



Talking Leaves: Volume 6, Issue 2

Summer Solstice 2017

Welcome to Yggdrasil

Yggdrasil is a collaborative venture of a small circle of co-creative friends - the culmination of our life experiences; our work as healers, teachers and writers; our soul journeys; our dreams and our quests in nature. We envision Yggdrasil to be a mystery school for visionary contrarians and a forest retreat for souls seeking to reinvent themselves, housed within a self-sustaining eco-village community. We are now in the formative stages of this project, working together to refine and elaborate our vision, and root it in fertile soil.

This newsletter is one way for us to stay in touch with our extended family of friends and supporters. Please feel free to share this issue of **Talking Leaves** with anyone who feel might be interested in what we are doing. You can also learn more about Yggdrasil through our website at yggdrasilretreat.com, and/or keep track of us on our Facebook page at www.facebook.com/yggdrasilretreat.



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Our 2017 Workshop Menu

At Yggdrasil, it is not our goal to provide you with answers to life's most mysterious – and worthy – questions, but rather to provide you with the opportunity to explore them, and clarify your own evolving answers. In 2017, we are offering two fun and exciting workshops where you can do this:



Our 4th annual [Tracking the Soul](#) workshop – from August 17-21 at Spirit Matters (near Almonte, Ontario, Canada) – will be co-facilitated by Talking Council Members [Joe Landwehr](#) and [Julie Yeaman](#). The [Mentorship Program](#) – six one-on-one mentoring sessions (by phone or Skype) – is a pre-requisite for anyone planning to attend this workshop.

Our 1st [Inner Spiritual Wisdom](#) workshop – from October 14-15 at a venue near Los Angeles, California (directions sent upon registration) – will be co-facilitated by Talking Council Members [Steve Hayes](#) and [Bruce Durward](#).

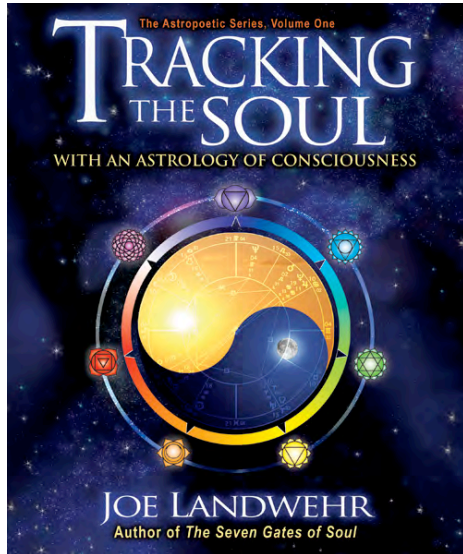
Tracking the Soul

from August 17-21, 2017 at Spirit Matters (near Almonte, Ontario)

2 Openings Left – Final Deadline for Signing Up is July 1

The Tracking the Soul workshop is based on the [book](#) of the same name, written by Yggdrasil's Founder [Joe Landwehr](#). The book integrates the exquisite spiritual psychology of the seven chakras with an intimately personal, image-based approach to astrology called astropoetics. In the

preparation for the workshop, Joe works with the system outlined in the book to lead each participant to a deeper understanding of their core issues, as well as to an intuitive sense of what might be necessary to shift these issues to more positive, creative and self-empowering expression. At the workshop itself, we leave all theory behind and create an experiential space in which the understanding attained in the preparation can be rooted in the body, heart and imagination.



The workshop brings the provocative theory of the astrochakra system into real life application in relation to core issues brought by participants. The emphasis is on working with troublesome patterns and shifting them toward positive, more creative and empowering expression.

The workshop provides each participant with ample opportunity to be the loving center of group attention, while allowing plenty of alone time for integration. The workshop includes experiential exercises in authentic movement and other experiential modalities designed to illicit your own inner knowing and bring it to the fore. In the 2017 workshop, we will incorporate some shamanic work, as rooted in the experience of workshop co-facilitator [Julie Yeaman](#). We also develop customized exercises to address the specific needs of those attending.

About the workshop, a 2016 participant said:

The workshop was really, really something for me. It was wonderful, scary, fun, sacred, mind-jarring, a time of growth and peace and a whole lot more.

Another 2013 participant said:

I would say that it was life altering. I feel that strongly and I don't say that lightly, perhaps because I've done some personal growth work before. I was ready to heal and I'm extremely grateful for this past weekend.

