

The Five Great Awakenings

Another way to understand the core of these stations is through the prism of what I call the Five Great Awakenings.

A shared understanding, revealed by so many systems of knowing, whether pre-modern, modern or post modern, is that we are asleep and need to wake up. But the fact that we are asleep is not an accident. It is not a cosmic mistake. Rather, it is the intentional nature of the living kosmos that we earn our attainment, as well as its by-products of joy and fulfillment, through the process of waking up. Everyone agrees: we need to wake up. The disagreement in culture, however, is this: In what way are we asleep, and consequently, in what way do we need to wake up? Each stream of culture, including psychology, spirituality, evolutionary theory and more, answers this question differently. Moreover, there are significantly different answers within each of the aforementioned streams. More confusing still, each one focuses on one form of awakening as the key to liberation, fulfillment, or some other great good of humanity, but ignores other forms of awakening.

As Integral philosophy wisely points out, no major stream of knowing is smart enough to be entirely wrong. Each claim in regard to the essential nature of the desired and required human awakening is true, but partial. The problem starts when a partial claim to truth claims to be the whole story. When parts pretend to be wholes, as we shall see, the result is cancer in the body or the body politic. But when we integrate the major streams of insight and view them as complementary, we realize that there are in fact five great awakenings in the journey of a human lifetime. All are necessary. Each form of awakening addresses a different level of reality, that is to say, a different way that humans have of being asleep. Each gives a different gift. Each requires a different process to awaken. Together, they might be seen to be an accurate map of the human journey that we are invited into at birth. Taken together, they might be said to point towards the core intention and purpose of our lives.

Although the numbering system is somewhat different, these awakenings closely approximate the map described in the eight stations that we have just unfolded. When we use different mapping systems, the number of levels or stages or stations nearly always differ, even in the best maps of spirit. Below, I will briefly correlate the two maps. But if you read closely, it becomes clear that they are covering the same ground.

So, what I share with you below is a very brief view of the Five Great Awakenings. It recapitulates, in different form, the journey to awakening we have just outlined. These Awakenings may serve to sharpen the contours of the Eight Stations in your mind and deepen their roots in your heart and spirit.

Each of these levels of awakening creates a deeper and more expanded sense of identity and consciousness. Each level of awakening takes place both within humanity as a whole and within every individual human being. Ontogeny recapitulates phylogeny.

1) Ego Awakening: Pre-personal to Personal Awakened Self.

The first great awakening takes place when the human being emerges from the slumber of immersion in the Great Mother. At the dawn of human existence, a separate sense of self has not yet emerged. Instead, the self was, to varying degrees, identified with nature and the immediate environment, with no sense of an individuation. At this level, there is no sense of larger frameworks of time beyond the immediacy of the present moment or the present day. So, the first level of awakening is to a separate self, or Level One Personal. You experience this awakening in your life in the beginning of your journey, as your baby self awakens to an individuated identity as a separate self-ego. This is the move from the pre-personal to the personal. It might also take place when you free yourself from any pre-personal context, such as a cult or a family system, that subsumes individual emergence.

One expression of this awakening crystallizes in Hebrew mysticism, which affirms the human being as a *homo imago dei*, a separate dignified self, rooted in the divine, and possessed of infinite dignity, value, and adequacy.

Once you have firmly stabilized your realization of separate self, you need to fully claim your story and your life. You need to clarify the true nature of your story and step out the limiting beliefs and distorted narratives of your false self. I call this the Awakening of Ego.⁵ This is a stage of awakening. The ego is not merely a level to move beyond. It is a level to awaken. This is the first expression of a full integral enlightenment. It requires that all the parts of the self, all the voices, all the sub-personalities,

be given their place. The protector, wounded child, controller, seeker, competitor and all other parts need to be seen with compassion and recognized for the gifts they give. It is only this recognition, which will allow the parts to let go of their attempt to pathologically hijack the whole. Once each part or voice is given its place and recognized, it more naturally takes its place in the larger whole and releases its destructive and pathological expressions. Shadow in the sense of any disowned parts of your consciousness needs to be surfaced and appropriately integrated. All of this is part of awakening to your separate self. On the Eight Stations map, this awakening takes place as part of Stations One, Two and Three.

