Occasional Note #14

The Fifth Awakening:
All Here/All Now/ One Whole/Ever New

This Occasional Note is the most recent in a series of Notes in which I have explored, from different angles, the process of human soul awakening and realization/incarnation on earth. This has been a long journey and has taken me into marvelous territories of thought and experience over the course of some 35 years, and yet only now am I beginning to get a sense for the process of soul awakening as a whole. Paradoxically, this sense has led me to see that in essence this process cannot be fully known but always retains an element of mystery and the unknown which is forever changing into the New. At the same time, I have been able to identify stages by which this process seems to occur and my book Holy Fire (2020) detailed four of them. At that moment I thought four sufficient, though I also suggested there could be more understanding to come. This I have shared partially already in OCN #13 in beginning to detail a Fifth Awakening, and this note continues this exploration.

Overview

Before we get into the details of this further stage of awakening I want to state what is perhaps obvious but can bear reiteration—the overall purpose of my endeavor. In his introduction to his major book, Psychosynthesis , Roberto Assagioli states that the central purpose of Psychosynthesis is "to release, or let us say, help to release, the energies of the Self". In my book, Holy Fire, I speak of the intent of this process of soul awakening as the exploration of "who we are and who we can become" as human beings. In both statements the basic radical supposition is that we are at root a soul, not a personality, though we have such, and that we, as souls on earth, are on a journey of realization and expression of who we most deeply are. This core intent drives the stages of soul awakening and the eventual full realization of our spiritual being **and** the maturation of our personality. Jung's term for this process was "Individuation"; Maslow's was self-realization/actualization". For

all these thinkers, Self, or Soul, is the core of identity and vitality in a human being, and the work of a lifetime is to nourish and support the ways in which this spiritual reality comes into full and mature expression through our personality within our daily lives.

Further, at a macro level, I hold that this mature wholeness of soul that we essentially are is rooted in a Universal Wholeness and Vitality, a cosmic field of coherent force that embraces and guides all Life. This experiential energetic context for Life has many names in different traditions, but in all it is seen as a Universal and LovingEnergy Field that embraces every human being. Therefore, as we come closer to who we most are as souls on earth, we also come to experience a fuller contact/connection with this Universal Field of vitality and love.

Further again, we can also conceive that at birth as souls we are deeply embedded in this Universal Life Force Field, but that as we grow into the world this connection becomes attenuated, or lost, due to inculturation, trauma, habit, education, social pressures—many psychological forces. We tend to "forget" who we are as souls in order to survive a range of circumstances we find ourselves in, and this not only causes us to suffer, but it stunts our development as mature human beings. We become identified as personalities, and our soul is sidelined except for secret moments when we touch it again and experience who we truly are.

At the same time this "disconnection" from soul sets off in us a yearning, or soul hunger, to find our true selves again and this yearning in turn initiates and drives a pilgrimage, or soul journey, to restore this connection. This journey has several phases, each important in their own nature, and over the course of a lifetime we have seen in Psychosynthesis and Spiritual work that this "adventure" can lead to Soul-reconnection via the process of soul awakening as well as to full incarnation of who we most are on earth in our personalities and daily life. We regain the capacity to experience the Universal Wholeness that once held us all as well as to fulfill our unique part and path within that Whole. And as we shall see in this Note, this soul-restorative experience

enables us also to contribute to Species Maturity, which is the Collective Realization of All Souls on earth, as well as to the coherent functioning of the systems by which we live on earth in ways that we all prosper—including all non-human species and the earth herself—what Assagioli termed " The Supreme Synthesis".

Individual Soul-realization/incarnation is thus directly related to the Realization/Incarnation of the human species, and every human being's life counts, one way or the other. In other words, unconsciousness, or immature consciousness, keeps us separate and at odds with each other and the planet, while Soul Awakening enables us to not only live our particular life well, but also to contribute to the healing and development of species maturity and a healthy, vital planet. As I often say,

"The stunning paradox of human spiritual maturity is that, as we become one with all Life, we also at the same time become completely and uniquely ourselves"

The Five awakenings

Now that we have laid out the context for this process of soul awakening, in the spirit of review I quote the paragraphs in Holy Fire (pp.201-203) that lay out the stages of the four awakenings as I conceived them at that time.

First Awakening: Self-awareness

There is a quotation from Jung that says, "Those who look outside, dream; those who look inside, awaken." The "first awakening" in consciousness is to self-awareness, the capacity to be aware of your experience and observe it. This is a skill most, but not all, human beings gain early in life, and it is supported by most cultures on the planet. There are instances of the first awakening not happening, in which case you have a person who is dominated by the unconscious, but in evolutionary terms, most humans have mastered it and are able to be aware of themselves and their experience.

Second Awakening: Soul Presence

The "second awakening" is one central focus of this book—the growing awareness of ourselves as souls with personalities that are more, or less expressive of who we are. I mentioned earlier that Assagioli would speak about waking up in the morning and then, before he got up, sitting in his bed and dis-identifying from his personality to

affirm his life as a soul. There are many people at work on their second awakening, building on the first, and on gaining this perspective in consciousness within their daily life. It is the hallmark and aim of most spiritual practices, and generally it is the fruit of human maturity.

