

Chapter 15: “Being-Initiation Comes Awake: Realizing Yourself as Embodied Feeling-Witness Consciousness,” from *Waking Down*.

For several chapters I have been introducing the processes and phenomena that may come into play for you as Being-initiation in the White-Hot Way of Mutuality comes alive. For two reasons, I have not talked much about the practices or things you might be doing during this time. First, so much of this stage of the Way is about relaxing effort and doing as little as possible. Second, this is not a book in which I wish to make detailed suggestions for your practice. If you want to hear such advice, you’ll have to consult my more explicit practical recommendations, especially in *The White-Hot Yoga of the Heart* and *The Sanctuary of Mutuality*.

Here I have indicated some of the principal experiences and changes you might be going through as this initiation flowers. But I haven’t really spoken much of the most fundamental one. What is that? It’s the deepening feeling you will be having of becoming yourself. More and more, through all the hard times and the easy ones, through the ups and the downs, you will be landing in and as your obvious and essential self.

At first it won’t be clear, perhaps, that this has anything to do with the awakening of transcendent consciousness. Later, though, that will become more clear than the finest glass.

At the same time, you will also be landing in your ordinary human self, your own particular dynamics of body, psyche, and soul.

Let me see if I can be more specific about how all this happens, and offer some indications of your likely concrete experience along the way.

Before sitting down to write this chapter, I spent a morning addressing a group of people who were participating in a workshop we call “The Waking Down Weekend.” After a period of meditative silence, including the open-eyed contemplative meeting of each other that we refer to as “gazing,” I read aloud the chapter from this book entitled, “The First Birth and Its Now Ending Evolutionary Heyday.” When I finished, several people indicated their appreciation. Then one woman, new to our work that weekend, asked for clarification.

The woman – I’ll call her “N.” – explained that, while she enjoyed the writing, it seemed pretty theoretical to her. And she asked if I could talk about how this kind of transformation actually comes about.

N. further explained that she needed a more practical sense of what could occur for her, and for people in general who carry severe wounds or damage from their experience. As a personal example, she revealed that she had been born in Korea right at the end of the Korean War. Her entire family suffered devastating experiences during and after the war, and she felt herself severely split in her being from that early experience. She had been doing a lot of work with these parts of her psyche, but it was clear to her that much more

had to be done. So how, she wondered, could our work serve her healing and reintegration? Could we even deal with such traumas?

By the time she finished her brief account of her early life, several of us who were listening, including me, were in tears – though N. herself was quite composed.

I pointed out to her that the way this process works is, we might say, both from the inside and the outside. The transmission of whole Being-force works simultaneously from awakened and awakening others and from your own Source-nature, which is none other than the Source-nature. Thus, I said, that force pushes these and other contents of the deep psyche up to the surface, for us to see and feel and encounter them fully. At the same time, the permitting, welcoming, and honoring participation of others – who have gone or are going through similar openings and revelations – also pulls this traumatic psychic material up, moving us to embody and give voice to what we might otherwise need to protect or hide.

By speaking these pained, difficult parts of ourselves aloud to such deeply sympathetic others – which, I acknowledged, N. was already doing in sharing what she had – we then bring forth the full power of Being to allow the healing to occur. And the salve we feel on or in our psychic and even physical wounds works at the same time as an awakening medicine in consciousness.

After some more conversation along these lines, N. was satisfied with my answer. At this writing it remains to be seen whether the Way of Waking Down will provide a safe harbor for her personally to do that depth of work. In any case, this is how our active communion with one another in this Way stimulates both healing and awakening. I often have to point out to people that the kinds of insight and self-awareness that develop in this Way are different from what you may have gone through before. One of the traps for the grizzled veteran of endless therapy or spiritual transformation is the feeling, “I’ve already done all that work. I’ve already seen my early childhood patterns. I already know the ins and outs of exactly how I am damaged, wounded, split, disintegrated. I don’t need to look at my deep psychological and emotional issues again. I already know that stuff!”

My reply to such feelings is that a different kind of integration is happening here. This time around the one who is getting to view all that supposedly old stuff of the psyche is the increasingly conscious Being who is awakening and incarnating now as never before.

This is an important distinction, so let me try to clarify it further. Along the continuum of identity, the previous work that people may have done on their “stuff” was generated from the fundamental position, we could say the base camp, of either the material, genetic persona or the individuated soul-nature, the deeper psychic persona. In some cases individuals have also done a certain degree of such work from the position or base camp of the non-individuated, spiritually all-pervading, universal soul, or even that of the non-individuated, transcendent, conscious nature, which is the source or root of both the universal and individual soul-natures. But in each such case, the work is done from a dissociated disposition that is always striving, explicitly or at least implicitly, to affirm

and enforce a transcendence of at least the material, genetic persona, if not the individuated soul persona as well.

The very effort to work on one part of yourself from the point of view of another part of yourself reinforces the split between the two parts even while trying to achieve an integration. And most people who make such efforts are often not at all willing to admit that, their expansive spiritual and conscious states notwithstanding, they also really are the identity that appears in the context of deep psychological and emotional issues. They won't allow themselves to be reduced to that smallness, that miserable bewilderment and insignificance.

