

Center Voice

Fall 1994

the newsletter of the Center for Sacred Sciences

In this issue . . .

Special Focus: Gnosis

Contents

- 2 CENTER NEWS.
- 3 KEEPING THE 'MYSTERY' IN MYSTICISM
-- by Joel.
- 9 LIBRARY NEWS.
-- Updates and book reviews.
- 10 IN MEMORIAM
-- by Mike.
- 11 WHAT IS GNOSIS?
-- by Mike.
- ** Plus: **Calendar & Catalog Inserts**

◆ **Christmas Day Service** ◆

December 25, at 11 a.m.

Thank You Melody!!

We would like to express our appreciation and heartfelt thanks to Melody for her 3 1/2 years of editorship and dedicated hard work in getting the Center Voice from a two page hand out into the wonderful newsletter you have before you. We wish her the best of luck as she ventures forth into new publishing adventures and other creative endeavors.

The special focus of this issue, Gnosis, is a subject often referred to here at the center. We present teachings from the mystics of many eras and traditions regarding this mysterious subject. Joel teaches from his own Realization, or Gnosis, and guides each of us on the Spiritual Path toward our own Enlightenment. Always there is awareness that the teachings and our practices are in relation to this ultimate Truth.

This Truth, or Gnosis, is said to be beyond the power of the human mind to conceive, and impossible to communicate in words without falling into paradox. It is no wonder, then, that the subject of Spiritual Enlightenment is fraught with misunderstanding and confusion, confusion about what it is, whether it truly exists, and if it is even possible for people like you and me to attain. In his article "What Is Gnosis?" Mike does his best to explain the unexplainable and to give a clearer sense of this mysterious Truth that all mystics claim is the end and goal of the spiritual life.

A recurring fact throughout human history has been that all spiritual traditions tend to go through periods of degeneration and exotericism, and lose sight of this deep inner Truth that their founders gave testimony to. The forces that lead entire traditions astray have their roots in each and every human being. In "Keeping the 'Mystery' in Mysticism," Joel delves into the powerful egoic tendencies that may cause us to misinterpret the teachings, even while believing we understand them. He then examines five common fallacies, or misinterpretations, of the spiritual teachings, and shows us where our misunderstanding can so easily derail our practice.

This issue is rounded out with the latest Library News and selected book reviews on page 9, as well as Center News beginning on page 2. Be sure to see the Calendar Insert for our fall and winter schedule and information on our Video Sunday presentations. We hope you find this issue informative and thought provoking.

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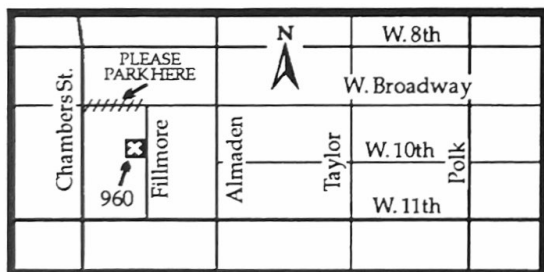
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The Center for Sacred Sciences is a non-profit, tax-exempt organization dedicated to the creation and dissemination of a new Worldview, based on the wisdom of humanity's great spiritual teachers, but presented in forms appropriate to our present scientific culture. Our programs draw on the teachings of the mystics of all traditions, as well as the evidence of modern physics. Among the Center's current offerings are Sunday Programs with meditation and talk by Joel Morwood, meditation classes and retreats, and workshops and study groups. Joel also leads a weekly Practitioners' Group for committed spiritual seekers, as well as being available for private consultation. The Center also maintains an extensive lending library of books and tapes covering a broad spectrum of spiritual, psychological, and scientific subjects. Other than a small stipend for our bookkeeper, the Center has no paid staff. We rely entirely on volunteer labor to conduct our programs, and on donations and membership dues to meet operating expenses.



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Center News:

Our spring retreat was held at Cloud Mountain Retreat Center in Castle Rock, Washington. The theme of the five day silent retreat was "Mirror of Consciousness."



Participants at Cloud Mountain, Spring 1994.

