



Six-Month Open Path Training

with Pir Elias Amidon

Himmelreich Retreat Center, near Lindau – Germany

Seminar I: Noon April 26 — 3 PM April 29, 2018

Seminar II: Noon October 18 — 3 PM October 21, 2018

What is the Open Path?

The Open Path is a non-sectarian approach to spiritual realization. It is a path dedicated to the direct experience of our natural state - a state known as Pure Awareness, Selflessness, Nonduality, Oneness, Original Spirit, and by many other names. It is a process of natural enlightenment that belongs to everyone.



To travel the open path does not require following a belief system or a specific set of esoteric practices or ritual forms. What is required is that we relax into the awake openness of our original nature, free from assumptions about who we are or conclusions about what is real. What is required is that we relax from compulsive doing and mental commenting and recognize the immanence of the here-and-now for what it naturally is.

With this unadorned recognition we experience release from our insecurities, self-doubt, and judgments of others. As a result we are able to respond spontaneously to whatever comes up for us with equanimity, creativity, and with a kind heart.

The Open Path Training

The intention of the six-month Open Path Training is to introduce you to the direct experience of pure awareness, free from religious interpretations and obligations. Usually this experience begins with short glimpses of its lucid clarity. As these glimpses are pointed out, you learn to open to them again and again. The natural ease they reveal becomes increasingly familiar. This familiarity gradually allows you to sustain and integrate the realization of the natural state in your daily life.

A central aspect of the Open Path Training involves noticing the stream of assumptions that accompany our moment-to-moment experience of life, and that obscure recognition of the natural state. These assumptions range from ideas about the nature of reality to the requirements for happiness. Most of these assumptions involve the sense of our being an identifiable entity – a self – who is the agent of choice and action, and whose well-being is dependent on getting the phenomenal world to line up in a certain way.

In the training we directly inquire into the truth of these assumptions, looking for the evidence upon which they are based. This deconstructive inquiry, or *unlearning* as the Sufis call it, becomes a natural part of our everyday experience as we proceed on this path of opening. In the process we may experience moments of bewilderment or disorientation as our assumptions about what is real and true are seen through.

There is nothing aggressive about this process, and everyone is encouraged to follow his or her own pace of inquiry. Gradually the mental and emotional constructions that we have taken for granted lose their substantiality. They become transparent. In that transparency we are able to welcome and rest in the stillness and openness that is our original nature.

Direct Experience

In the Open Path Training we are committed to *direct experience* rather than studying *about* the recognition of the natural state. We acknowledge that the mind's tendency is to make up stories and interpretations about what is real, and that these interpretations give us a measure of security. We try to be gentle with ourselves here, neither blaming ourselves for objectifying our experience with concepts nor exerting tremendous effort in attempts to stop our habits of thinking and conceptualizing.



The key to our “work” in the Open Path is to allow ourselves to relax from the need to figure out what is true. This relaxation - often called *unknowing* - is not laziness or dreaminess. It is an openness to direct experience of the present moment in all its spontaneity and mystery.

While we do explore many exercises and practices, and share many “pointing out” conversations and written material, the heart of this Path is not didactic. Our explorations are primarily devoted to evoking each person's direct experience of the natural state – timeless awareness – without relying upon belief or cognitive understanding to convince ourselves of its presence.

The Structure of the Open Path Training

The training, which spans a period of six months, is offered in England, Germany, and the United States. A four-day residential seminar is held at the beginning and end of the training. The textbook for the course is *The Open Path — Recognizing Nondual Awareness* — the German translation of which will be published by Kamphausen in September, 2017. The essays and practices in this book will focus our work together.

In addition, we connect with each other by telephone on a regular basis. This telephone work is a central aspect of the training. There are group conference calls with Elias every three weeks, and individual calls with Elias and other Open Path guides several times during the semester between the two seminars. In addition, each student will have one or more partners in the class to work with by telephone or in person on exercises and inquiry work.

During the course you are encouraged to maintain a *contemplative practice* – a period of about twenty minutes (or more) each day during which you follow both specific practices as well as periods of “non-doing” – simply resting in the natural state.