2) The Awakening to the Unity Principle:

This is an awakening to the Absolute, the eternal divine principle, which is the ground of being. This takes place when you awaken to the reality that this unified principle, the organizing principle of the kosmos, holds you. If you are a theist, you might see this as the arms of the Great Mother or Great Father holding you. You may awaken to the unity principle and then realize that you are in the arms of the Mother, or held by the Father-God. Or you may waken into the arms of God and then realize that she is the Unity Principle. This awakening begins in Station Two. As you evolve, however, in Stations Three through Eight your personal relation to the ultimate deepens in quality and depth.

3) Awakening from Separate Self to True Self:

This awakening is classically called enlightenment in the great spiritual traditions. It is possible to awaken to the unity principle and still experience yourself as a separate self. You can be in the arms of the Great Mother and still be in separate self. The awakening to True Self is the awakening described in the texts of classical enlightenment, where you realize not only that there is a unity principle, but that the unity principle is one with you. You realize that infinite no-thingness is who you are. This is the recognition: "I am part of the All, not separate from the ground of being. All the love that inheres in All-That-Is flows through me and incarnates in me." This awakening is a realization of the Absolute, the eternal divine principle, which is the ground of being living in you, as you, and through you. At this level, the human being

at her core is realized as identical with the spacious ground of All-That-Is, incarnate as the essence of all life. This is the Supreme identity that is the secret teaching of all the great traditions. In the Eight Stations, this takes place at station four.

4) Awakening from True Self to Your Unique Self.

The fourth great awakening is the realization of your Unique Self, when you awaken to your identity as a radically singular expression of the single One. You realize that you are not only the process, but also the personal face of the process; you realize that God is having a You experience. You know that you incarnate a unique emanation of All-That-Is, with unique gifts to give to, the evolutionary process itself. You follow your unique shadow back to your Unique Self when you realize that your shadow is simply your un-lived, or distorted, unique Essence. You recognize that awakening as Your Unique Self is the essential joy, obligation, delight, awesome privilege, and responsibility of your life. You commit to express your Unique Gifts. This is the great vow of your life. In the eight stations model, this level corresponded with stations five, six, seven and eight.

5) Evolutionary Unique Self Awakening.

The fifth great awakening is also an awakening to the ground of being. However, this time, the ground of being is understood to be constantly evolving. You awaken to the fact that you are living in an evolutionary context. You realize that the context is alive and conscious. This is an awakening to the divine nature of the evolutionary process. In some sense, it is an awakening of the process itself. The Unique Self awakens to his or her nature as evolution, as a unique expression of the evolutionary impulse. In this awakening, you realize that the evolutionary impulse lives in you, as you, and through you. You understand that your heart is identical with the evolving heart of the kosmos, that the heart of the kosmos beats as you and through you.

This is the level where you become an evolutionary mystic. This happens as you realize your identity with the impersonal creative energy of the divine, which has been called the evolutionary impulse.⁶ Once this realization awakens as you, you live with evolutionary integrity, giving your unique gifts. Holding this infinitely wider context makes it easier for you

to work with your shadow. Your contraction naturally expands. Evolution becomes conscious of itself and advances through the awakening of your Unique Self.⁷ In the eight stations model, this corresponds with Stations Five, Six, Seven, and Eight.

In the best possible scenario, each level of awakening transcends and includes the previous rung of consciousness. The levels of development may happen in a different order than described here, but to freeze at any one level creates shadow—shadows of the personal and impersonal.

A Clarifying Note on the Eight Stations

A Short Recapitulation of Unique Self Doctrine