Our 2017 workshop will be held from August 17-21 at [Spirit Matters Centre](#) near Almonte, Ontario, Canada. Since the workshop requires a bit of preparation, early registration is encouraged. You can sign up directly on [our website](#), using Paypal to pay. The absolute final deadline for signing up will be July 1.

For an in-depth account of last year's workshop, read "[Tracking the Soul 2016 - Another Mind-Jarring Experience](#)" in [Talking Leaves #19](#) (downloadable from our website).



Inner Spiritual Wisdom

Connecting With Spirit and Remembering Who You Really Are

from October 14th and 15th, at a venue near Los Angeles, CA



Find your own connection to Spirit.

Discover the best ways for you to access and cultivate that connection.

Explore direct spiritual guidance through guided meditations and shamanic journeys.

Meet your own spirit guides and begin a relationship that will last the rest of your life.

"You are never alone or helpless. The force that guides the stars guides you also."

Shri Shri Anandamurti

Beyond every major religion in the world, usually built on the outer teachings of a great master like Jesus, Buddha, or Lao Tzu is an experiential tradition designed to teach direct access to the source of wisdom from which those teachings flow. Christian mystics seek "a direct, intimate union of the soul with God through contemplation or ecstasy." Buddhist and yogic meditation practices take the diligent practitioner beyond words toward the place inside where knowing arises. The shamanic traditions of indigenous cultures use drums, journeywork and other techniques to induce altered states of consciousness in which information not available to the conscious mind becomes accessible.

In the spirit of these traditions, co-facilitators [Steve Hayes](#) and [Bruce Durward](#) present Inner Spiritual Wisdom, a two-day workshop designed to expand and deepen access to the source of wisdom within. Steve is a psychotherapist specializing in trauma therapy, with extensive experience in attachment hypnotherapy, past life regression therapy, and facilitation of work with spirit guides. Bruce is a practicing shaman taught by Peruvian masters, specializing in psychopomp work, releasing old trauma in the energy body, and communication with channeled entities like Quan Yin and Archangel Michael.

Both co-facilitators of this workshop believe that each person has spirit guides that watch over them and help them in limited ways when we give them permission to do so. These guides can take many forms, including angels, spirit animals, faeries, deceased loved ones, deceased pets, ascended masters, archangels, gods and goddesses. In the workshop, Steve and Bruce will facilitate an experience of this connection with Spirit and get to know at least one of their guides.

The cost is \$200 per person. You can register by clicking the Buy Now button at the bottom of the [web page](#), and paying through Paypal.

Details and directions to the workshop venue will be provided upon registration, along with a brief questionnaire to help us better address your needs.



The Mythopoetic Realm and the Fallacy of Misplaced Concreteness

by Graywolf

At Yggdrasil Central, we are both blessed and challenged with the necessity for perpetually clarifying what we are doing and why. We are guided by our shared vision, and the four soul tasks that give it structure:

- 1) Tending the sacred wound;
- 2) Cultivating a deeper sense of visionary calling;
- 3) Entering into co-creative dialogue with others holding perspectives different than our own; and
- 4) Courting the mythopoetic realm.

But what do we mean by “tending the sacred wound?” What is “a visionary calling?” What does it mean to “court the mythopoetic realm?”

In the birthing of the vision that encompasses these ideas, these phrases once held great power to

evoke a deeply felt set of intentions. They still do. But in the manifestation of the vision, it turns out, each phrase, each idea, each epiphany and revelation, each scintillating glimmer of understanding, is but part of an ever evolving, one might say living invitation into a process in mid-stride. These ideas may not mean the same thing to you as they do to me; and they may not mean the same thing that we take them to mean tomorrow as they do today. They are merely the portal into an experience of something – exactly of what may be ultimately impossible to say.



Nowhere does this become more apparent than in the workshop development process. In our recent development of the Inner Spiritual Wisdom workshop, for example, we have had to wrestle with the many questions:

What is Spirit?

What is a spirit guide?

What is guidance?

What is wisdom?

What is the difference?

What is channeled guidance, and how useful is that in opening to guidance from within?

How does one tell the difference between true guidance and false guidance?

And so on. For some on our Talking Council, the answers to these questions have been mostly settled long ago. For others, like myself, it continues to be useful to ask them anyway. This is especially true when “entering into co-creative dialogue with others holding perspectives different than our own” – our third soul task – which after all is what the workshop development process is all about. We don’t all necessarily mean the same thing when we speak the words we hold in common and take for granted. To assume that we do can, and often does, create difficulties.

