

# The Meaning of Life and the Process of Self-Actualization

Zoran Salopek, Vida Demarin

Međunarodni institut za emocionalnu zrelost, Vrhovec 18/1, 10000 Zagreb

OPEN ACCESS

## Correspondence:

Zoran Salopek  
info@zoransalopek.com

This article was submitted to RAD  
CASA - Medical Sciences  
as the review article

## Conflict of Interest Statement:

The authors declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

Received: 23 April 2025

Accepted: 29 May 2025

Published: 25 June 2025

## Citation:

Salopek Z, Demarin V. The Meaning of Life and the Process of Self-Actualization

567=70-71 (2025): 52-59

DOI: 10.21857/yvjrdcdvzy

Copyright (C) 2025 Salopek Z, Demarin V. This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License (CC BY). The use, distribution or reproduction in other forums is permitted, provided the original author(s) and the copyright owner(s) are credited and that the original publication in this journal is cited, in accordance with accepted academic practice. No use, distribution or reproduction is permitted which does not comply with these terms.

## ABSTRACT

This paper explains and analyzes the relationship between the meaning and purpose of life and emotional maturation as a path toward self-actualization. In addition, it presents a new model of self-actualization, a new model of maturity levels, connecting them through the lens of emotional maturation - consciousness. Central to this process is the role of the ego, viewed as emotional inexperience that creates a false identity to compensate for feelings of inferiority created by this inexperience. Emotional maturity arises from confronting ego-driven fears and challenges, which foster learning and the development of self-actualization skills, including selflessness, perseverance, acceptance, and forgiveness. Furthermore, the paper critiques existing maturity models and proposes a new map of emotional maturity levels. This progression highlights that true maturity involves silencing the ego through emotional knowledge and embracing inner balance.

**KEYWORDS:** Meaning and purpose of life. Self-actualization. Ego. Emotional maturation.

## SAŽETAK:

SMISAO ŽIVOTA I PROCES SAMOOSTVARENJA

Ovaj rad objašnjava i analizira odnos između smisla i svrhe života i emocionalnog sazrijevanja kao puta prema samoostvarenju. Osim toga, predstavlja novi model samoostvarenja, novi model razina zrelosti, povezujući ih kroz prizmu emocionalnog sazrijevanja - svijesti. Središnja uloga ovog procesa je uloga ega, promatranog kao emocionalno neiskustvo koje stvara lažni identitet kako bi kompenziralo osjećaje inferiornosti stvorene tim neiskustvom. Emocionalna zrelost proizlazi iz suočavanja sa strahovima i izazovima vođenim egom, što potiče učenje i razvoj vještina samoostvarenja, uključujući nesebičnost, ustrajnost, prihvaćanje i oprost.

Nadalje, rad kritizira postojeće modele zrelosti i predlaže novu kartu razina emocionalne zrelosti. Ovaj napredak naglašava da istinska zrelost uključuje utišavanje ega kroz emocionalno znanje i prihvaćanje unutarnje ravnoteže.

**KLJUČNE RIJEČI:** Smisao i svrha života. Samoostvarenje. Ego. Emocionalno sazrijevanje.

## INTRODUCTION

The meaning of life is one of humanity's most essential and complex questions. Nevertheless, there is an Absolute Truth answer to that question, as to any other, if we have enough experience to understand it. It is this topic that the present paper explores, the Absolute Truth for all the questions we will be addressing here. It is important to highlight that Absolute Truth is defined as a statement that is true at any time and in any place, always true regardless of the circumstances. It is a fact that cannot be altered. In essence, the *truth* itself is absolute; otherwise, it is not the *truth*, it is perspective. Therefore, in the remainder of this paper, we will refer to it simply as *truth*.

At one time, a crucial need arose in medicine to model and uncover the *truth* about human anatomy, leading us to dissect bodies in order to understand how they function, what causes various processes, and which effects follow. Even before medicine, we began modeling the *truth* of our sky and stars. Today, humanity has reached the point where it needs to model the *truth* of our inner and outer worlds. It is this model that the present paper outlines, covering all the details of the self-actualization process and providing a map of the human inner world.

