

The Loving Heart of Enlightenment

A summary overview of spiritual awakening in simple, clear English

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You know you exist. This, of course, is self-evident. And you know you are sentient. This, too, is self-evident. These two points, taken together, lead to a very interesting question. Could it be true that you exist fundamentally – and by that phrase, I mean what you really are when stripped of everything that is not essential – could it be true that you exist fundamentally as this power of sentience, as this open capacity for experience? In other words, could your fundamental identity be pure awareness?

Now I use this word “awareness” a lot, so I want to be clear right up front that I am not using it in any special way. It just means the power of sentience. Yet I use this phrase “pure awareness” to emphasize the idea that this awareness is not a thing.

You are not a thing that is sentient. You are not an object that is aware. You are not a sentient being. *You are sentience itself.*

Now when I say that this awareness is not a thing, I mean that it has no thing-like qualities that can be perceived in any way whatsoever. This awareness perceives, but it cannot be perceived. This paradox was spoken about rather poetically by some of our most ancient texts – oral texts that go back almost three thousand years, the Upanishads. They offer us this:

“This awareness is the unseen seer of seeing, the unheard hearer of hearing, the unfelt feeler of feeling.” And it goes on. To what these texts offer us, I like to add my own thoughts: This awareness is the undreamt dreamer of dreams.

The idea that you exist fundamentally as pure awareness is the third way that you can identify yourself. You already know the first two ways yet I still want to put them on the table for completeness. So here they are.

The first perspective offers us the idea that you exist fundamentally as your body. And when your body dies, that, my friends – according to this view – is the end of you.

You might be surprised to hear me say that there are two things about this perspective that I really like. The first is that it highly motivates you to take care of your body in a practical way, and I think that’s a good thing. The second is that this perspective does not really answer all of our deep questions about life and creation and so forth, so it leaves you plenty of room to stand in wonder and awe of the world that is all around you. I think this is profound, beautiful, important ... and fun! Now, these two points actually apply to all three ways that you can identify yourself, and I just wanted to mention that.

Now, in my opinion, the idea that you exist fundamentally as your body is best described as incomplete rather than wrong and this leads us to the second perspective, which offers us the idea that you exist fundamentally as your soul, which associates with your body. And yet again, in my opinion, this perspective is best described as incomplete rather than wrong.

The third perspective, which again, offers us the idea that you exist fundamentally as pure awareness, comes about, not through observation and logic, but instead, through a spiritual, intuitive awakening. And to be more precise, there are three key awakenings regarding this awareness. These awakenings can occur in any order or in any combination, including all at once. So in my presentation here, when I say first, second and third, I am only talking about their order in this presentation, and not necessarily the order that they will occur for you.

The first awakening is the one that I've already touched upon several times: "Ah, I am not *fundamentally* my body, and I am not even *fundamentally* my soul. Instead, *I am fundamentally pure awareness!*" That's the first awakening.

The second awakening is this: "Ah, the awareness that's looking out of my eyes is the same awareness that's looking out of your eyes ... and his eyes ... and her eyes ... and the eyes of every sentient being on all the worlds, both physical and spiritual. *There is only One Awareness.*"

Now, when I use this phrase, "One Awareness," it's not because you can see it and count it, because as I mentioned earlier, this Awareness is completely imperceptible in every way. So instead, we use this phrase, "One Awareness," to emphasize the idea of wholeness.

This Awareness never breaks itself into pieces, whether those pieces are disconnected or connected. Furthermore, this Awareness is not like a tree with a trunk of the One Awareness that grows into a branch of your awareness, and into a different branch of his awareness, and into a different branch of her awareness and so forth. No, this Awareness never branches out at all. This Awareness is always whole.

There is only One Awareness. That's the second awakening.

Now, quickly, before we get to the third awakening, I just want to mention that we call these awakenings "awakenings" since they seem to happen suddenly and yet they are never instantly complete, just like waking up in the morning. These spiritual awakenings always have a period of deepening, and this deepening can last years or even lifetimes. During this time, these concepts are transformed from mere ideas into a living truth that shines within your soul.

Now, here's the third awakening. *This Awareness arises as each and every thing that it is aware of.*

What we are talking about here is God and creation – Awareness (God) and the objects of Awareness (creation). This is very simple. Now when I use this phrase "objects of Awareness," I am talking about anything at all that can be perceived in any way at all. So I am not just talking about physical objects, I am also talking about thoughts, emotions, nighttime dreams, intuitive feelings, energy states, hallucinations – anything at all that can be perceived in any way at all is an object of Awareness.

Now, with this particular awakening, we recognize the second capacity of this Awareness. This Awareness has both *the capacity to perceive* and *the capacity to create what it perceives*. This process of creation is best described as an emanation – a spontaneous emanation – and this Awareness is the source of this emanation. This is why my mentor, Timothy Conway, and I refer to this Awareness as “Source-Awareness.”

This Source-Awareness spontaneously emanates as the totality of created reality and this Source-Awareness is what you truly are fundamental. This Source-Awareness is looking out of your eyes right now! *Not a piece of it. Not a branch of it. The wholeness of this Source-Awareness is looking out of your eyes right now!*

There is an ancient metaphor that will help us here. It is the metaphor of the actor and the character. So just think of a Hollywood actor and when you do, it’s easy to see that the actor is the source of the character. Surely it’s not the other way around. The character is not the source of the actor. Furthermore, the character cannot go on the stage without the actor. And yet, the actor can drop the role of the character at any time. Because of this, it is wise to make a distinction between the *transcendent source* (the actor) and the *dependent construction* (the character).

And yet *when* the actor comes forward as the character, they are one. If you are standing in front of the character and you want to find the actor, you do not need to dig into a deeper and deeper layer. No. When you look into the eyes of the character, you are looking directly into the eyes of the actor. They are one.

Of course you see what this metaphor is pointing to. This Source-Awareness is the one *invisible* Actor who is arising as each and every *visible* character, as each and every *visible* person. It is God who is arising as everyOne and it is God who is doing everything.

We have all heard it said, “We are all one.” Yes. Yes, of course. But this brief statement is a bit more confusing than it needs to be. It starts off by speaking from one perspective and then it changes to a completely different perspective and it doesn’t even give you a hint that it’s going to do that. So I like to add a few words. Not too many. And here they are: “In form ...” (meaning “in construction,” “in creation,” “in the world all around us.”)

“In form, we are many; in essence, we are one.”

In this, we see that it is only through the many that we can share the One Love of God. When we look into the eyes of another, we are looking directly into the eyes of God. It is God who plants a seed in your soul that grows into the loving heart of enlightenment.

There is a lot here to ponder so I will leave you with that. In truth, I honor your divine nature.

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Written January 2017 and edited slightly over the years since then.