I think this is especially true when the third soul task shades over into the fourth: courting the mythopoetic realm. The mythopoetic realm is essentially an imaginal space, where the everyday

experiences of an ordinary life acquire deeper spiritual meaning, as part of the soul's journey of learning and growth, healing and self-actualization. The idea that it might be possible to commune with spirit guides – essentially denizens of the mythopoetic realm – in order to explore the meaning of our life experiences, and get guidance from a source of wisdom rooted in something deeper than the everyday, ordinary ego-centric mind – is appealing. If indeed it is possible to do this, this would certainly be one way of courting the mythopoetic realm. Because it might be, we have been working together to create this workshop, where those who are interested in this possibility can come together and explore it.

I realize in saying this that for those who are teaching the workshop – Steve and Bruce – the question of possibility is settled. For myself, having had less experience of contact and converse with spirit guides, I continue to wonder: What is actually happening when we contact a spirit guide? Are we talking to a deeper, older, wiser part of ourselves? Are we contacting a diverse intelligence in some other realm? Or is something else going on that we can't explain, or find adequate words to articulate?

To be clear, I have had many experiences of the mythopoetic realm and I am not a newbie. I have worked extensively with my dreams, done countless guided imagery meditations and shamanic journeys, been on vision quests and had visions. I do value these experiences. But I am not sure that they are real in the same sense that my flesh-and-blood life in a brick and mortar world is real. I know all about quantum theory and Eastern thought, both of which question the so-called solid reality that we tend to take for granted. That does not dispel the sense that a spirit guide or a dream image is of a different order of reality than a tree or a lover.

Whether such distinctions are ultimately illusory or not, the differences are real in terms of how we actually experience this world, this life, inner and outer, and the gradations of reality within it. Even trees and lovers are not always what we think they are.

What is Real?

In the 1920s, English philosopher and mathematician Alfred North Whitehead coined the phrase “the fallacy of misplaced concreteness” to describe what one happens when one mistakes an abstract belief, opinion, or concept about the way things are for reality itself. At the time, he was concerned with the metaphysical implications of science, which had largely been dismissed as unworthy of investigation by scientists because they were not subject to empirical testing. Yet, as Whitehead pointed out, scientists routinely make assumptions about the nature of reality, and then – because these assumptions are never examined – mistake their assumptions for reality itself.

Take the simple idea of time. Scientists – and most of us for that matter – take it for granted that events happen in time, and that time is sequential: what happened yesterday precedes what will happen tomorrow. But what is time? Does it exist? Or is it merely a mental construct that allows us to make sense of our experiences? Whitehead would argue the latter. In fact, Whitehead would argue that most of what we take to be real is, in reality, only a convenient way of talking about or understanding reality that is at least one step removed from reality itself. Time, space, matter,

consciousness, identity – all of these are, according to Whitehead, ideas and not “the thing” itself.

This may seem like little more than splitting philosophical hairs, but it is also an attempt at cut through the conceptual fog to get to what matters most. In Whitehead’s view, what matters most is an actual experience of something. It is human nature to want to make sense of our experiences, and in this endeavor, ideas can be useful, after the fact – as long as we realize that what is important is the thing we are trying to make sense of, and not the ideas we use to do this.

While Whitehead’s initial concern was the philosophical fallacies routinely committed by scientists in attempting to describe material reality, his view have deeply metaphysical implications and become even more relevant when we start talking about “spirit” and “spirit guides.” For if we take “spirit guides” to be real, we may be committing the fallacy of misplaced concreteness. We may easily forget that we are attempting to give an explanatory name to an experience of something, rather than allowing an experience to unfold free from preconceived ideas.

We commit this same fallacy when we say, “I am having an experience of a spirit guide.” Who am I? Do I exist? When I read back through my journals of the past 40 years, I sometimes cringe in embarrassment at the naïveté of this being with the same name as myself. I sometimes marvel at what used to concern me, what I struggled with, what made my life so difficult back then, that is not part of my experience now. There are some threads of continuity, but there is enough that is different that my use of the word, “I” means something different now than it did then.

This is so, because my experience of myself is different now than it was then. In that sense, I am the horizon I have been moving toward, which like a mirage, never quite gels into anything more than a working definition of who I am in relation to who I think I am becoming. “I” am then, merely a concept that can be useful in orienting myself to a process that is ever new.