Third Awakening: Soul Incarnation

The "third awakening" is emerging now more and more in people's lives. As souls we are awakening to the world and our intent to be more deeply incarnated in its ways rather than to rise above it—another central focus of this book. The Bodhisattva within Buddhism is an image of this movement of the soul, as is the Christian emphasis on service. David Spangler speaks about "not being incarnated enough" and "privileging the personal." And in a bottle cap I recently found a quotation from Albert Schweitzer, "Among you who will be really happy are those who have sought and found how to serve." The direction of soul expression in this awakening is down and in, rather than up and out. Assagioli's emphasis on the will also speaks to the emergence of this third awakening in our human consciousness.

Fourth Awakening: Soul Realization

The "fourth awakening" involves the synthesis of the second and third, and the word "realization" is apt for this, for it can have two meanings—to realize who you are as a soul and to make yourself real in the world. It also includes a wider realization of who we are in the Universe and an experience of total interrelatedness and inter-being with all Life, near and far. The most mature souls have this experience and speak about it in many ways. These are the great teachers who come again and again to teach us the way, but you can also find it in humble people from all walks of life. For most of humanity, however, this experience is still ahead. My sense is that the majority of us are at work on the second and third awakenings. There is no reason, however, why more and more people will not come to the realization I describe here, and the species as a whole will mature as a result.

And five years later I quote from Occasional Note #13 (2024) a description of The Fifth Awakening:

Fifth Awakening: Full Soul on Earth

The fifth awakening goes beyond the fourth in a subtle way. It is a return to ordinary living and the particularity of a given life in all its details, but this time fully suffused with the being and energies of the soul.

In the fifth awakening there is a subtle figure/ground shift in our experience whereby we are no longer focused on spiritual awakening per se, but rather on our daily lives which have become suffused with the being and energies of who we most are—the soul. We no longer need to pay attention to the work of

transcendence (2nd), or descendance, (3rd), or realization (4th) we simply are fully who we are in all the particularities of our given life, and we are living this unique life in alignment with the Universal Whole, so that we, without trying, contribute to the healing and maturation of the species as a whole. We are "cosmolocal," to use a term in current use for this state of consciousness--empty of separate ego and full of soul at the same time in a way that the empty ego becomes infused and illumined as an instrument of expression/action for us as souls. Go figure! It is hard to grasp the coherence of this seeming paradox, but the experience of the fifth awakening heals all splits spiritual and secular, and renders the world sacred, and the soul fully present on earth in daily life.

In Zen Buddhism there is a teaching that points to this experience.

"In the beginning mountains are mountains and valleys are valleys. In the process of awakening mountains become valleys and valleys mountains. After enlightenment mountains are again mountains and valleys are valleys".

Or another more humorous one, "After enlightenment, more laundry"

Within the Christian tradition Brother Lawrence describes his experience and contact with God through washing pots and pans in the monastery kitchen.

Ordinary, everyday life is the hallmark of the Fifth Awakening, and the Extraordinary of spiritual experiences is no longer the focus of the journey. (In fact, continuing to search for these experiences can hinder the full realization of the soul within the personality in daily life.) It turns out that there is nowhere to go but now here, and, as T.S. Eliot says in the Four Quartets, "We shall not cease from exploration/And the end of all our exploring/Will be to arrive where we started/ And know the place for the first time". It turns out we have everything we need and there is a complete fit with soul and personality and life as it progresses day to day. Soul is fully incarnated and expressive within personality and there is as well an experience of the Universal Wholeness right here now. Joy is often a "symptom" of this fifth awakening, as well as wisdom, humility, humor, true power, and love. Everything becomes simple in a very complex Universe. And we are who we most can be—full souls on earth—mature human beings.

Present Moment, Precious Moment

At this point I hear someone saying "OMG, how can I do all this? It is too complicated." And here is my reply. Here is the secret; we can do all this if we learn to stay in the present moment with whatever experience we are having, have that experience fully, and learn what it is bringing us". In this work of soul awakening, theories and "maps" can help, ideas can help, practices can help, theories and stories can help, but they are all "fingers pointing at the moon", not the moon herself. The moon itself is the present experience we are having, and our soul is present in our need to have this experience directly and learn from it. In the work of soul awakening there is no substitute for the present moment, the NOW, into which the Soul brings what is most needed for us to experience and learn from in order to grow and awaken further. This is the secret of spiritual life, and it is right under our nose. I have come to see that this is the way Life works in us to help us grow, moment to moment and over time/through space, and if we can learn to rest in, and trust, what is immediately before and in us, bear it, study it, and learn from it, we will be well on our way.

