

Occasional Note #13

The Fifth Awakening: Full Soul on Earth

Several years have passed since Holy Fire was published (2020) with its process and present centered framework of the four soul awakenings. Occasional Note #11 details the dynamics of this process through a presentation of the adages that Roberto Assagioli used in his work in Psychosynthesis and Occasional Note #12 draws on Chapter Seven of Holy Fire to fill out the experience of what I call “kosmos” as the core of the fourth awakening. At the time I thought that was all that was needed. It seemed a good place to rest after the intense effort of the previous years of bringing Holy Fire to birth. At that time, however, I also indicated that I would continue to explore this question of a fully human spiritual maturity and particularly its relationship to the emerging global context of species maturity—the need for us as a species to realize who we are in our spiritual depths and being and to act wisely and effectively on the many, many problems we face now collectively on earth as a result of our immaturity as a species. This Occasional Note #13 is about this search and about what I have discovered so far. As usual it is incomplete, but I hope it may add awareness and understandings that will be useful in identifying and adding a fifth awakening to the framework toward the end of more fully experiencing and realizing “full soul” on earth.

New Global Context

In the last years it has become increasingly obvious that the context for our living on earth has changed. We can no longer distance ourselves from what is happening in another part of the planet and say that it is “their fault” that such and such crisis is happening. Rather, it is increasingly clear that everything is happening everywhere, whether it be COVID, or climate change, political polarization and radicalization, or economic greed and exploitation. Without our quite realizing it, human

nature has become one around the globe, both in its dysfunction and depravity and also in its altruism and care for the whole earth. Pundits have been predicting this for decades, and Peter Russell's "Global Brain"(1983) gave a vivid image of how the nervous system of the planet was differentiating and becoming one that included all human beings. More recently Duane Elgin, in a series of books, has detailed an evolutionary staging that could lead us in time to this realization and species maturation. The internet has been a major contributor to this phenomenon, but so has human travel and migration. People move easily, or with difficulty, depending on circumstances, within and around the world now, and think nothing of a trip to some far corner of the planet, for pleasure, or escape, or a new life.

The result of this is that humanity has the growing capacity to respond *as a whole* to conditions it wants to change, just as the conditions are increasingly affecting us as a whole. Our nervous system is beleaguered as a whole, or the impact of an event spreads through it to the whole. We can no longer turn a blind eye to conditions halfway around the world, or we do so at our peril. We are one highly differentiated species, with many shared problems mutually generated, *and* a potential capacity to work together to solve them. We can respond now increasingly as a whole, save that we do not yet experience this context and rather settle for partial solutions that do not take the whole into account and so fail.

We need to learn to respond as a species as a whole, not just as individuals and groups. These latter obviously are important and are the building blocks, but we need to see more clearly that it is the species as a whole that is responsible. We need to be local and global at the same time and find solutions that simultaneously address the issues at home and around the globe.

This is a tall order, but nothing less than this will do. We need, each and all, to bring everything we have to work on the whole and to do this in the most practical ways, even if these actions spring from the maturity of the soul. The global situation is dire and will brook no delay. We

need to “learn to live as souls on earth” and do the work with our human consciousness that enables this to happen. This is the fifth awakening.

The Four awakenings

In the spirit of review, I quote the paragraphs in Holy Fire that lay out the four awakenings.

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.

The 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 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 prosaic 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.

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 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.

Soul Practice and the Fifth Awakening

How would we recognize a fifth awakening if we experienced one? What are the attributes in peoples' experience that characterize it? From one point of view this is a foolish question, for at this point we are far beyond descriptors that would apply across the board, and the process of awakening is unique to each person in ineffable ways, and direct experience always trumps understanding. At the same time, there are descriptions that point in the right direction at least, and get us in the ballpark, if not in the game itself. It is these that I present briefly below, knowing full well that this is indeed "the finger pointing at the moon". Bear with me.

Emptiness/Fulness

There is an experience of being emptied completely, either gradually through the process of letting go, or precipitously through the experience of being stripped summarily of all that we have known ourselves to be. In either case we become egoless in terms of identifications/attachments and a "hollow bone" as Fools Crow, a Lakota medicine man, describes it. Near death experiences can bring this on, or traumatic experiences in which we "lose" ourselves, but more often it is a gradual process of emptying and letting go of familiar ways of being in the world—a development that can be frightening as well as liberating. And at the same time, paradoxically, as we lose all sense of personal identity, we also become open to an experience of fulness of Being, a vitality of life force that has no form, but is very vibrant and alive. It is often described as a field of Light that surrounds and penetrates us, a benign radiance that holds and comforts us and brings us alive in a very different way. Further, the two happen simultaneously, so there is no "either/or", but a "both/

and” and the two experiences are aspects of one, and remain distinct, even as they change from one to the other. This is a paradox, but it is more than that because the two are not polarized, or in conflict, but rather are each the other as well as themselves. Hard to say, for sure, but very real in the experience. There is no split, or polarity, but one unified experience of emptiness/fulness, and consciousness remains synthesized as a differentiated whole.

