

The Center For Sacred Sciences

The Center for Sacred Sciences is a non-profit, tax exempt organization dedicated to the creation and dissemination of a sacred world view appropriate to our contemporary scientific culture. Our programs draw on the wisdom of the mystics of all traditions as well as the evidence of quantum physics. Among the Center's current offerings are Sunday meditations and talks by Spiritual Director Joel Morwood, meditation classes and retreats, study groups, and dream workshops. Joel is available for private consultation, as well as leading a support group for committed spiritual seekers. The Center also maintains an extensive lending library of books and tapes covering a broad spectrum of spiritual, psychological, and scientific subjects. Run entirely by volunteers, the Center has no paid staff, and relies on donations and membership dues to meet operating expenses.

Spiritual Director: Joel Morwood

Librarian: Jennifer Knight

Newsletter: Melody Carr, Therese Engelmann, Steve Frankel, Jennifer Knight, and Mike Taylor

Secretary: Mike Taylor

Publicity: Barbara Dewey and Bonnie Linn

Activities: Cyohn Reinhart

Center Activities

Speakers' Forum

The Center, as a part of its educational program, sponsors a public forum for speakers from many different spiritual traditions. The spring speaker's forum was on Monday, March 18th. Ligia Dantes, the author of The Unmanifest Self and founder of the Self-Studies Foundation in Ojai, California spoke at the Unity Church in Eugene. The Self-Studies Foundation presents silent retreats that give people the opportunity to experience the power of silence and inner peace. Unpretentious and soft-spoken, Ms. Dantes prefers to engage the audience in dialogue and respond to questions. Her message is a simple and open-ended one. The heart of it is the freedom of the individual to discover "a different kind of awareness" through silence and inner peace. She gives no specific techniques to practice or disciplines to master: "No technique will enable you to experience oneness," nor does she present herself as possessing special powers or knowledge unavailable to the average person. She speaks of the importance of observing what is happening around us and within us without judgment, of exercising our capacity for awareness. For those interested in learning more, The Unmanifest Self is available from the Center library.

Spring Retreat

The Meditation study group will have its spring retreat from April 5th through the 9th at Cloud Mountain, a Buddhist retreat center, located one hour north of Portland in Southern Washington. The Center's twice yearly retreats offers participants the chance to deepen their meditation practice through intensive sitting and contemplative living.

Enlightenment Day Celebration & Annual Membership Meeting

This year the Center plans to celebrate the 11th of August as a holiday. Each year, to commemorate Joel's enlightenment on the 13th of August, we're going to host a membership gathering. This celebration will also honor the enlightenment of one of Joel's teachers, Franklin Merrell-Wolff, which also happened in August. Since August is such a propitious month, we thought it called for a party. The annual members' meeting will take place prior to the party. We are still in the planning stages for the party; Keep updated on the Center answering machine in upcoming months.

If you have any leads for the Speakers' Forum program or suggestions for Center activities, please feel free to contact Cyohn Reinhart, at 689-5382.

Library Corner

Your donations in this year's book drive have helped us raise \$200 dollars for buying books on Hinduism and Eastern Orthodox Christianity. Some of our new titles include: *Jnana Yoga* (Vivekananda), *Yoga Philosophy of Patanjali*, *Doors of Perception: Icons and Their Spiritual Significance*, and *The Jesus Prayer*. A few late arrivals from last year's book drive have come in: *Lao Tzu and Taoism*, and *Jewish Mystical Testimonies*. Recent additions bring our collection to over 1100 books and 150 audio tapes. Come visit our library and have a cup of tea. Please note the new hours: Mondays 11 a.m. to 6 p.m.

I would like to give a big thanks to everyone who has donated and loaned books in the past year. A special thanks to Janet Mayhall for being our book detective, and Karen F., Ann L., Mike T., Steve F., and Therese E. for all their work on updating the card catalog. THANKS!

On the library's current wish list are bookcases, bookends, and a transcription machine, for transcribing Joel's many tapes. We could also use small and medium picture frames.

Jennifer Knight

THE SELF

"We possess nothing in the world--a mere chance can strip us of everything--except the power to say 'I'. That is what we have to give to God--in other words, to destroy. There is absolutely no other free act which it is given us to accomplish--only the destruction of the 'I'."

Simone Weil
from *Gravity and Grace*
translated from the french
by Emma Craufurd

Center Move!

The Center is planning to move sometime this spring or summer. At this time we have no details of the move; so keep updated on the Center answering machine.

