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The Awakening Ground: A Guide to Contemplative Mysticism

David Chaim Smith

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The Awakening Ground: A Guide to Contemplative Mysticism David Chaim Smith
A guide to the practice of contemplation as a living mystical pursuit

• Introduces six stages of mystical contemplation to break the habits and reflexes of the ordinary mind and expose the awakening ground from which meaning arises

• Each stage is illustrated by original art that elaborates the stage's main tendency, kabbalistic implications, and symbolic functioning

• Draws upon the 13th-century kabbalistic text The Fountain of Wisdom, 17th-century alchemical texts, and writings of Isaac the Blind and other masters

Contemplation begins with intellectual understanding. As contemplation deepens, the mind shifts from the accumulation of data to the unfolding of direct gnostic apprehension. This dissolves the idea that outer and inner or personal and cosmic distinctions exist, allowing phenomena to return to its basis as a single, uninterrupted continuum. As the mind becomes dwarfed by the sheer immensity of this vast wholeness, the character of meaning begins to change. Meaning's fullness shapes the mind rather than the mind's reflexes and habits shaping meaning. Meaning passes beyond the experiences that an individual uses to define themselves in the world, yet it arises nowhere else but from those experiences. This is the paradox of gnostic awakening.

Offering a step-by-step guide to the practice of mystical contemplation and direct ecstatic revelation, David Chaim Smith explores how to ride the razor's edge of the paradox of gnostic awakening and coax the mind from the sleep of habituation into nonconceptual gnosis. He sets the process within the symbology of the kabbalah, introducing six stages or gates of contemplation, each illustrated by original works of art that elaborate the stage's main tendency, kabbalistic implications, and symbolic functioning.

Drawing upon the 13th-century kabbalistic text *The Fountain of Wisdom*, 17th-century alchemical texts, and writings of Isaac the Blind and other kabbalistic masters, the author reveals how meaning never remains static--its nature is to move, transmit, and display--yet its precious potential becomes buried under layers of mental constructs. He explains how the mind's habits and reflexes impose structures of containment to make sense out of phenomena, but these very structures obscure the essential nature of all phenomena. Smith's experiential path to gnostic awakening reveals how, in the wake of the lesser concerns of the contained mind, the primordial purity of creativity shines, great resonances of poetic beauty arise spontaneously, and a sensibility of wonder, awe, and delight is cultivated.

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