For a long time, it was mistakenly believed that the Earth was the center of the universe. The disproving of this misconception used to lead to strong resistance and violence until the society realized that the *truth* was actually different, confronted this misconception, and changed it in scholarly texts. Today, there is a misconception that our external world is of central importance and that our need to prove ourselves and play a role in it is the center of everything. At least, our surroundings and our ego try to convince us of this. Challenging this misconception also generates a lot of resistance. This resistance will persist until, as a society, we recognize another *truth*—that our inner world is the center where we are important and where our maturation and self-actualization take precedence. It is also the *truth* that life, the external world, our social relationships, work, or family serve merely as a stage, a training ground for accumulating experiences and exercising our maturity.

We are all aware that the human desire to prove the existence of *truth* of us humans lies beyond the reach of our limited speculative minds. Indeed, the *truth* about ourselves and our lives cannot be proven; we will need to agree on this as a species. If it could be proven, it would simply be too easy. The first person to prove it would set a path that others would merely follow. In this way, a consensus is required—a shared experience and mutual understanding that will lead to a common knowledge and a path for others.

## THE MEANING OF LIFE

The need to mystify the meaning and purpose of life stems from pure ambiguity, and the *truth* about what the meaning of life is is so simple that it can be summed up in one word: experiences.

The meaning of life for us humans is to gather experiences and mature through the process of self-actualization. As such, it is collective in nature and predetermined for us humans, who in this world of duality have, on one hand, an irresistible need—almost a task—to explore and develop, to create and connect. On the other hand, there is a fear of inexperience and the unknown, of change or pain. By fulfilling these needs, overcoming fears, and exploring the unknown, we collect new experiences (Frankl, 1946; Rogers, 1969). To explain the meaning of life and self-actualization in detail, we must clearly distinguish what types of experiences exist, and what experience truly is.

In line with our external and internal world, our experiences can be categorized as external and internal. All our needs provide the impetus that drives us to seek experiences in the external world, while our conscious and unconscious fears that manifest as *ego challenges*, give us the opportunity to overcome them and thereby gain internal experiences or self-actualization skills such as responsibility, acceptance, forgiveness, and others.

We gain experience when something becomes truly unimportant to us. Traveling a lot, going out, or constantly proving ourselves and seeking attention does not mean we have experience. With these activities we explore and study that experience, and we truly comprehend that experience when the traveling, nightlife, or proving ourselves and seeking someone's attention become simply unimportant. It is exactly through the gathering of these experiences that we mature and self-actualize. We have experienced all of this and can do it, but we do not want to; we do not see the value in it; it becomes unimportant (Salopek, 2023).

The importance and significance of experience are entirely the same at the social level as they are for the individual due to our interconnectedness. This is best illustrated by the fact that it took humanity approximately a million years to understand the experience of ordinary fire, which then enabled further development of our specie. For a million years, we as a society struggled to comprehend fire, and the moment we grasped that experience, it became again - unimportant. No one talks about fire anymore; it is irrelevant and unnecessary, even amusing to marvel at it (Colman, 2003). However, it was a significant step in the development of us humans as a species, because a species self-actualizes in the same steps as an individual, thereby proving our interconnectedness.

## SELF-ACTUALIZATION

Self-actualization was first mentioned in 1943 in a paper on the hierarchy of human needs by American psychologist Abraham Maslow. However, it only referenced a few internal needs, leading to a misinterpretation of self-actualization as merely one of the needs, rather than a process. We achieve self-actualization by accumulating experiences, and these experiences are fulfilled needs, which fundamentally makes them the same topic. However, self-actualization in the context of meaning and purpose in life is much more complex. A new model of the self-actualization process through the fulfillment of needs and the gathering of experiences can be found in Figure 1 (Salopek, 2023).

