

Overcoming Exceptionalism Through Knowing our Sacred Equality and Interdependence

Exceptionalism describes how Westerners view all others as inferior to us. No other culture can approach the excellence of our culture in terms of religion, music, science, art, philosophy, economy, laws, and governance.

The sacred path holds that life has no hierarchy of higher or lower, simpler or more complex, primitive or advanced. Instead of hierarchy, we celebrate and honor the unique difference of equal beings, an interbeing that includes all the ways that life and the Earth manifest the sacred. The Earth Interbeing draws and holds all being together within a harmonious interbeing. All life live as equals within the sacred Earth Interbeing. The sacredness of life makes life equal.

All beings have the equal sacred responsibility to further life on Earth in ways unique to each being. Interbeings live by the common values of the Earth Interbeing.¹ All life wants to survive and has the common interest in furthering life on Earth. To further life on Earth requires the common participation of all life in coming to know how to interactively further life on Earth.

Most on the path have an intellectual understanding of the equality of life. Yet for many Westerners on the path, living equally with others, life, and the Earth challenges us. When we do not live as equals, we prove our ignorance and act in ways that harm life on Earth. We feel that we know what others should do, judge others for being less than us, ignore the consequences of our actions upon the Earth Interbeing, and the list goes on. Those who believe in their superiority view all others as inferiors, even those closest to them. Everyone is less than me. The privileged on the sacred path have the great need to sacrifice their privileges.

We have our feet in two different cultures. In the Western culture we need to constantly prove our superiority. In the sacred world, the Earth Interbeing culture depends upon equality for our survival because we live in an interdependent reality.

Learning how to live equality challenges Westerners. For us, living as equals will long remain a work in progress, but we can begin to transform our wrong views. We can start by deeply knowing our own sacredness and ourselves as sacred beings. Western culture has so long denied our sacredness that it will take on effort on our part to uncover our sacredness.

Western Hierarchy of Who Has Power Over Whom

White wealthy men over all others

White men over other others

Nonwhite men over others

Women and children over other life and the Earth

Other life and the Earth have no status

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Women and their children have access to the status of the man they marry. Single mothers and single women have access to the status of their family of origin.

The rank of no status also includes homeless people, disabled people, and those incarcerated for crimes of resistance against the capitalist state.

¹ **Common values of furthering life on Earth (work in progress):** a strong resolve to live a sacred life to further life on Earth, grounded within the sacred experience of life, willingly surrendering to the sacred knowing of how to further life on Earth, relieving suffering and unravelling the causes of suffering, harmoniously interacting others by knowing the sacredness, equality, and interdependence of life on Earth, equitably sharing of the Earth commons, responding in valued ways that further life on Earth, restoring and renewing through self-discipline our balance with Earth and life to recover our mutual wellbeing. By living in these ways, we deepen our loving awareness of the sacred and sacredness of all life and the Earth.

People who believe in their superiority view themselves as having the abilities to make it on their own. They view those who cannot afford basic needs as needy and inferior because of their inherent weaknesses. Yet nobody can meet all their own needs all the time. Western claims of self-sufficiency reveal our ignorance. Nobody can survive in a void. Life persists within a mutually interdependent interbeing. All beings have common needs to survive and depend upon other beings to provide what we need.

Until we deeply know our mutual neediness and need for mutual care, we cannot know our equality, our true interdependence. The wealthy who believe they have no needs give charitably to those with needs, an unequal relationship. Mutual need means we really need one another for our well-being. Privileged Westerners on the path of the sacred Earth Interbeing, who feel they have everything they need for basic survival, must look to other needs that they have not met and must depend upon others help meet them.

People share with the rest of life on Earth the mutual need to further life on Earth. Yet to know how to meet that need with others, life, and the Earth requires the privileged to overcome our belief that we have the best ideas about how to go about doing that. The Western mind cannot solve the problems that Western minds cause. To even participate in such a mutual problem solving process requires that we have already stopped harming others, life, and the Earth and no longer ignore suffering. You would not want an active child abuser to discern how to further the wellbeing of children. Actions speak louder than words. Who would trust their oppressors to care for them?

Our mutual neediness opens to our need for mutual caring us. When we live as equal beings, the flow of care moves freely between and among us. The common neediness and need for care make life equal. The most caring thing we can do right now to prove to ourselves and others our mutual equality lies in stopping ourselves from harming life and the Earth..

November 16, 2025

Rev/ 12/28/25