are immaterial. What matters is the activity itself.** The notion of giving up this inner activity appears to the self as defeat, a surrender to hopelessness.

The mental activity intensifies in an effort to avoid deep hopelessness and helplessness, despair and depression. These feelings are part of a narcissistic depression and deep hopelessness that the student feels about being her real self. This heavy and painful state is characterized by inertia, dullness, and self hate. One feels existential hopelessness and despair about the possibility of existing authentically, and about receiving support for one's authenticity.

The intense ego activity seems like an alternative to giving up hope and succumbing to this heavy hopelessness. However, some people get stuck in the depression – not because they cannot get out of it, but because it functions as a kind of a filler for the emptiness. It does feel like a heavy, sticky and thick substance which some students feel is more tolerable than the stark emptiness. To be depressed is more acceptable than to be nothing at all. Beth:



*“The depression came on to ward off the emptiness. As long as I was identified with depression nothing would move. From this arose fear of no protection from the emptiness, the emptiness of just is. There is nothing in the emptiness yet I hear a voice talking.”*

Each student encounters this depression in the process of working through the narcissistic sector of the personality. Discovering that one has been living the life of the empty shell brings up a deep hopelessness about living an essentially authentic life.

The ego activity, the voice that still exists in the emptiness in Beth's report above, has a more comprehensive function, which is to perpetuate itself; this makes slowing it down extremely difficult. Here is Mark:

*“In the meeting I asked about physical action and the activity of my mind, and mentioned that I did not know whether to do something or not because I thought it would just reinforce the basic inner activity. Then I realized from our work that the concern is the activity itself, to keep up the activity, and that I was wanting to do something out of rejection of what was happening at the moment.*

*When I saw that the deficiency was what was behind the inner activity and that this activity was a rejection of the deficiency and an attempt to change it. The deficiency felt larger than I have felt before and I felt suspended. Then, after staying with the deficiency and relaxing my legs a pure experience of Being; Being without attributes, emerged. I felt complete for a second or two then I felt somewhat incomplete, and felt the incompleteness was about not knowing what to do with this sense of Being in my life.*

*The activity of my mind began to increase again and the sense of pure Being became less, and the whole cycle began to feel that I just did not know what to do, and that was just a fact, and not a reflection of deficiency on my part. The activity stopped and the sense of pure Being*

*came back more. Then I thought I had the answer now, became interested and desirous of holding onto it to be able to reenact this process. The activity began again.*

*You pointed out that we are not incomplete, that we think we are getting something but that is not the case. This insight seemed very significant and like the missing link. It made the whole situation look truly ridiculous.”*

Achieving a measure of freedom from this incessant ego activity is not easy; it requires a deep surrender. This letting go requires several factors. One of these is learning what Mark says he discovered:

**1. Helplessness:** that not knowing what to do in order to be is not a deficiency, for being is not a matter of doing anything. When there is nothing to do, then not knowing what to do is an objective situation and not an indication of a personal failing. When this happens, then the feeling of “I cannot do anything: I do not know what to do”, which is the hole of the Diamond Will, transforms into the solidity of essential support, with the understanding that Being is the support for being.

[... one’s helplessness is based on a delusion: the belief that there is something we need to do in order to be ourselves and the resulting conviction that we can know what it is. This is one of the basic delusions of the ego life of the self. It is inherent in narcissism that we will attempt to do things to support our sense of identity. So the self is always engaged in inner activities of remembering, imaging, identifying, repressing, projecting, idealizing and various self-manipulations to shore up our insecure sense of identity.... The issue of real support emerges clearly only after we have penetrated the various external manifestations of this ego activity, and have experienced essential presence directly and immediately. The experience of essential presence functions naturally to expose these psychological activities....

The nondoining we learn at this stage of transformation is not the absence of activity in general – physical or psychological. It is the cessation of the particular activity whose specific purpose is the formulation and support of a sense of self and identity. Clearly there is nothing wrong with activity: we need it for living. We cannot live without physical activity; and we need

thinking for many purposes. But when we use our thinking and our psychological activity in general to construct and support an identity (ie. to try to be ourselves) then we are using the mind inappropriately. *It is not the job of the mind to tell us who we are. The recognition of who we are is the function of the Essential Identity, whose mere presence is sufficient for self-recognition. This is being ourselves, and knowing ourselves, directly and immediately, without even self-reflection.*

There are many routes by which we might arrive at the state of existential helplessness; most of them involve a lot of activity. Many spiritual practices and exercises are designed for the very purpose of ceasing this activity. In the path of spiritual transformation a great deal of uncovering and understanding are necessary for us to be able to experience this helplessness objectively, impartially and without defensiveness. So we cannot take the attitude that doing nothing is the real practice and stop all practices. If we do that it is more than likely that we will merely continue with our ego activity unconsciously and will develop only laziness. Many spiritual disciplines use the ego activity intentionally, with a great deal of energy and effort, to gain as much as possible from it; but at the same time, they use it in a way that tends to expose its nature. For such disciplines to be successful, the activity must be such that in time its nature and function are revealed.

Since we do not need any inner activity to support true identity, if we were able to simply cease all this activity, then we would need no practices for self-realization. However, this is impossible for almost everyone; thus the necessity for the various disciplines and practices. These disciplines will always bring the student to the realization of nonaction when the complete transformation of self-realization is attained.