## SELF-ACTUALIZATION

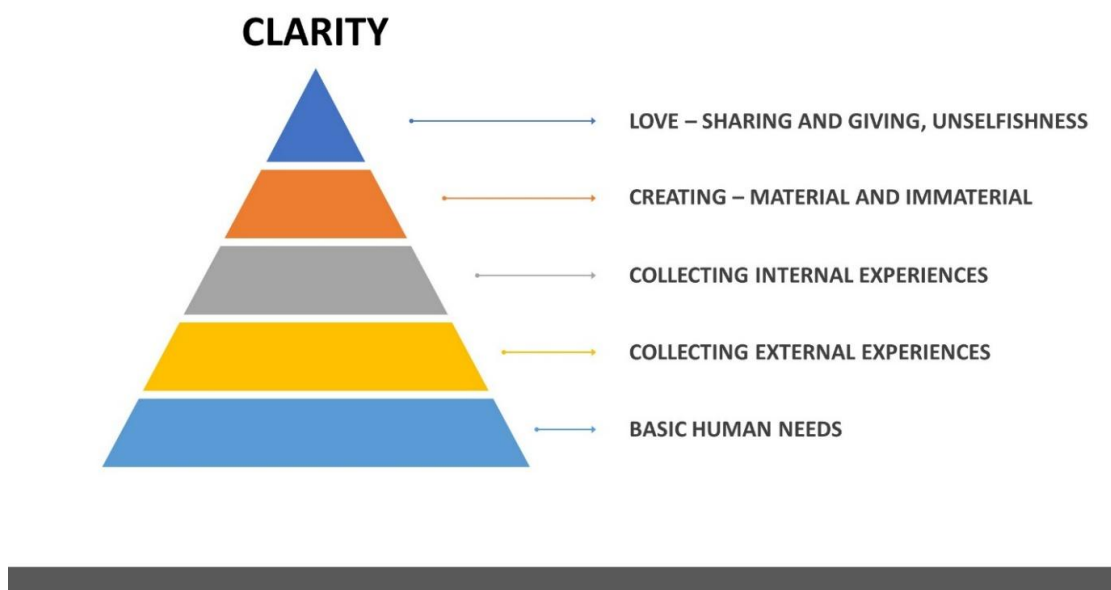


Figure 1. Pyramid of Self-Actualization

The base of the self-actualization pyramid is indeed defined by fundamental human needs, such as physical and psychological safety, which are prerequisites for existence and maturity. If basic needs for food and water are not met, or if one is physically or psychologically threatened, all attention and energy will instinctively be directed toward survival, rather than the gathering of experiences, introspection, creation, and personal growth (Maslow, 1982). This level teaches us the skill of survival.

Once these needs are satisfied, individuals move to the next level of the pyramid, seeking experiences from the external world based on what they observe around them. There is a strong desire for experiences that align with their maturity and previously gathered experiences, focusing instinctively on new experiences that they lack in the external world, such as playing, riding a bike or driving a car, first kisses, belonging, relationships, material possessions, nightlife, knowledge, first jobs, parenting, or traveling. Human needs or impulses exist to drive us toward the gathering of the experiences we lack. Moreover, unwanted events and traumas, such as a broken arm or divorce, are also experiences. With the passage of time, these events lose their negative emotional connotation and remain as mere experiences, since even children cannot learn to walk without falling. However, up to this point, animals can do the same since they also experience the basic needs such as birth, survival, work, finding their place

in the social hierarchy, reproduction, and death. What they cannot do, however, is explore their inner world, which is the next step in the process of self-actualization (Salopek, 2023).

In the middle of the pyramid, the individual focuses on inner experiences, consciously or unconsciously turning toward the fulfilling of their internal needs and overcoming of fears. Our internal needs for respect, attention, validation, trust, and similar sentiments stem from immaturity and a lack of experience. As one matures, these needs diminish in significance because the experiences gained help alleviate the fears that drive them. Fears are the root of our immaturities and weaknesses, providing challenges that allow us to acquire new skills and experiences while exploring our inner world (Segrin, 2007).