When such individuals become attracted to the White-Hot Way of Mutuality, they begin to fall into the paradox of simultaneity. They begin to know themselves from a new base camp, that of the transcendent, non-individuated Ground of Being- consciousness that is simultaneously identified with and as the material body as never before. This is what Being-initiation leads to in this work. It, Being, You as Being, drive into realization of and as the core wound – the simultaneity of infinite and finite nature. As I indicated in the last chapter, this is a most fundamental form of acceptance of the true and total Self. Someone going through this is not trying to make anything happen. He or she is just persisting through and enduring, participating in and cooperating with, a descent into an integration of Being that cannot be prefigured.

Thus, whether an individual is severely damaged in personal, individual ways, or just an ordinary sufferer of the core wound of separateness and confusion, once Being- initiation is alive he or she will naturally gravitate toward integrated awakeness, or conscious embodiment – the second birth. In that process, as a matter of course, that person gets to see whatever aspects of his or her true and total Self need to be seen in order to recognize previous survival patterns from an unprecedented depth of centered, whole-body presence.

Sometimes you won't be feeling that you are entering into any such depth. You'll come talk to me or another adept in the work with a litany of woes and complaints, and we'll say, "Good! Sounds like progress." But you will be feeling the exact opposite. You'll be feeling you're just up against your stuff and now you have no distance, no means to cut through it all, no way to get your arms around it. And we will say it again: "Good! That really is progress!"

Eventually, all of the enlivenment and resurrection of hope and inspiration, along with all the revisitation of primal psychological, emotional, and physical patterns you have developed to survive in this bewilderment of a life, will crystallize into the first real stage of Self-realization. Having spoken of it with a variety of names over the years, I have come to call it realization of "the embodied feeling-witness consciousness."

Before going further, you might ask, "Why? Why, and how, does all of that lead to such a realization?"

I am going to give a key answer to this question in the next chapter. But I can broach that subject now in a basic way.

The answer to the “why” of your question is that Being must come to life first. It must begin to re-animate the living body with hope and inspiration, in order to free sufficient energy and attention for the true and total Self to be able to activate profound Self awareness. As long as you are depressed, just going along, not activated, not turned on to the prospect of actual realization of Being, your energy is in fact only being sustained at a very low level. Whole Being Self-realization takes juice, it takes life, it takes spirit!

The answer to the “how” of your question is that, in the magnetizing context of truly liberating transmission of Being, that very enlivenment drives to become fully conscious. In other words, appropriate juxtaposition with other bodies similarly awakening or awake allows you – You – as Being to feel-be-know yourself as transcendent-yet-embodied consciousness. As such, you see that you are naturally, effortlessly witnessing the whole display of soul nature, mind, body, life, and world as it appears to and in the form of your own organism in each moment. Transmission makes a big difference. So does mutuality. This is how bodies awaken most naturally here. So, at any rate, it appears to me!

I do not find it helpful to speak of the awakening witness consciousness in the traditional Oriental language of exploration of the conscious principle. In almost every case of which I am aware, the classic Oriental schools place supreme value upon a realization of consciousness to the exclusion of phenomena – that is, of everything that appears in and as mind and life and is thereby registered, noticed, or witnessed by consciousness. It’s true that some Oriental schools appear not to counsel such exclusion. Nonetheless, if you dig down beneath the surface of their ideologies, you find that their reality belies their affirmations. They carry a taint about life and the possible objects of our experience, both physical and psychic. They promote a sublime prejudice that subtly or not so subtly devalues the conditional, personal, and individual aspects of our personhood while exalting the unconditional, impersonal, and non-individuated ones.

What I mean by the embodied feeling-witness consciousness is a crystallization of the reality of the inescapable paradox of being alive – the paradox of being infinite and finite at the same time. Suddenly the fact of your infinite, or non-finite, primordial conscious nature becomes as obvious to you as the fact of your finite, ever-changing material nature. Yet your realization of your identity as that indefinable conscious principle does not set you at any overwhelming distance from the reality of your identity as the finite, mortal, local human person. You land simultaneously in your conscious nature and your bodily, human personhood. That landing, whether sudden or gradual, is an arriving at once into your own unique personal life and into the unconditioned, unknowable Ground of Being that is consciousness. You fall or drop into an unspeakable, yet ever so ordinary, permission to the conscious, psychic, and material parts of your being to be what they are without any further fundamental dissociation from one another.

Perhaps this may sound like ultimate realization of the Onlyness of all consciousness and all phenomena. No – that’s not so. The person established in this stage of awakening has

arrived into a new depth of incarnation or embodiment, yes. But the absolute non-difference between consciousness and phenomena has not yet become obvious. Yet it is also true that, in the awakening of the embodied feeling-witness consciousness, a certain degree of reconciliation or integration of the disparate parts of the whole being has occurred.

