

HEALING THE WESTERN SOUL

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Today, in Europe and the US, there is increasing attention paid to multi-culturalism, One World, and universal spirituality. This makes sense because all spiritual traditions – at their foundation – lead to the same Higher Power – whether that power is called Atmen, Consciousness, Allah or God. Why then do I focus on the Western soul in this workshop? I do this because many Western seekers reject their own Judeo-Christian spiritual roots. They look to other traditions – Eastern, Shamanic, Wiccan etc., because they are not aware of the sacred ground of their own roots. They confuse their tradition's spiritual foundation with organized religion. So when they have authentic spiritual experiences reflecting this sacred ground, they turn away and reject such experiences.

When they do this, they get stuck. Because whatever comes through one's consciousness (whether it be a vision at a meditation workshop, or deep religious feelings experienced in nature, at a church or monastery, in a dream, or even in one's own daily activities), such processes have important meaning for individuals' spiritual development, and have nothing to do with human or institutional corruption .

People are rejecting traditional religion – often understandably – because it doesn't support their spiritual yearnings, or because of historical abuses, or because it feels outdated and meaningless. Yet in many respects, these seekers are rootless.

The problem is that for many in the West, there is a lack of spiritual identity. Data from sociological cross-cultural research tells us that erosion of a strong cultural and spiritual identity leads to a self-image that loses its definition and becomes more fragile. We become thwarted in our development if we deny an essential part of our being. When we bypass and/or avoid a spiritual message that arises within, we are saying to the universe "No." Instead, what we need to say is "Yes." The Dali Lama says, "Study your own tradition. Much better, safer."

Our sacred ground is our birthright. There are actual innate forces within us that have to do with the deep spiritual/cultural undercurrents in a person's soul. This workshop will discuss what it means to be nourished by our Western mystical ground. It will also describe the three major stages of the Western Spiritual Path – 1) Spiritual Awakening, 2) Illumination, and 3) Union. It will focus on the characteristics of each stage, the challenges faced by seekers in each of these stages, and the ways to resolve these psycho-spiritual difficulties. Questions and answers and group sharing of personal spiritual experiences and challenges will be a part of this workshop as well.