For instance, if a person has never possessed many material items, that lack of experience may lead to a strong desire for them. From this perspective, the individual might believe that owning material things affirms their worth and importance. As they accumulate more possessions, they gain more experience. However, true understanding comes when they realize that these items are ultimately unimportant. Only then can they say they have learned the skill of letting go and detachment. If a person still feels a need for these items or concepts, they have not yet grasped that experience and cannot progress along the path of self-actualization (Kardas et al., 2019).

Further on, due to the trauma and negative experiences we have endured, we often develop resentment towards the person or event that caused that trauma. This trauma and the accompanying resentment serve as experiences that aim to teach us a necessary skill in our maturation process: forgiveness. All our fears and the consequent character weaknesses caused by mere inexperience exist to challenge us and teach us the skills of self-actualization.

After accumulating enough external and internal experiences, a person transitions from being a survivor to a creator—turning their focus to the act of creation itself. On the second-to-last level of the pyramid, we find creation, both material and immaterial. The specific object of creation is not important, be it art, business, a book, a family, a film, an application, or a house. What matters is our dedication to the act of creation itself. By creating, we present something external to ourselves and divert attention from how we feel in the process. Paradoxically, this focus on creation allows us to delve deeper into ourselves, gathering experiences, maturing, and growing until we realize the value of giving—love (Salopek, 2023).

At the top of the pyramid of self-actualization lies love, which is portrayed as an individual strength and skill developed through experience and maturity, rather than an inherent right obtained at birth. Love is characterized by unconditional giving and sharing of experiences acquired on the journey to self-actualization, both with loved ones and strangers. Unlike the meaning of life, which is collective in its nature, the purpose of life is individual and pertains to the experiences one must gather at any given time. The highest purpose in life is to share these experiences gained through maturity, akin to how a mother selflessly shares her experiences with her child. Interestingly, the need to share and give is also egoistic if it is conditional; true love cannot have conditions. If one still feels a need for something, it indicates a lack of mastery over the skill of love. Thus, to truly love, we can do whatever we want, but we must not be in need of it, since the need itself will prevent us from mastering the skill of love. When we need nothing and learn to love, we automatically enter the present moment (De Karoli, 2014).

At the end, love will lead us to clarity. This is the reward for a fulfilled meaning of life, rather collected experiences. Clarity is also both internal and external. In a moment of complete internal clarity, nothing from the external world will be able to affect us or our inner world anymore, as we have fulfilled all needs, overcome all irrational fears, and taken control over ourselves (Kardas et al. 2019).

External clarity is the realization that life is not a chaotic and random sequence of events but that there are specific laws, such as duality or cause and effect, that govern this school for gathering experiences we call life. These laws help us overcome our fears by providing life challenges, and it is up to our experience and maturity whether we interpret them as problems or assistance (Salopek, 2023).

The key to self-actualization and the meaning of life lies in experiential, emotional understanding of what is important and what is not. From our own inexperience fears are created. If we, for example, don't have experience of being alone, fear of loneliness will arise. From all inexperience and fears we develop a deep sense of unimportance – feeling of inferiority, leading to a need to feel important. Consequently, we unconsciously create an identity that provides us that importance. Based on the dual “*fight or flight*” program (Cannon, 1932), we either flee from this need to be important by pleasing others, becoming passive, or even resorting to self-destructive behavior, or we constantly seek validation, impose ourselves, or even act aggressively to affirm our own importance and identity. This deep sense of unimportance drives people to addictions as substitutes for love – strength and skill. All human-created addictions essentially serve to numb this deep feeling of insignificance or provide a false sense of strength and importance (Kozarić-Kovačić et al., 2024).

To achieve a balance between these two extremes through experience, we must first experience both “extremes” in this world of duality before realizing completeness and self-actualization. The most inexperienced individuals initially flee from everything because they unconsciously feel very insignificant and are actually running away from being important, both to themselves and to others. When emotional suffering compels us to explore our own importance, we begin to prove ourselves, seek attention, and collect experiences to demonstrate our value to ourselves and others. That is why emotional suffering exists, because without it who would even begin to explore their inner world? Who would deal with their fears, passiveness, or selfishness if there was no emotional pain to nudge us?