We need a place to move that has a larger meditation room and more room for the library. As the Center expands with more people and more books, our old location is becoming too small.

If you know of a place we might like to see--give us a call!

#642

Me from Myself--to banish--
Had I Art--
Impregnable Fortress
Unto All My Heart--
But since Myself--Assault Me--
How have I peace
Except by Subjugating
Consciousness?

And since We're mutual Monarch
How this be
Except by Abdication--
Me--of Me?

Emily Dickenson

Center for Sacred Sciences

Tape and Publication Catalog

Title	Length	Cost	Date	No.	Also Available:	No. of Copies
Spiritual Motivation	90 min	\$7.50	7-19-88	___	<i>Naked Through The Gate</i>	___
Looking for the "I"	60 min	\$6.50	10-2-88	___	by Joel	\$9.95 ___
Spiritual Philosophy	90 min	\$7.50	11-20-88	___	CSS Newsletter, published	___
The Third Dance of Shiva	90 min	\$7.50	1-22-89	___	quarterly, free.	___
Archetypal Guides	60 min	\$6.50	7-9-88	___	Mark items with number of copies wanted.	
The Meaning of Mantra	60 min	\$6.50	9-17-89	___	Note: Another copy of this catalog will be sent to you with your order.	
Solitude: Laboratory of the Soul	60 min	\$6.50	10-29-89	___	NAME _____	
What Is Love?	60 min	\$6.50	11-12-89	___	ADDRESS _____	
What is Spiritual Love?	60 min	\$6.50	11-19-89	___	CITY/STATE _____	
Gratitude	60 min	\$6.50	11-26-89	___	ZIP _____	
Ignorance: The Root of Suffering	90 min	\$7.50	12-10-89	___	TOTAL ORDER \$ _____	
The Meaning of Sacred Sciences	60 min	\$6.50	1-28-90	___	SHIPPING \$ _____	
Intro to Quantum Mechanics I (Tom McFarlane)	60 min	\$6.50	2-11-90	___	TOTAL \$ _____	
Intro to Quantum Mechanics II (Tom McFarlane)	90 min	\$7.50	2-18-90	___	Shipping: Books and tapes will be sent separately. Books: \$1.50 for the first book, 1.00 for each additional book. Tapes: \$1.50 for the first tape, .50 for each additional tape.	
Spiritual Death	90 min	\$7.50	4-15-90	___	Allow 3-4 weeks for delivery.	
First Fundamental	90 min	\$7.50	4-8-90	___	Send order with payment and this form to:	
Second Fundamental	90 min	\$7.50	4-29-90	___	Center for Sacred Sciences	
Third Fundamental	90 min	\$7.50	5-20-90	___	1430 Willamette St. #164	
Fourth Fundamental	90 min	\$7.50	6-24-90	___	Eugene OR 97401-4049	
Fifth Fundamental: Part I	90 min	\$7.50	7-8-90	___		
Fifth Fundamental: Part II	90 min	\$7.50	7-17-90	___		
Consciousness in Form	90 min	\$7.50	5-27-90	___		
The Beginning of Wisdom	90 min	\$7.50	6-17-90	___		

“Speaking of God . . .”

It was out of reverence for the Real that the ancient Israelites refused to utter the name of God, for whatever can be named is not Ultimately Real. This is not simply because no finite name can do justice to the Infinite Reality of God, but more profoundly because it is names themselves which constitute the veil that hides this Reality from us.

Ordinarily we suppose names designate a world of substantial objects existing outside of Consciousness. But this is a delusion. In Reality, names designate only images created by Consciousness within Itself. Hence, whenever we make use of a name we are in danger of idolatry--of believing that a name can refer to something real--whereas a name can only refer to something imaginary. As this applies to all names, how much greater then is our danger when we try to name the Unnameable!

Yet, at the same time, names are indispensable for any discourse whether spiritual or worldly. Thus, even the 'Unnameable' is a name as are all the other negative names with which mystical traditions abound--'The Formless', 'The Unmanifest', 'The Inconceivable', etc. Though such expressions are intended only to be remedial--to prevent us from reifying Reality in any form--they often prove worse than the disease they are intended to cure. In eschewing all positive references to a Deity, Buddhism, for example, must constantly guard itself against nihilism. When ignorant minds reify names like Nirvana (extinction) and shunyata (emptiness), imagining Reality to be a mere vacuity or some actually existing void, then idolatry is averted at the price of blasphemy--a far more grievous sin, as Buddhists themselves acknowledge in the saying: "If you get stuck in emptiness not even the Buddha can save you." To avoid such pitfalls more refined formulations are called for. It must be insisted that in the last analysis Nirvana is indistinguishable from samsara; that emptiness is not other than form; that God is neither Something nor Nothing. This, the traditions proclaim, is the Ultimate Truth. But the 'Ultimate

Truth' is itself just another name for God.