As we saw in Julia's case in the last chapter, support is not an activity but a manifestation of Being. When we finally accept our narcissistic helplessness and experience it in a totally open and impartial manner, the deficient emptiness loses its deficiency and reveals itself as a vast spaciousness. The transformation of deficient emptiness into space is made possible when we accept the deficient emptiness. This process involves the transformation of

self-image, namely the relinquishing of the conviction that we could know what to do and that we are inadequate because we cannot. The emptiness feels deficient because it is pervaded by the deficient concept of ourselves, which is based on a delusion. Letting go of the delusion dissolves the self-image and liberates the emptiness from the pervasive feeling of deficiency. Emptiness reveals its true nature as a deep and peaceful inner spaciousness.

Point pp 257 /259

**2. Distrust/Manipulation:** The surrender requires deep and unquestioned *trust in truth* and in reality in general. It requires an unusual faith or basic trust that if one suspends the activity, everything will be okay, that everything will be taken care of. For most people, this basic trust was eroded because of early parental treatment that failed to give the child the implicit confidence that she would be taken care of without having to manipulate her environment to provide what she needed.

The inadequacies of the early holding environment made her feel that she cannot just relax and be; she has to take things into her own hands and make sure that she will be safe and cared for. This orientation manifests in later life as a general distrust of reality. She learns to react instead of being, to manipulate things in an attempt to compensate for inadequate holding...“If maternal care is not good enough then the infant does not really come into existence, since there is no continuity of being; instead the personality becomes built on the basis of reactions to environmental impingement.” (Winnicott). This reactivity is part of the very structure of the self-identity; the fundamental distrust is one of the deepest motivations for the compulsive activity. **Because the self believes that she can trust only her own activity, she is certain that it would be foolish and dangerous to cease this activity.** Therefore, the prospect of the cessation of this activity tends to produce a tremendous amount of terror.

**3. Striving:** Another important factor in the ego activity is that a **self is always striving to be a particular way, in order to achieve support.** The primary

image pattern in this activity is the ego ideal. The self tries to approximate a certain ideal, in the hope that if she succeeds, she will be worthy of the support she needs. This ideal is never attained, but the self never tires of trying. Thus, effort is a chronic characteristic of the self identity structure. ...

This lack of basic trust is fundamental to the normal identity. There is no sense that the deeper nature of the universe is good and loving. The basic distrust reflects the ignorance of the knowledge which arises only with self realization, which is that Being is the fundamental ground of all existence, and that its nature is inherently benevolent. In religious language, this issue is understood as the lack of faith that God exists.

**4. Guilt:** Understanding ego activity brings about (among other things) the personalization of the intelligence aspect. The Personal Essence becomes present in a precious, brilliant, exquisitely smooth and luminous form. The experience is to be, completely, with no concern or attempt to be anything. This seems to move emotional and instinctual libido towards Being. It is interesting that this state of the Personal Essence is connected to the sense of responsibility; one understands that one's ultimate responsibility is to be.

This also resolves the deep guilt that one experiences when one lets go of ego activity. One feels guilty just being, instead of doing things to help others. One feels just to be is selfish, and involves abandoning others, not caring for them. One then realizes that the best that one can do emotionally for another is to be, to be there, to be present for him. This is real responsibility.

### Universal Love p 343

As we explore the barriers to self realization, we need to inquire into our basic distrust. This will take us into exploring our early holding environment and its effects on the development of our sense of self. Investigating the inadequacies of our early holding environment reveals the effects of these inadequacies on our particular self-identity structure. Working through this history, and illuminating the psychic structures it has created, leads finally to the awareness of the absence of basic holding. This absence is associated with a certain emptiness, the hole of a specific manifestation of Being. Learning to allow this emptiness finally ushers us into this manifestation of Being, which turns out to be a quality of love. It is the quality of boundless and gentle love, a delicate light experienced as the presence of softness, sweetness and

generosity. It is not exactly a personal kind of love. It is love for everything and everyone – universal love.

Its direct effect on the self is for her to feel lovingly held, as if cuddled in the infinitely loving arms of the universe. It also brings the perception that this loving, holding quality is intrinsic to the fundamental ground of all existence. The more she experiences this loving manifestation of Being, the more basic trust develops, and the more her faith in reality is restored.

The issues of basic trust and the surrender that it engenders are not specific to the work on narcissism. However, some resolution of these issues is necessary for the surrender involved in slowing down and ceasing ego activity. The realization of this quality of love, which we call Living Daylight or Loving Light resolves these issues. The presence of the Living Daylight helps us to let go of the empty shell, to allow the narcissistic wound and accept the narcissistic emptiness. This boundless, loving presence makes it easier for the self to relax and cease activity. One also comes to understand that it is this love which actually acts, and not the self. It is the melting action of this love that finally dissolves ego activity. P 344

## **Rounds**

I recognize myself through what I do, through my activity. Through what I hope for, what I desire, what I am trying to do. I have to keep doing.

(inner activities of remembering, imaging, identifying, repressing, projecting, idealizing and various self-manipulations to shore up our insecure sense of identity)

**Personal Exploration:**

1. What do you do to prop up your identity? How do you engage in inner activities: remembering, imaging, identifying, repressing, projecting, idealizing and various self-manipulations to shore up our insecure sense of identity.
2. Tell me a way you think it's wrong to be helpless. Get the idea that you really are helpless, that you can't, that there's nothing you can do to be.
3. Get the idea of emptiness as deficient. Get the idea of emptiness is simply vast and spacious.
4. I have to take care of myself. I can't afford to stop doing.
5. What do I believe would happen if I stopped?
6. What do you have to do to get what you need? Who would you be without your activity? Notice the importance activity has for your identity.
7. My goals are not actually important, what matters is my activity; that I have something to do.
8. It's selfish to just be, I can't abandon others, I have to do something to help.
9. I can slow myself down, I don't have to fill the space with talk, action. I trust myself. I can trust emptiness, I can trust and let go