

What are the primary paths of shamanism?

As in dreamers verses stalkers, or oracles and seers and such? Ah well, that's the Castanedian approach.

I can see how they would break it down that way. But of course they also were practiced healers and seers as well, though that isn't emphasized in the books. It is much more complicated than that. I see it this way, shamans have to become accomplished stalkers, dreamers, seers, and healers as well as a few other things, but according to each individual's predilections they will end up specializing in one area. Sort of like doctors, but without the BMW's. In the common vernacular, there are healers and seers. One can extrapolate those two words to also translate as dreamers and stalkers. The methodology of the various traditions places emphasis on the various abilities, usually according to what the culture demands at the time. So it might be crucial at one point for a culture to have seers, another time they might want healers.

What about our culture today?

Our culture today is looking for healers mostly, but with the millennium upon us also seers. This is where we get back to the basic dreamer/stalker thing. Think of those terms not as specific modalities, but as broader definitions of a way to approach the shamanic. You can be a healer from either a dreaming position or a stalking position. A stalking healer hunts down the problem and uses energetic manipulation to alter the person's configuration for healing on the conscious everyday level. The dreamer would prefer to do it through visualization perhaps, or directly in a trance state, or dreaming. The point is though that shamans have to have experience in all of them, not just one, and different people will use them differently. For instance a person might do physical healing as a stalker, but do mental/emotional healing as a dreamer. So it gets more complicated than simple definitions.

So are there 4 basic paths/approaches, or more?

I think four pretty well covers it. It's the way in which they are combined that makes it so complicated. When someone journeys to do soul retrieval, is that stalking, or dreaming, or both? So you have to look at it in stereo. It's an application of dreaming energy and the dreaming body near the line that marks the separation between the two sides of our energy. Too many people mistake control of dreaming as the way in which we use dreaming energy, but it's not. It's tearing down the fabric of dreaming to get to the pure energy of it. There are so many facets to the shamanic, so many ways in which it can be interpreted, that is making it the current new age darling it is, they perceive it as having no rules. People who actually step into it though, know it's not a picnic. It is a relentless battle for control of your own energy, a life and death struggle which you can't hope to win, but must win anyway. The shamanic requires tremendous self-discipline

and the will to see with clarity even when that clarity causes you immense pain. You must destroy yourself and rebuild yourself. You have to die and rebirth your own energy. You must act with compassion, but without attachment. Most love is conditional, most compassion desultory. As a shaman, you need to learn to act from a different place. Then your compassion would not be attached to an outcome and that would be good. I get letters all the time from people who "want to be a shaman" and I am always at a loss as to what to tell them.