As we accumulate more experiences, we start to realize the insignificance of those same experiences. Our diplomas and positions, proving ourselves and seeking attention, mingling and excitement, travel and money become unimportant to us. Ultimately, we realize that we become insignificant to ourselves. In this realization of our own insignificance, we begin to discover our own infinity and strength, self-confidence and clarity, joy and love, the power of simplicity, and finally, our importance once again. This time, however, that feeling of importance arises not from weakness and validation, but from complete acceptance, strength, and clarity.

Thus, our entire lives and all experiences serve to help us understand that everything is unimportant, including ourselves, only to realize that we are so important that life is made just for us so we may collect experiences. It may sound paradoxical, but the understanding of this law lies in the insight itself, which follows the same pattern throughout life. Given that paradoxicality always involves returning to the starting point based on experience, I have termed it the *paradox of the circle*.

### *The Paradox of the Circle*

*The paradox of the circle* is best explained through a story. I will use the metaphor of a person fishing in a small town who has never left it. This person fishes out of inexperience and fear of everything that lies in the unknown. One day, feeling bored with safety, he decides to explore the unknown and confront that fear. He sets out into the world, discovers the lights of the big city, and turns to the gathering of external experiences amidst that abundance. Amazed by the glamour, this person thinks he will never return to the small town because there is nothing left for him there. Once he experiences that abundance and realizes its insignificant nature, he matures and turns to his own inner world, questioning the importance of the external world. Upon gaining clarity about the unnecessary glamour, and a waste of time spent studying that experience, he turns to creation, but for the benefit of all, including himself. After feeling immense satisfaction in his creation, he wants to share it with others. Recognizing the importance of sharing, he also grasps simplicity and, driven by this new motivation, returns to his small town to fish and share his experiences of the big city and his realizations. Now this person is doing exactly the same thing, fishing, as he used to when he started his journey of self-discovery, but now he is doing it guided by a completely different motivation—insight and clarity, rather than fear and inexperience (Norrish et al. 2011).

By the same logic and *paradox of the circle*, a child experiences various experiences while growing up, seeking their own identity but quickly changing identities by altering their interests. These changes occur rapidly because there are no limitations in the environment, which easily accepts changes in children's interests and identities. As we grow older, it becomes increasingly difficult to change, and we establish an identity that suits us more or less. The less mature and inexperienced we are, the greater our need for identity, making it harder to discard it and seek our path in the unknown.

The path to realization lies in discarding our own identity and returning to the starting point, where we, as children, curiously and easily changed identities because we effortlessly accepted our own insignificance. Thus, throughout life, we must gather experiences, building our own identity and a sense of self-imposed importance, just to gain the strength, courage, and maturity to discard all identities. In that own insignificance, we discover who we truly are. We must become no one to be able to be everyone, thereby uncovering our true selves. (Norrish et al., 2011).

It is our motivation that will reveal to us which point of this circle we are at—the reason «why?» we do something. Overall maturity and self-actualization are defined only by our motivation. For everything we do, we will uncover our motivation by asking ourselves a simple question «why?». The answer to the question «why?» will define our motivation and, consequently, our maturity.

Therefore, *it is not important what we do, but only why we do it.*

Do we do—or not do—something out of fear and inexperience, or out of clarity and strength? The answer to this question will define our maturity and, consequently, our entire life. (Colman, 2003).

Due to our interconnectedness as individuals, we, as a society, mature and self-actualize along the same path as individuals. Throughout history, we had to go through a long and difficult first step of self-actualization, which is physical and psychological safety. It took thousands of years for us as humans, and society as a whole, to develop sufficiently so that this is no longer a topic. Naturally, we speak at the level of all humanity, not locally, where there are still many parts of society that have not even surpassed the first step. After that step, again in this world of duality, the Western part of humanity has gone to one extreme, focusing on experiences in the material world and proving themselves within it, consequently bewildered by those who seek answers in their inner world (Colman, 2003). In doing so, they unconsciously neglect the study of self-actualization skills such as silence, forgiveness, acceptance, letting go, or selflessness. In the same imbalance, the Eastern part of humanity is oriented toward the other extreme, exploring their inner world and how this life functions. In the same ignorance, they are astonished by those who seek answers in the material world, thereby unconsciously neglecting the skills such as new experiences, determination, taking responsibility, persistence, or discipline.