Enlightenment Day Party

Can a group of pillow-sitting, breath-watching, emptiness-contemplating awareness freaks throw a good party? Every August we at the Center for Sacred Sciences are put to the test when our Enlightenment Day celebration rolls around. This year, Bonnie's sister provided us with a beautiful house, situated in a lovely rural setting northeast of Eugene. However, things got off to a rocky start when it was realized that our mimeographed maps failed to conform to the terrain. A crucial turn-off had been left out. Like a true Bodhisattva, Bonnie stood where the roads forked and pointed the way. Thanks to her selfless sacrifice, only a handful of guests never made it. (Are they still wandering those silent hills, looking for Shenandoah Loop? If so, that's what comes from taking a map as dogma and not checking it against reality!) The rest of us were treated to a veritable fore-taste of paradise, including perfect August weather, a swimming pool for the kids, a variety of delectable foods, delicious wine, merry conversation, and a general sense of comradery that even extended to a family of deer munching on the hillside above us as the sun set. Afterwards, Gene got out his guitar to beguile us with witty spiritual lyrics, fitted to favorite hillbilly tunes. Later he was joined by others of us who, fueled by food and drink, love group singing. In truth the divine was there, playing at the BBQ, in the pool, on the hillside, in the sky, in the taco salad, and in the barn where the horses neighed.

cont'd on page 8

KEEPING THE 'MYSTERY' IN MYSTICISM

by Joel

At the end of our last retreat, one of the participants, B___, reported that the most important thing she had gotten out of it was a startling realization that the spiritual path is not just some kind of "super therapy"--a means of enhancing one's abilities to cope in this world--but aims, instead, at something far more profound and mysterious. Part of what made this insight so surprising was that she also realized her misconceptions had not been based on any lack of exposure to authentic spiritual teachings. As a long-time member of our Practitioners' Group, she had read many classics of mystical literature and knew, intellectually at least, that the goal of all mystical traditions is a Gnostic Awakening which actually frees one from the whole delusion that there is any truly existing 'self' in a truly existing 'world'. Nevertheless, because of her previous training in psychology, she had, at a more subconscious level, continued to regard the spiritual path as a strategy for self-improvement rather than a Way of Self-Transcendence.

Now, this tendency to interpret, or rather misinterpret, spiritual teachings in terms of one's own background and beliefs is by no means unique to Jane. Instead of fully "hearing" the words of the mystics, many seekers subconsciously censor out whatever does not accord with their existing knowledge about the world, in effect, taking the 'mystery' out of Mysticism. But one of the most important functions of mystical teachings is precisely to remind us that ultimately Reality *is* a Mystery--one which cannot be grasped by any of our customary ways of acquiring knowledge. Only when this has been fully recognized will the seeker be prepared to move beyond "knowing" and confront this Mystery with a mind of "unknowing," which is the indispensable prelude to the dawning of true "knowledge," or Gnosis. In order to guard against this tendency to de-mystify the teachings in ourselves, it

is imperative to understand what motivates it, as well as to recognize some of the more common forms it takes.

Actually, this tendency is symptomatic of a far more general predilection, well documented by anthropologists and sociologists, which is shared by virtually all human beings, and that is to try to make anything that appears incomprehensible comprehensible by incorporating it into what is already known; or, to put it more technically, to nomonize anomalies by explaining them in terms of an established worldview or paradigm.¹ To cite but one example, here is how anthropologist Clifford Geertz describes the way in which a group of Javanese villagers responded to an unusually fast-growing toadstool:

...people came from miles around to see it, and everyone had some sort of explanation--some animist, some animatist, some not quite either--for it. Yet it would be hard to argue that toadstools had any social value...It was just that this one was "odd," "strange," "uncanny"--*aneh*. And the odd, strange and uncanny simply must be accounted for--or, again, the conviction that it *could be accounted for sustained*...In the broadest sense the "strange" toadstool did have implications, and critical ones, for those who heard about it. It threatened their most general ability to understand the world, raised the uncomfortable question of whether the beliefs which they held about nature were workable, the standards of truth they used valid.²

This, of course, holds true not only for "primitive" peoples like the Javanese, but even in suppos-

edly sophisticated cultures such as our own. What may seem like completely innocuous anomalies can, in the absence of any coherent explanations, threaten the validity of a society's entire stock of knowledge. In fact, it was precisely such a failure to explain the anomaly of retrograde planetary motion that sparked the modern scientific revolution and, in the process, overthrew the Aristotelian worldview that had dominated European minds for the previous five centuries. It is no wonder, then, that an encounter with any strange or uncanny occurrence can arouse an acute sense of what anthropologists have called "metaphysical anxiety" and "anomic terror."