This preliminary realization turns the key in your ignition in a new way. Now another kind of journey commences. Whereas in the earlier stages, when Being-initiation was coming alive, you continued to suffer a primal confusion or split in your identity, now something about that dis-ease or disintegration has dissolved. I remember that when this stage opened up for me, a couple of phrases came to mind that named the new quality: singularity of Being and confidence in Being. Difficulties still arise, and the ultimate connection between conscious identity and relatedness to all others and things remains unclear. But you find yourself moving through the difficulties in a different manner than was ever possible before. And you have refreshed, vigorous, effective drive to examine that ultimate connection until clarity appears.

This fall into the Heart-Ground of Being and Consciousness is an immense breakthrough in your evolutionary journey. Now, Being-initiation has come awake in a manner that you will find yourself less and less able to deny. And though there are many things that you and your adept(s) can and will have done to expedite this shift in your Being, most fundamental to making it possible is your simply daring to grasp the means of realizing and expressing Who you are. Awakening as the embodied feeling-witness consciousness is the first stage of divinely human participation in life. I have compared it to conception – this time leading to the second birth.

It's important, in this definitive overview of the White-Hot Way of Mutuality, to place some of this technical language in clear sequences and juxtapositions. Your Being-initiation first gets underway when it begins to come alive. Though I first used that language in Chapter Twelve, I have been speaking of that stage of the Way in more and more detail since defining transmission and the adept's job in Chapter Nine. However, it is only at the phase I am describing in this chapter, the realization of the embodied witness-consciousness, that your Being-initiation comes fully awake. And it is only at this stage that you enjoy what I refer to as fully functional Being initiation. This degree of awakens, then, is what I call the second conception.

Let me say a few things about this quality of Being-initiation that will help ground it for you in practical life-terms.

The revelation of the witness-consciousness as this whole-being embodiment is a realization, not just a temporary opening, *samadhi*, or *satori*. But your experience of its qualities begins shifting very soon after the realization is established – such that you may think that you have lost it. There is a very good evolutionary reason for this, which I will address in the next chapter. Now I just want to point out that there is a dimension of this shift in Being that remains continuously established ever afterward. Fully functional Being-initiation is a new stage of life, a categorical transition in the fundamental quality

of your conscious presence and participation in the world. Yet, bizarrely enough, you can feel as if you are not really holding the transition. You can feel as if you are helplessly gravitating back into your ordinary confusion and separateness, perhaps as you have many times in the past.

The reason this is so is that you will tend, initially, to identify the essence of the realization with certain qualities of its breakthrough appearance in your body, mind, and deep psyche or soul-nature. Often the first flush of this stage of awakening is accompanied by a sense of fathomless depth of consciousness, of infinite spaciousness in Being, of clarity, imperturbability, serenity, ease, and grace. However, none of these qualities of psyche or body in and of themselves, nor all of them together, define the realization. Rather, this awakening constitutes a shift in what I have called your center of identity-gravity. You begin to discover that you are fundamentally, and indeed effortlessly, based in a different place or quality of your total nature.

This shift is nothing less than a falling into Heart-Consciousness as your new base of identity-gravity. And this particular “base camp” is fallen out the bottom of the cosmos. In other words, it is not just some precious little intuition that consciousness is the Ground of Being. One who has passed into this disposition is fundamentally located outside or transcendental to all of cosmic and personal Nature. He or she is standing in and as the dimensionless dimension, the featureless feature of existence, the non-thing that registers, notices, effortlessly apprehends but is always untouched by absolutely all things and beings that display themselves before it.

The conscious nature that you are now living as and also embodying is realized or known to be transcendental to absolutely everything conditional or phenomenal. The world, others, things, objects, events – including thoughts, feelings, sensations, reveries, impulses, dreams, the sense of your basic daily identity, and all the subconscious and unconscious rumblings and subliminal movements of which you are sometimes aware – all of these, and every other possible thing, event, or process that you can experience as an object to your simplest and most essential subjective nature, is part of the conditioned cosmos that you, as consciousness, are now transcending. This doesn't just include local, familiar beings, things, and events. It includes every heavenly and hellish kind of experience you could possibly have. It even includes perception of and union with God, the Truth, the divine Reality. Whatever such a Thing, Being, or Event may be for you, this feeling-conscious nature is witnessing, or registering, even it and your gnosis of or communion with it.

You realize this to be so, but the realization is not in the mind and body that you are now transcending. That mind and body, including the deep soul-nature or root of the psyche, now must go through a basic adaptation to the new ground of their Being. That ground, paradoxically, is also absolutely free of all this psychophysical personhood and en-world-ness – even while, in some sense, it is right up against it all, exposed to it.

Thus, fully functional Being-initiation – this awakening into embodiment as the feeling-witness consciousness – instigates a new stage of living. It is, again, the second great

conception in the grand evolutionary journey of your existence. I venture to propose that, whatever great realizations may have occurred in this or previous lifetimes, this second conception, in its precise details, is a new event for you, as it is for each one who passes into it.

What then comes after conception is, of course, gestation. (*WD*, pp. 84-91)