There are many levels and kinds of human experience, it is always changing, it is unique to each person, and always there is an element of the unknown to it, but I have come to realize that Presence to the NOW, whatever it brings, is the key to the process of soul awakening and that there is no substitute for it—None. Working directly with experience and soul process requires opening again and again, moment to moment, to the unknown and the new, and letting the soul guide this work, not you. This does not mean that you do not make interventions and give support in various ways, but the bottom line is that "experience teaches" and it is prime, with understanding coming later, or not. The central point is to learn from everything, even the most challenging and painful experiences, for it turns out that we, as souls, need all our experience, not just the pleasant ones, in order to awaken fully.

The Primacy of Presence

Note well: the practice of Presence is essential as a means to support this work in the present moment with the flow of experience, this soul process, both in ourselves and in others. I detail this practice and its relationship to soul process on pages 138-143 in Holy Fire and I have written about it in many other places over the years, for beyond all other practices, good as they may be, without presence, the soul process slows and falters, with presence it quickens and deepens. Presence is the experience of being connected to one's own soul in the present moment **and** paying close and loving attention to the flow of experience in yourself, or in another person. Presence generates and intensifies a "soul force field" which envelops you and the other person, or persons, and in this shared field the soul process quickens and trues. Presence does not depend on words, or even thoughts and feelings; it is a practice that brings the energies of the soul directly into the shared space and supports whatever needs to happen moment to moment in the soul process. "Mindfulness" is another term often used for presence, or in Psychosynthesis "resting in the "I", but whatever the term, the point is that this focused energy and life force flowing from the soul into the world illumines the present moment and the truth of what experience is happening at the time. If we can do nothing else, we can at least be present to whatever is, and this is a great gift to the awakening of consciousness.

Human Wholeness and Life on Earth

And here is the true miracle— we can grow as I have been describing here in consciousness, we can work and rest in the present moment as we do, and follow our particular paths, and our lives will gradually become mature and whole. That alone would be enough, but as well, as we experience this process of soul awakening, and restore a "lost" connection, we also reconnect with Universal Life Force and Being, as it is often termed. And in this re-connection we contribute as well with our individual lives to the collective and universal Wholeness and the emergence of Species Maturity on earth--what Assagioli termed the "Supreme Synthesis". We don't need to sacrifice ourselves, we don't

need to be someone else for this to happen, we need only to be truer and truer to who we most are right here at home and in the present moment. "What a relief" I hear Roberto saying with his characteristic chuckle. The miracle is that simple.

Love as an agent of Awakening

There is a story that Huston Smith used to tell about a conversation he once had with Aldous Huxley, who at that time was the Master of Consciousness Studies in the Western world. Huston was a graduate student at the time, and he was escorting Huxley to a series of lectures in the Boston area, and they became friends. One day as they were sitting in a car at a red light, Huston asked Huxley, "Aldous, of all that you know of consciousness work and human and spiritual development, what would you say was the most important thing to do?" Huxley was quiet, but as the light went from red to green he said quite clearly, "To try to be a little kinder."

At the core of the human soul is love, and as we become separated from ourselves, we cease to love in ways that nurture and heal and grow others and ourselves. In the process of soul awakening this capacity to love is gradually restored and broadened, and we become more and more capable of expressing this core of love day to day in ordinary ways. And it turns out that this love is for the Whole as well as any part, and that as we grow in love, we grow in wholeness, large and small. Individual maturity leads to Species Maturity and small acts of love lead to Universal Love for all other beings and the planet herself. "To be a little kinder" marks the steps on the way and we need only to begin from wherever we are. Love is our true nature, and, given the chance, each of us can be part of the Great Healing and Species Maturation that is needed on earth now.

Love Now

I want to end this note with a poem I wrote some time ago, one of a quartet of poems entitled "the Soul Canticles". It speaks in its own way

to the experience of the Fifth Awakening-- All Here/All Now/One Whole/Ever New.

Love Now

Strange this journey leading
in the end nowhere but here,
the path our breathing,
the road our blood.
Yet every step is needed to arrive
where beauty inundates our veins,
suffuses living flesh with darkened light.
No wonder we, so long the wanderers,
can't see at first we're home,
and reach among our gatherings
for further guidance and a map of God.
It seems we've garnered just the things
we needed to resume our way--
wisdom, knowledge, skill, endurance--
but no route opens-- up, or down--
no inner finger points, or probes,
no voice conspires to draw us on.
And yet such sweetness now surrounds,
such nearby celebration,
we scarce can breathe--
no more from ancient fear,
but from this standing still
so close to God.
Amazed, we wonder can this be--
our bodies rooted in the firmament,
sun, moon, stars, and earth confiding

in our hearts and minds?
What is this marvel of a world
that no more falls away
and leaves us longing,
but presses close to see
its cherished progeny?
Stunned by love, we sense
the primal innocence returned,
but nearby dark still spreads its wings.
No, this is new, unknown and intricate,
something of earthy fuse and force
that pours through every living thing.

Here, yes, here is home at last!
We step across the threshold stone,
alive as we have never been,
yet somehow also knowing this was ours
at every step along the way.
And God, who once embraced,
then bade farewell, is here again
so near we breathe together one vast love.

O who can say when earth will end?
Not I, nor you, nor one,
but some sweet breath
that sweeps the planet's face
to keep us company as we lose
and find again our O so ever
human grace.

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