Even more threatening than anomalous occurrences, however, are encounters with anomalous people--i.e., with individuals or groups who hold different worldviews and thus live in different worlds. This is often the case with "foreigners," "minorities," and other "deviants." Such people are commonly regarded with suspicion and fear because the very fact that they inhabit a different world casts doubt on the reality of the world inhabited by most members of the society. For this reason those charged with maintaining social order have frequently gone to great lengths to isolate, suppress and at times exterminate people who are committed to unorthodox paradigms. But whether or not overt repression is employed, official explanations must always be found for the embarrassing fact that not all human beings experience reality in the same way. After all, if there is only one "real" world why isn't this obvious to everyone?

To allay the anxiety raised by this question it may be claimed that deviants believe what they do because they are possessed by devils; or that members of a minority perceive reality differently because they are racially inferior; or that foreigners inhabit strange worlds because they are "primitives" who have not yet advanced beyond a "pre-rational" stage of development. But whatever the specific form such explanations take, the important thing to notice is that they always attempt to reduce the unknown to the known by interpreting it in terms of the "reality" defined by the reigning paradigm.

But while your garden-variety deviant or foreigner merely challenges the reality of a particular

world, as it is envisioned in the worldview of a particular society, mystics deny the reality of all worldviews and ultimately all worlds! Thus, the Buddha taught that "the multitudinousness of objects have no reality in themselves but are only seen of the mind and, therefore, are of the nature of maya and a dream."³ The great Hindu sage, Shankara, maintained that: "The apparent world is caused by our imagination, in its ignorance. It is not real."⁴ Likewise, the renowned Sufi master, Ibn al-'Arabi, declared, "the Cosmos is but a fantasy without any real existence, which is another meaning of the Imagination,"⁵ while the Christian Mystic, St. Bonaventure, called the things of this world mere "shadows, echoes and pictures of that...eternal Source, Light and Fullness."⁶

In other words, according to mystics, the boundaries that shape the 'things' we experience are imaginary constructs which do not exist independently of the mind that constructs them. Moreover, this applies not only to the supposedly objective 'things' 'out there', but, what is of even greater psychological significance, also to that subjective 'thing' 'in here' which we call the 'ego' or 'self'. In fact, 'self' and 'world', being two sides of the same imaginary boundary, arise together and are equally fictitious. This is why the Buddha said: "When you realize that there is no personality in your mind then you will recognize that there is no reality in things as well."⁷ Similarly, Shankara claimed that the appearance of "an individual soul is caused by the delusion of our understanding, and has no reality,"⁸ while Ibn al-'Arabi told his readers: "You are an imagination, as is all that you regard as other than yourself an imagination,"⁹ and Catherine of Sienna admonished the Christian aspirant to be humble, "seeing that, in thyself, thou dost not even exist."¹⁰

Given the radical and uncompromising nature of their teachings it is hardly surprising that a majority of their contemporaries have greeted mystics not as "saints and saviors" but as the most dangerous sort of madmen and heretics! Indeed, to the ordinary mind the message of the mystics represents the Supreme Anomaly, for it denies the most taken-for-granted assumptions people have about themselves and the world. At the same time, however, it also holds out the promise of a Supreme Hope, because in proclaiming the imaginary character of all selves

and worlds, mystics simultaneously proclaim the imaginary character of suffering and death; for if there is no 'world', wherein lies the basis of suffering? And if there is no 'self', who is it that dies?

Furthermore, the mystics insist that what stands revealed when these twin phantoms of 'self' and 'world' have been put to flight is not simply a "nothing" in the sense of a mere vacuity. Rather it is a Boundless Reality of indescribable "Light and Fullness," (as St. Bonaventure called it) which in the words of the Buddhist *Lankavatara Sutra* is, "radiant with the potency and freedom of its self-nature."¹¹ In this Reality, say the Hindu *Upanishads*, "man has all: for he is one with the ONE."¹² In short, the message of the mystics confirms that what the great religious scholar Mircea Eliade called humanity's "nostalgia for paradise"—so poignantly voiced in the myths of myriad peoples—is not just some childish fantasy, but expresses a hidden intuition of how things *really* are—if we could but see them clearly!

There is, however, a catch. In order to "see things clearly" we must abandon all our conventional ways of seeing—which is to say, seeing our 'selves' and the 'world' through a filter of imaginary thought-constructs. Indeed, it is these very thought-constructs which, when taken to be 'real', veil Reality from us. Thus, instead of trying to capture what is essentially Unimaginable and, therefore, Unthinkable in a net of images and thoughts, we must open ourselves to that Mystery which is beyond all thought and imagination. Specifically, we must relinquish all those boundaries between self and world, I and other, subject and object, the human and the divine which we normally strive to defend with our very lives. In other words, we must paradoxically die to this deluded egoic life and this perishable reality before we can be born again into the True Life of that Imperishable Reality which transcends all selves and all worlds.