In this process, both worlds create and develop unaware of the fact that for the final step—the most difficult and mature, the realization of love—it is necessary to incorporate and recognize both poles before we become whole, and understand personal insignificance and the notion that no one is more important than the other, and thus that everyone is important. By understanding the skill of love, we achieve emotional maturity as individuals and as a society. (Salopek, 2023).

### EMOTIONAL MATURITY

First of all, it is important to note in terms of terminology that emotional maturity and maturation are called personal growth and development by some authors, while some call them spirituality and the search for the true self, whereas some call these concepts awareness or personal transformation. The *truth* is that these are all synonyms, and we will use the term maturity because it is the most complete, taking into account the meaning of life, the process of self-realization and the map of the inner world. Awareness is also a plausible term because it is a complete synonym, much more popular, and therefore acceptable.

All experiences lead us to emotional maturity, i.e. self-actualization. The real core and point of emotional maturity is the inner balance achieved by facing one's own needs and fears that manifest through ego challenges and consequently learning the skills of self-actualization.

Ego is actually our overall emotional ignorance – inexperience. This creates our deep feeling of inferiority – unimportance, that we try to compensate by creating identity that will give us importance – false identity (Winnicott, 1971). The more experienced and mature we are, the less things and ideas are important to us, and with that we are actually breaking down our identity so that

through experience we return to insignificance, but this time out of strength, not fear.

However, if there were no ego, there would be no fears and challenges to overcome, and thus there would be no learning and maturing (May, 1980; Horney, 1950). Our ego and its challenges are not put there just to cause us suffering, they are given to us so that we can gain experiences and learn the skills of self-realization - fulfilled needs and skills of selflessness, letting go, silence, perseverance, understanding, growth, letting go, determination, accepting reality and yourself, and forgiveness.

Our ability to change and learn new emotional skills by confronting our fears caused by inexperience is actually our emotional intelligence. It is made out of our consciousness, conscience and courage. By the same logic, it wants to teach us the skills of responsibility, proper motivation and discipline (Salovey, Mayer, & Brackett, 2007; Goleman, 1995; Bar-On, 2005).

Therefore, our emotional intelligence is actually our capacity

for change, learn and gain new experiences and to learn self-actualization skills, i.e. our ability to silence our ego. How much we have silenced our ego, i.e. the level of our experience, is our current state of emotional maturity – awareness (Muk, 2007).

Maturity - awareness itself was mapped by David R. Hawkins in 2013. It corresponds almost completely to the concept proposed and described in this article, and certainly provides an insight into the levels of maturity- consciousness (Hawkins, 2022).

However, this model does not show that maturity comes from balance, so it does not accurately visualize the truth. Additionally, it does not provide the full context and explanation of how we progress through the levels with self-actualization skills and emotional intelligence, and it incorrectly positions fear and courage.

In line with everything stated here, in Figure 2 there is a proposal for a new map, that is, the level of emotional maturity - awareness. It completely correlates with the pyramid of self-realization, but is described from the perspective of the meaning of life.

