

## Ten Levels of Consciousness

1) Bodily Awareness: often we are subtly or actively aware of reports from our circulatory, nervous, respiratory, digestive, sensory, and ambulatory systems. Moreover, unless we are sleeping, we are nearly always aware of what is being reported by our five senses.

2) Self Awareness: It is hard not to be aware of our core ego identity, and mostly aware of our sub-personas related to our roles, positions, history, education, gender identity, sexual orientation and everything else in our awake psychological wardrobe.

3) Superego Awareness: we recognize the inner voices of our internalized good mother, bad mother, good father, bad father, and all the voices of our known significant others, teachers, mentors and tormentors.

4) Shadow Awareness: we start to become aware of our far less known ancestors, and of closeted or denied aspects of our selves, such as opposite gender, or different sexual attractions and orientations. If we view ourselves as good, we may be denying our beastly aspects. We deny these aspects out of fear that if expressed, they might take over and appear as a molester, rapist, abuser, even a mass murderer. If we view ourselves as a bad beast, we may well be missing that we are also loving bodhisattvas (sages that care for all beings).

5) Awareness of Archetypes: Sage, Innocent, Explorer, Ruler, Creator, Caregiver, Magician, Hero, Outlaw, Lover, Jester, Victim, Perpetrator, Child, Adolescent, Parent, Priest, Priestess, Witch, Wizard... The names are not important. If we listen and observe carefully enough, we can all feel various kinds of decidedly human archetypal currents pulling and pushing us.

6) Totem Awareness: Owl, Bear, Deer, Raven, Orca, Snake, Eagle, Lion, Lamb, Wolf... Again, the names are not important. If we listen and observe carefully enough, we can all feel various kinds of animal archetypal currents guiding or influencing us.

7) Awareness of Fundamental Nature: Ice, Sun, Star, Moon, Fog, Rain, Ocean, Tree, Grass, Rock... Going ever deeper into our own true nature we become aware and in awe of every leaf, blade of grass and grain of sand.

8) Awareness of Fundamental Polarities: 4-elements (earth/wind – fire/water), 4-directions (North/South – East/West), Yin/Yang, Male/Female, Hot/Cold, Alive/Dead... Moving way down into our collective unconscious we can feel the fundamental polarities of this alive multi-dimensional universe.

9) Awareness of the Tao of No Name: This is where we dissolve into the intimate, infinite, flow of the Dharma, the flowering, fundamental essence of the universe, prior to heaven and earth, prior to the Big Bang, incomparably profound and minutely subtle, and vocalized as *Mu* in Rinzai Zen.

10) Tathagata's Awareness: Tathagata is a name Gautama Buddha used in referring to himself that means, "the one who has thus gone." When and if we can let go of any awareness of ego-identity by falling or dissolving into the intimate, infinite, vast, bottomless void of our deep nature, then awareness of the embracing presence of the universe becomes apparent. This loving presence is always everywhere and is everything. It has no form, no birth, no death, let alone a name.