How Much Time is Involved?

In addition to the two 4-day seminars, the Open Path Training involves a minimum of 20 minutes each day in a contemplative practice over the six months of the course. You will also spend about one hour (or more as you wish) each week in reading and in exercises done independently or shared with other participants. In addition, you should be prepared to spend about two hours each month on the group and individual telephone calls. You may also wish to do readings from the bibliography outside of the course work. If you are not sure you can devote this amount of time to this work over the six months of the course, we recommend that you wait until your life schedule will allow it.

Who Is This Training For?

The Open Path Training is appropriate for people who are psychologically stable, emotionally resilient, and who are invested with a deep spiritual calling for realization. Of course, everyone experiences ups and downs in his or her life—the stability and resilience mentioned here is the capacity you have to deal with these natural ups and downs honestly and wholeheartedly. In engaging with this course it is also helpful to be someone who has a strong love for life and who has a natural generosity—these qualities serve to support your commitment to the learning involved, as well as deepen the contribution this work can make to the well being of your family, friends and community.

While it is often beneficial to have had a background in meditation practice or in a spiritual tradition, it is not necessary. Most important is a steadiness of commitment over time and an honest curiosity to explore your direct experience of being.

The Lineage of the Open Path

The Open Path is a contemporary and non-sectarian approach to the journey of awakening that is at the heart of all mystical traditions. The particular style of the Open Path emerges from the lineage of western universal Sufism expressed by the Sufi Way.

This “style” is inclusive in its methods, non-dogmatic in its view, and dedicated to direct experience. The methods we make use of in the trainings are drawn from many sources: classical and modern Sufi practices, contemporary psychological methods for releasing mental and emotional fixations, Buddhist meditation practices, forms of inquiry from Zen, Advaita Vedanta, and Tibetan Dzogchen and Mahamudra traditions, and from the inspiration of many historic and contemporary Western nondual teachers.

Elias Amidon



The Open Path Training is taught by Elias Amidon, the spiritual director (Pir) of the Sufi Way. Elias teaches and holds retreats on nondual spirituality and Sufism throughout Europe and the United States, and is known for his direct and experiential approach to spiritual realization. He has worked for many years in the field of peace and environmental activism in the Middle East and Southeast Asia, and with indigenous tribes on land-rights issues.

Accommodation



Himmelreich Retreat Center

The Open Path seminars will take place at Himmelreich Retreat Center near Lake Constance, Lindau, Germany. Himmelreich is a beautiful and gracious home for our seminars and is known for its sacred atmosphere. Lindau is easily reached by train (1½ hours from Zurich) or by plane (Zürich or Friedrichshafen - 1/2 hour drive from Friedrichshafen).

Fee for Six-Month Open Path Training

The fee for the 2018 Training is €1100. This fee includes: Two 4-day seminars • Open Path individual practices and shared exercises • Study essays and contemplative readings in the *Open Path* book and other material sent by email • Conference calls with Elias every three weeks • Individual calls with Elias and other Open Path guides during during the semester • Weekly calls with a practice partner.

The fee for those who have previously taken the training is €750. (Note: students frequently choose to take the training twice (or more); repetition of the Open Path experience and material helps to deepen its realization.)

A deposit of €200 is required to secure your registration. The balance is due two months prior to the first seminar. You may also pay the balance in installments.

A scholarship fund has been established through the generous donations of past students; it is our hope no one will be prevented from attending Open Path programs for financial reasons. To apply for a partial scholarship, write to openpath@sufiway.org, describing your financial circumstances and the amount you feel able to pay. If you can contribute toward the scholarship fund we would be most grateful.

Costs for Room and Board at Himmelreich

The cost for room (double occupancy) and board at Himmelreich for each of the seminars is €330. There are a few single rooms available for a small extra charge. All room and board costs (per seminar) are paid directly to Himmelreich at the beginning of each seminar.

Registration

To register, go to: **www.regonline.com/OpenPathTraining2018**