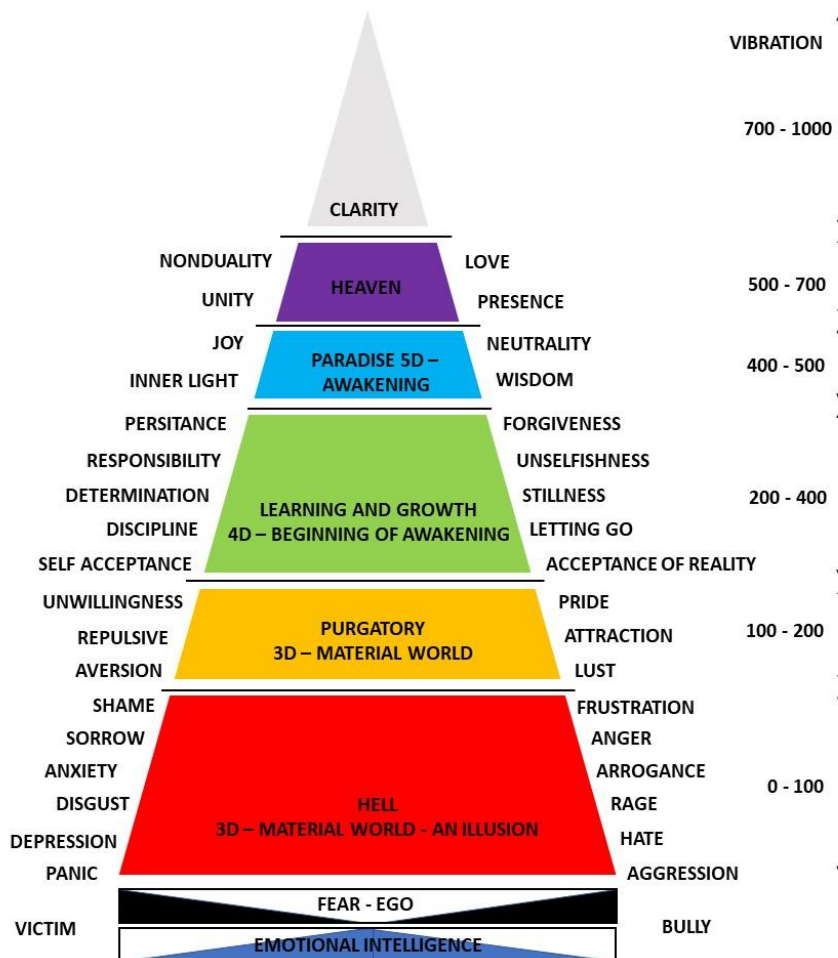


Figure 2. Levels of maturity - awareness

The first level of maturity is complete inexperience in which there is a complete rule of the ego and the absence of our emotional intelligence, our only tool for learning. This level is also called hell because it is full of daily emotional suffering and consequent problems.

At the next level, the ego is quieter, there is a certain shift in maturity due to the accumulated experience. Extremes are much rarer, satisfaction is greater, everyday problems are fewer and fewer, and relationships are getting better. Nevertheless, none of that has disappeared yet, we are still in the material, mental, world and see nothing but the outside world where we fulfill our needs, mature and further cleanse ourselves of our ignorance - ego, which is why this level is called purgatory.

After we have gathered enough experience, we begin to notice that the outside world does not provide us with answers to our questions, which we ask more and more often. We then start looking for the answers and *truth* in our inner world by changing ourselves and learning the skills of self-realization. It is the beginning of awakening from the illusion of the importance of the material world that we used to be in. This can be quite a confusing level because a person is waking up and everything that was important to him/her loses its importance, and everything the person sees begins to be seen with different perspective. However, it is necessary to understand that the beginning of awakening does not mean being awake. Although we begin to perceive the *truth*, it does not mean that we are living it yet: we have just become aware of it. At this level, we are expected to learn all the skills of self-realization and continue to create until the moment we wake up.

At the next level, nothing from the outside world can control us anymore and we achieve neutrality or indifference, but at the same time reach complete joy and wisdom. This level is characterized by the fact that it is not a process, but a precisely defined moment that is not accompanied by any audiovisual effects. Suddenly, we get a feeling of complete clarity. Every day after this, emotionally, is like paradise for us. It is necessary to understand that even at this level we are still not completely devoid of emotional reactions. However, they no longer control us, and life itself becomes completely clear to us.

We begin to realize that we are all one, and with that realization we get a huge need to share the knowledge and clarity we have received, and thus realize love and enter heaven. The characteristic of this level is that we will not even know when it happened to us, because only once will we realize that our priorities, that is, our perspective and what is important to us, have drastically changed. Love is the ultimate skill, with the knowledge of which we move to a new level and realize that we are part of a bigger picture. With this, everything becomes unimportant to us except other people and their knowledge and needs. It is necessary to understand that we do not deny ourselves, but feel sincere satisfaction in helping others in any way, especially the one in which we ourselves have the most inclination and experience.