If I, who exist in a material body occupying space, and apparently living a life unfolding in time, cannot be said to be real in any kind of way that has continuity of meaning, then how much less reality can we ascribe to beings composed of energy or light or thought or imagination or who knows what, who appear and disappear in the blinking of an eye?

What’s in a Name?

To be clear, it is not that these things do not exist for the time we experience them. But are they an experience to which we give a useful name, or are they something that exists whether we experience them or not? Who can say? To those who think they can say, Whitehead would say you are confusing an idea for an experience. I would agree.

Heaven, hell, reincarnation, karma, sin, gods and goddesses, archetypes, dimensions of reality, chakras, entities, spirit guides, devas, fairies, ley lines, acupuncture meridians, and countless other metaphysical concepts that are taken for granted by many – point to experiences, or the possibility of experience. But they are not the experience itself.

If you do have an experience of one of these things, you might be tempted to create a map that helps you make sense of your experience. This is essentially what an astrological birthchart is, and since I am an astrologer, I cannot say that this is not an idea that has been useful. But as many astrologers are fond of saying, almost as often as they forget, “the map is not the territory.” Nor is the territory the territory, as anyone who has ever stepped into the same river twice – or looked at the same birthchart at two different points in time – can attest.

Whatever your territory, and whatever map you use to traverse the territory, if you forget this, then you commit the fallacy of misplaced concreteness. What is perhaps worse, you begin to slide down the slippery slope of literalism into the quagmire of fundamentalist dogma.

Human history is filled with religious wars fought over ideas. If I don’t understand the difference between ideas and the reality they purport to describe, I might begin to take my ideas literally. If I then encounter someone who fails to take them literally, or doesn’t believe they are real, because they haven’t experienced them as real, then I might presume to judge them as ignorant, or delusional, or even condemn them as heretical – when in actuality, they just see the world differently than I do, and explain its mystery in terms of a different set of ideas.

We are all blind, all circling the elephant, all naming what we see in our mind’s eye, all wanting to believe it is real because we have named it. But a rose by any other name would smell as sweet, and those who think they know what a rose is because they have smelled one once, eventually forget what sweetness is. In that immeasurable loss, a mere name is no consolation.



What is Spirit?

As part of our ongoing conversation, circling the ideas that compose the ever-evolving vision of Yggdrasil, the Talking Council recently considered the question: “What is Spirit?” and the corollary question: “What does it mean to live a spiritual life?” What follows is a taste from the shared cauldron in which these ideas continue to brew.

Steve: “I don’t have a clue what Spirit is, but my working definition would be that we are all eternal beings, which are spirits, that we come into form as human beings, that we have done this hundreds of times, if not thousands of times – not just as human beings, but on other planets, in other galaxies and in other universes, who knows? Other spirits take form as trees, animals, the Earth itself, as water, as fire, as stars, planets. There are spirits who have transcended life in form. There are also spirit guides who manifest as faeries, spirit guides, animal totems, angels, ascended masters, deceased loved ones, and in endless other ways.”

What does living a spiritual life mean to you? “I feel the energy in my chest, in my heart. That’s my connection to spirit. **Living a spiritual life means learning and growing and getting closer to spirit all the time. It means communicating to spirit in every way possible** – through meditation, shamanic journeying, channeling, automatic writing, toning, Reiki, past life regression – any kind of spiritual activities, especially in a group – and through my work as a therapist.”

Bruce: “Spirit is everything. It is the Whole that we’re a part of. When we’re on the other side of our experience here, we’re in closer connection with All-That-Is. I have a very shamanic view of life. I believe everything has a spirit; everything is energy.”



“I think we agree to a set of experiences for our growth, before we come here, and the Universe is set up to provide those for us. My spiritual practice is not about changing my experiences, but **taking the lessons from those experiences, and learning how to go through them with more grace and ease.** I’m really into the idea these days – **Whatever arises, love it** – which of course, includes loving myself.”

Beverly: “Everything is spirit, and spirit is energy constantly manifesting in new forms. It’s eternal, creative, and intelligent. Because we have consciousness, as humans, we have the capacity to recognize the wondrousness of this, appreciate and honor this Mystery, of which we are a part for a while. We manifest in our own unique ways as a part of everything that is. **I see it all as a kind of composting system – that we’re all part of this system that is constantly changing form and mutating.** Love is what brings us all together and unifies us.”