Apparently, then, in speaking of God we are led only into the slippery swamp of paradox. We cannot escape God's names, but neither can we grasp what they mean. And if we cannot grasp what they mean, it seems impossible to follow a spiritual path, for how can we believe in a Being we cannot conceive of, worship a God we cannot imagine, serve a Master we cannot comprehend?

The trouble is, we are looking at the problem the wrong way around. Normally, when we turn to God we are expecting God to answer a question: how can we be happy? But 'God' is not the name of an answer. God is the name of the question. That is, to invoke the name of God is to cry out this question. And if we focus on the question, instead of an answer, we can see that it arises out of our own suffering, which itself begins with a name--the name of 'I'.

In naming ourselves 'I', we impose on the Absolute Continuity of Consciousness an imaginary boundary between 'subject' and 'object', a 'self' and the 'world'. Although this boundary is purely metaphorical (an 'as if' construction), under delusion we take it to be real and identify ourselves exclusively with the side we have named 'I'. Having identified ourselves with 'I', however, we necessarily become estranged from all 'others'. It is this estrangement that constitutes our 'original sin', that cuts us off from the life of the world, and gives birth to that inherent sense of incompleteness from which all future sufferings flow. But despite this apparent sin of estrangement, in Reality, Consciousness Itself remains, an unalterable continuum--a continuum, moreover, which Consciousness now, in the form of 'I', strives to Re-cognize.

At first, this striving expresses itself as a profane effort on the part of 'I' to appropriate the 'other', usually in the form of people or possessions, or both. By bringing these 'others' into the orbit of self, I hope to end my estrangement from them. As long as I believe this strategy can succeed, God remains hidden, for I have no reason to question the nature of my relationship to the

world of others upon which the strategy is based. But if the persistence of suffering makes me suspect that this strategy is doomed (which, indeed, it is), then I will be forced into a re-examination of that fundamental relationship, and this by way of asking the double question: Who am I? Who is the Other?

It is through the Grace of such a crisis that God enters our lives, not as the name of some new 'object' or 'being' (however exalted), but rather as the Name of the Mystery of this relationship. To invoke the Name of God is to look upon the Face of this Mystery and allow oneself to be filled with awe. To pursue a spiritual path is to go stumbling after this Question, confessing with every step that one has not the slightest clue to an answer. In other words, it is not to adopt a dogma, but to undertake a quest--a quest for which the only true prerequisites are faith and humility.

Invoking God's Name in this spirit means to cease demanding answers. Instead, we are directed simply to contemplate God's Mystery as it manifests in our own daily suffering. Then and only then will the Mystery begin to unveil itself by showing us what further questions to ask, which is to say, what other names of God we must invoke. Becoming aware of my ignorance, I will seek the grace of Wisdom. Fear and confusion will prod me to find Peace. My iniquity and guilt will produce a longing for God's Goodness; and out of my loneliness and isolation will spring a thirst for redemptive Love. In this way I come to know the names of God's particular attributes precisely by coming to know names of the things which I lack and which cause my suffering.

Furthermore, each of the names of these attributes holds the key to a particular form of practice suited to the kind of suffering which prompted its invocation. Thus, the quest for Wisdom leads naturally to inquiry; a desire for Peace motivates a practice of meditation; the longing for Goodness unlocks the gate of virtue; and the yearning for Love brings one to devotion.

In submitting to such practices the seeker of God

becomes also a worshipper of God--literally, one who "turns towards what is most Worthy". But this turning towards what is most worthy is simultaneously a turning away from what is unworthy--i.e. the old, profane strategy for attaining happiness through the appropriation of mundane others. In its stead, the seeker adopts a new, sacred strategy aimed at appropriating the Divine Other or God. In order to accomplish this the seeker now strives to acquire God's names or attributes for him or herself, i.e., to become personally Wise, Peaceful, Good, and Loving--to become, in short, just like God.