In the end, when we lose all emotional reactions and needs - since even the need for knowledge or giving and sharing is egoistic because it comes from inexperience - we gain complete maturity and clarity, and fully enter the present moment. However, paradoxically, as always, in order to mature and raise our own awareness, we must first enter our depth, our inner world (Brach, 2021; LaPera, 2021; Siegel, 2010), because we raise our maturity - awareness in the long term only by overcoming our conscious and unconscious fears.

## CONCLUSION

In this paper, we presented and connected a number of new concepts of the emotional functioning of us humans. The purpose of this paper was to break a series of misconceptions related to the meaning of life, self-realization, ego and emotional intelligence, and our emotions. Further on, the goal of this paper is to concisely outline all the information related to our inner world in one place and connect all these parts into one broad picture so that knowledge can be passed on to future generations as simply as possible. The only question in the end is, is this paper the truth? If it is, then we need to start revising the textbooks we use for teaching our children.

## REFERENCES

- Bar-On, R. (2005). *Emotional intelligence: An integrated model for the understanding and development of human behavior*. Trafford Publishing.
- Brach, T. (2021). *Trusting the gold: Uncovering your natural goodness*. Sounds True.
- Cannon, W. B. (1932). *The wisdom of the body*. W. W. Norton & Company
- Colman, A. (2003). *Oxford Dictionary of Psychology*. Oxford University Press.
- De Karoli, S. (2014). *Correlational Study on Dispositional Resilience, Psychological Well-being, and Coping Strategies in University Students*. *American Journal of Educational Research*, 2(7), 463–471.
- Frankl, V. E. (1946). *Man's search for meaning: An introduction to logotherapy*. Beacon Press.
- Goleman, D. (1995). *Emotional intelligence: Why it can matter more than IQ*. Bantam Books.
- Hawkins, D. R. (1995). *Power vs- Force*. Veritas Publishing
- Horney, K. (1950). *Neurosis and human growth: The struggle toward self-realization*. W. W. Norton & Company.
- Kardas F, Çam, Z., Eşkisü, M., Gelibolu, S. (2019). *Optimism and Life Satisfaction as Predictors of Psychological Well Being*. *Eurasian Journal of Educational Research*, 19(82), 81–100: ANI Publishing Company
- Kovačić Petrović, Z., Blažev, M., Peraica, T., Kozina, L., & Kozarić-Kovačić, D. (2024). *Empatija prema poremećaju uporabe alkohola i psihodinamsko razumijevanje: narativni pregled*. *Socijalna psihijatrija*, 52(3), 233–253. <https://doi.org/10.24869/spsih.2024.233>
- LePera, N. (2021). *How to Do the Work: Recognize Your Patterns, Heal from Your Past, and Create Your Self*. Harper Wave
- May, R. (1980). *Psychology and the Human Dilemma*. Van Nostrand
- Maslow, A. (1954). *Motivation and personality*. Harper & Brothers.
- Muk, K. (2007). *Emocionalna zrelost u svakodnevnom životu*. Self-publishing.
- Norrish, J. M., Williams, P., O'Connor, M., & Robinson, J. (2011). *Model for positive education*. Geelong Grammar School.
- Rogers, C. R. (1969). *Freedom to learn*. Merrill.
- Salopek, Z. (2023). *Ego, Ljubav, Istina*. Planetopija.
- Salovey, P., Mayer, J. D., & Brackett, M. (Eds.). (2007). *Emotional intelligence: Key readings on the Mayer and Salovey model*. National Professional Resources, Inc.
- Segrin, T. (2007). *Positive interpersonal relationships mediate the association between social skills and psychological well-being*. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 43(4), 637–646.
- Siegel, D. J. (2010). *Mindsight: The new science of personal transformation*. Bantam Books
- Winnicott, D. (1971). *Playing and Reality*. Tavistock Publications.