“In my life, understanding that I am worthy, as the holder of this consciousness, of love, and capable of having love for others, is my spiritual path. Lately that has meant **having empathy for the parts that are wounded, that are self-rejecting, and embracing everything that I am and everything that is, with love.** **Acceptance is an important practice to me.** Now that I’m retired, I have more time to devote myself to meditation, yoga, chi gung, walking in nature. My chi gung practice calls me to be aware of the energy within and around myself, and that is something I appreciate. I’ve also become more aware of **the importance of feeling what is going on in the body, and honoring it, as a way of working through trauma, and wounds, and re-integrating on**

a deeper level, becoming whole in so many ways.”



Nia: “Just listening to everyone talk is making me feel spiritual. Spirit is experiential and almost kinesthetic. When I relax, and be, and allow, my heart opens, and I have the feeling of being part of a huge, very loving Wholeness. It’s almost ecstatic, but in a very peaceful way. **Spirit is that unconditionally loving consciousness, which pervades everything**, every molecule of my own being, the air, the rocks, the plants, the animals, all the people – everything, and not just on this planet.”

“To me, living a spiritual life means **allowing myself to be so big and so whole that all of that is inside of me**. I’m God. I’m Spirit, and it’s all inside of me. If I’m in that place, it’s easier for me to approach whatever comes up from that place of unconditionally loving presence.”

Hannah: “This is not my area of expertise – to be into this head trip stuff. But I think we’re all One. Spirit is energy. I don’t have any words to describe Spirit, because **this could just be a figment of my imagination**. Time, space, reality as we think we know it, could all just be a figment of our imagination. But I think **Spirit is the glue that holds it all together**. It transcends time, space and form. It’s infinity, and I don’t know how to describe that, except to say there’s no beginning and no end. To live a spiritual life is **to be aware, as much as I can be, of everything I can perceive, and to be open to change**.

“Spirit has to include ‘negative stuff,’ too. I cannot say that Hitler or Trump or any of the other horrendous personalities in history are not part of what Spirit is providing us. It’s beyond my comprehension, and I’m just trying to be as open and as non-judgmental as I can possibly be. **I’ve had ‘negative experiences’ that have pushed me forward in my growth**, so how can I say that these were not a manifestation of Spirit doing what it is supposed to be doing?”

Joe: “To me, Spirit is the life force that flows through everything that exists in this manifest universe and makes it possible. The fact that I am alive means that Spirit lives within me, and there is nowhere else I need to go in order to connect with it. It also lives in everything else – other people, plants and animals, and also in natural phenomena we normally don’t think of as

being alive: mountains, rivers, storms, stars, tumbleweeds, even something supposedly inanimate like a computer. On the molecular and sub-atomic level, I consider the movement of energy to be an expression of this life force, even though of course, a scientist wouldn't see it that way.

I believe there is an underlying intelligence behind this life force, accessible to anyone who takes the time to listen, observe, and learn from it, and I believe that is why we are here. When I speak of my life as a spiritual journey, what I mean by this is that I am constantly trying to listen, observe, and learn from my life, and constantly asking the question, "What does my life want from me?" It may not always be what I tell myself I want, so there is a constant adjustment and re-adjustment. It is not entirely up to me, and so **living a spiritual life means, in part, recognizing that I am part of a much larger flow of life, in which I participate, but in which I do not always get to call the shots.** Finding the balance between my own ideas, wants and needs, and the intelligent flow of life through and around me is the essence of what I consider the spiritual path to be.

As far as what happens to the soul after death, I think there are lots of ideas out there, and I have entertained a few from time to time. But I now believe that the spiritual life takes place here and now, in this world, not somewhere else. And so this is where I choose to put my focus. I guess I'll find out what happens after I die, later on down the road."



Our Standing Invitation to You

If you want to stay in closer touch with what we are doing, you can easily subscribe to [our blog feed](#), like us on [Facebook](#), follow us on [Twitter](#), make a [donation](#), attend a [workshop](#), or find a [mentor](#). Or if you want to be a part of this exciting venture, [join the Talking Council](#).

Whatever your level of interest, thanks for being part of our extended community and for helping us hold a space for the vision we carry.

Yggdrasil is a mystery school for visionary contrarians and a forest retreat for souls reinventing themselves, eventually to be housed within a self-sustaining eco-village community.

Keep an eye out for the next *Talking Leaves* – Autumn Equinox 2017
Contributions in the spirit of Yggdrasil are welcome by September 15.