Darkness/Light

So it is also with the experience of darkness and light. In the fifth awakening we are surely in the dark, for we have let go of everything we have known ourselves to be and cannot “see” in any direction. We are on the path of no path and have no sense of where to turn and how to proceed. At the same time, we have an experience of light which surrounds and fulfills us and seems to stretch forever in all directions. It is a soft light and permeates our being in a way that brings comfort and expansion, and we are “big” in it as we are “small” in the darkness. Again, words fail, but the point is that these experiences of Darkness and Light are aspects of one experience, and each is indelibly in the other. There is difference, but no separation. The polarity is held in such a way as to transcend paradox and render it synthesized and whole within our consciousness.

Stillness/Movement

So too with stillness/movement—we have the experience of complete stillness and absolute velocity at the same time, both within ourselves and in the universe. We come to a stop and at the same time feel propelled at infinite speed in our Being, as if we were traveling at the speed of Light and at the same time remaining stock still where we are, in a deep place of rest. How can this be? And yet here is the same pattern of polarity synthesized within wholeness of Being consciousness *and* differentiation remaining of the aspects of the paradox—in this case stillness and movement. The fifth awakening is to this wholeness of consciousness

within the full differentiation of ourselves and our life as we experience it.

Spiritual/Earthly

This state of consciousness eradicates the common polarity between spiritual and earthly experience and brings us into a realm of consciousness where the two are one in that each is within the other and contributes to it as well as remaining itself. There is no more becoming “transpersonal” in order to rise above and leave behind the “personal,” or valuing spiritual experience over earthly. Each is the other, even as they remain themselves and are in full differentiation from each other. Wholeness holds both in a way that synthesizes them even as they remain distinct experiences in their own right. There is no split or separation, but rather a mutual co-existence in which both add to, and enliven, daily life. They are, in essence, inseparable.

I trust the pattern of the fifth awakening is clear by now, and more important, the lived experience that vitalizes the design. As we have said for the above, we can say also for the

Eternal/ Present Moment
Receptive/Active
Simple/Complex
Perceptive/Perspective
Bounded/Boundless
Temporal/Timeless.

In all six each is implicit in the other and they both exist in a wholeness of consciousness which holds their polarity paradoxically and then transcends this so that the split disappears completely even as the differentiation remains intact. Wow! This is some good news! For the Wholeness we are reaching in the fifth awakening leaves nothing out and the human being is whole in just this way, that nothing is foreign to our lives, and as we include everything, we become most alive and most our

unique selves within the context of Wholeness. No wonder that Ilia Delio, a Franciscan theologian, has described human maturity as the capacity to bear the “almost unbearable wholeness of Being”!

Self/No Self

These experiences of the fifth awakening also help with the on-going debate as to whether there is a Self or not. Much ink and occasionally blood has been spilt over this question and little progress has been made when it is put in an either/or framework. In fact, if we bring the pattern of the fifth awakening to the dilemma we see immediately that both are true and that Self and no Self exist within each other beyond polarity and paradox in a synthesis of human wholeness of consciousness. We are both Self and no Self and experience the full differentiation of this and all that it holds in our lives on earth. We are both empty and full, dark and light, still and moving, eternal and present, receptive and active, simple and complex, etc., and this all within a consciousness of human wholeness in life on earth. In the fifth awakening we become full souls on earth, very much ourselves while at the same time being participant in all Life on Earth, and responsive to it. This is full human maturity, and it is the opening to species maturity which we so much need in these dire days. The fifth awakening brings us to our full selves as very alive whole human beings and enables us to bring all that we are to the challenges and details of our daily lives on earth, which include now what is happening all over the planet, our shared home.

Soul Presence and Species Awakening

Full soul on earth is the opening within us to species awakening and maturity. This is a powerful way that we can contribute to the global process of species maturation and the consequent dramatic changes in how we as a species inhabit the earth and interact with the other species with whom we share this home—a process that is underway, and to which there is great resistance. “We are the ones we have been waiting for,” and it is we, the human species, who will save the earth, not God, or

Aliens, or Cosmic Energies. The job is right on our collective doorstep and we are capable of doing it, if we can grow, individually and collectively, in the ways I have been describing here. This is the challenge before us now—both to stop the ways that are not working and which bring sorrow and destruction to the earth and her denizens and to do whatever is necessary to begin to live in a new way here, one that is rooted in the spiritual maturity of the human species.

All these awakenings are underway on earth, including the fifth, and there are many good signs of an emerging maturity among us. And at the same time there is so much still to be done, individually and collectively, to strengthen and support this soul process and ground these awakenings in radically new ways of living on earth. Surely, we have our work cut out for us.

The Will of No Will

And, one more point, it seems we cannot make this fifth awakening happen in the familiar, willful way we have used in the past to get things done, nor can we even use our personal will in the ways we did with the first four. Rather we need to learn to open to the process of awakening in its fifth stage, as it comes to us and receive the gift as it is given. Letting go is central to how to go about this; the more we do so, the more comes to us and the more the consciousness of the species matures toward wholeness. Patience and Surrender are the path and deepening Being. We open to what is awakening in us by letting go, through silence and attending, for this consciousness is already present in our experience, though clouded by whom we might think we are and then we act accordingly for the good of the Whole.

With all five awakenings each of us has a next step to take, inwardly and outwardly, and each of us is capable of affecting the future of the planet in this way by contributing to the collective maturation of the species.

Full Soul on earth: this is the fruit of the fifth awakening.

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