Such an ambition, of course is absurd. Nevertheless, the effort to achieve it is both necessary and beneficent. As more and more attachments are sacrificed during the course of practice, the seeker's entire relationship to what is 'other' undergoes a profound change. Objects begin to lose their appearance of solidity; forms become more fluid, events and meanings less fixed. Gradually, the world of concrete quantities is transformed into a field of Divine qualities--qualities which in turn require new names to describe them. Inquiry, for example, yields glimpses of a providential harmony and perfection extending throughout the cosmos. In meditation one discovers an ineluctable clarity or presence infused in all phenomena, yet untouched by their constant fluctuations. During the exercise of virtue one may be suddenly overtaken by a beauty and light which melt the flesh and reduce the soul to tears; while in the fire of devotion it is possible to reach states of ecstasy and bliss that put all other pleasures to shame.

What differentiates this new constellation of names (harmony, perfection, clarity, presence, beauty, bliss, etc.) from the previous ones (Wisdom, Peace, Goodness, Love) is not that they are any less mysterious, but that they represent dimensions of actual experience. By entering these dimensions God's Mystery becomes, for the seeker, transformed from a set of intellectual Ideals into a series of experiential facts. Consequently, seekers in this stage often believe they are penetrating the Mystery itself. In reality, however, the situation is just the reverse:

the Mystery is penetrating them. For just as Consciousness has been striving to Re-cognize Itself in the form of 'I', it has also, all the while, been striving to Re-cognize Itself in the form of the 'other', which is to say, from the opposite side of the boundary. What has actually taken place is that the 'self' in its ludicrous effort to appropriate God has, through the sacrifice of attachments, opened itself to God's appropriation of it.

This is usually felt by the seeker as the Power or Hand of God (Holy Spirit) directing not only phenomena outside the self, but also operating within the depths of one's own innermost soul. With the realization that such a ubiquitous power is at work, God ceases to be simply the Mystery of the self's relationship to the world, but becomes more sublimely the Mystery of a Consciousness that transcends both self and world yet is fully incarnate in each. At this advanced stage of the path all 'things', 'beings', 'states' and 'experiences' are seen by the seeker to be merely occasions for this Transcendent Consciousness to commune with Itself. In effect, every name becomes, for a heart so illumined, the name of God, for now there is nothing but oneself and God in all the world--not because the world has been put away or left behind--but because everything in the world is clearly cognized as just another form of God.

This is true even and especially of what were once regarded as 'mundane' objects--trees, chairs, bugs, birds, stones, stars, friends, etc.--all are perceived as, in themselves, devoid of any substantial content. Rather they are but windows for God's blinding Radiance which cascades in from all sides, and from which there is no escape. Now, I and God stand face to face in every moment of experience . . . but that is the problem. There is still an 'I' and a 'God'. We remain separated by this one, last, agonizing distinction.

With God so tantalizingly close, the seeker begins to exert an all-out effort to obliterate this boundary once and for all. However, for reasons

the seeker cannot yet understand, this proves impossible. But if in the process the effort itself is thoroughly exhausted, then something totally unexpected happens. The seeker finds that he or she has no will left, even for spiritual practice. It has simply dried up. There is a complete emptiness, a vast desert into which the seeker wanders without any sense of purpose, convinced that all his or her spiritual efforts have wrought nothing but a colossal failure.

Such a state may last only a moment, or it may stretch into hours, days, weeks. Yet, if the seeker has really depleted every reserve (which is the real point of the practice), burned all bridges, then inevitably, sooner or later, it must be noticed that this emptiness is truly complete; that in it there are no boundaries, no distinctions, no barriers--hence, no 'I' and no 'other', no 'self' and no 'world'. All were merely imaginary (which is why no effort could obliterate them; for what was never in existence cannot be wiped out of existence). From the very beginning there was only Consciousness Itself, and when Consciousness Re-cognizes this Fact, then I lose the name of 'I', and God loses the name of 'God', for, in Reality, I and God are indistinguishable, and what is indistinguishable cannot be named. This is Gnosis--the end of the Path. With its instantaneous dawning the metaphorical world vanishes. Names and forms are now perfectly transparent to Consciousness Itself and, indeed, are identical to it. As such they lose all semblance of an independent reality and, in an absolute sense, even all meaning. Nevertheless, looking back from this vantage point, as it were (though truly no points can be specified), it may be seen how the pursuit of a nameable God leads to this, the God who is Forever Nameless. The trick then is not to avoid God's names, but, on the contrary, to actively engage the Mystery they represent.

Joel

March 1991