On the one hand, then, insofar as the message of the mystics speaks to our deepest desires, it kindles

"There is, however, a catch. In order to 'see things clearly' we must abandon all our conventional ways of seeing—which is to say, seeing our 'selves' and the 'world' through a filter of imaginary thought-constructs."

in us an ardent yearning to pursue the spiritual path. On the other hand, by insisting on the necessity of an absolute self-surrender, culminating in the ego's annihilation, this same message also fills us with tremendous dread. Thus, feeling both attracted and repelled by the same teachings, the egoic mind is plunged into an agonizing ambivalence. And it is the desire to escape this ambivalence that prompts it to revert to its familiar habit of trying to reduce the Unknown to the known. Through this strategy not only can the ego edit out those parts of the teachings which most threaten it, but, by seizing on secondary and auxiliary teachings, it can also re-interpret the whole path as one which actually aims not at the ego's annihilation, but at maximizing its gratifications.

For example, one of the most common and, historically, perhaps the oldest mis-interpretation of the spiritual path is that, instead of ending in the death of self, its main purpose is to insure the self's survival after death. We may call this *the fallacy of self-immortality*, which like most fallacies is based on a half-truth. For mystics have indeed taught, by a variety of analogies (some of which even utilize

images of post-mortem heavens and hells), that the continuity of Consciousness does not end with physical death. But this is primarily to call attention to a relative fact—namely, that as long as we remain deluded our actions will continue to bear fruit (either for good or for ill) even after the body's demise. It is also true that mystics have taught that physical death represents (for those who are properly prepared) a prime opportunity for that Gnostic Realization which obliterates death. However, this "death of death" (as it is sometimes called) ultimately has nothing to do with the self's continuing survival in time, but rather refers to the end of the delusion that we are anything but that Eternal Reality or Consciousness which transcends time altogether.

Another widespread and age-old misconception of the path is that the object of spiritual practices is to gain personal mastery over the forces of nature.

This particular fallacy, which we may call *the fallacy of magical power*, is born from the egoic wish to make oneself invulnerable to such things as disease, accidents, violence, and other forms of misfortune by magical means. But, again, although mystics have sometimes won reputations as miracle-workers and faith-healers, all have warned against taking such manifestations of extramundane phenomena as the goal of the quest, for no amount of supernatural shenanigans, actual or fantasized, can bring about that Realization which alone liberates one from suffering and death. Anandamayi Ma, for example, states unequivocally that: "Supernormal powers are but a stage. They may be beneficial; they may also be harmful. But through them you will not attain to the Supreme, the Ultimate."¹³ In the same vein, St. Augustine says of those who have become so misguided: "They have heard of or fancied some holy celestial power, but it is the admiration that human weakness feels for the works of power which attracts them rather than the model of reverent surrender which attains the peace of God."¹⁴

A slightly more sophisticated version of *the fallacy of magical power* is what we might term *the fallacy of the steady blissful state*. Those who suffer from this misconception imagine that the goal of the spiritual path is to cultivate some kind of permanent state in which the self experiences only feelings of felicity and joy. Instead of invulnerability to physical pains, these seekers picture a state of emotional invulnerability which will render them immune to the sufferings of their fellow beings. Although equally erroneous, this fallacy is harder to detect than *the fallacy of magical power*, because, for one thing, mystics themselves describe the Ultimate Reality as being ultimately "Blissful," "Beneficent," "Loving," "Compassionate," "Radiant," "Peaceful," "All-embracing," etc. Such adjectives, however, are not meant to indicate fixed states of emotion, for emotions, like all phenomena, are by their very nature transitory and ephemeral. Rather these terms are meant to express something quite different--i.e. the happiness inherent in that Freedom from *any* fixed states, or other ways of being, which comes with Gnosis. Put differently, Gnostics

do not *experience* happiness: they *are* Happiness. Moreover, this identity holds regardless of whatever emotions, moods, passions, or feelings may or may not be arising at any given moment.

Another reason so many seekers fall prey to *the fallacy of the steady blissful state* is that during intermediary and advanced stages of the path most will, indeed, experience various altered states of consciousness or *samadhis* (as they are called in the east), characterized by extraordinary feelings of ecstasy and bliss. But while such experiences are important indications of a deepening spiritual practice, and can serve to motivate seekers towards making a greater effort, they can also prove dangerously seductive. Seekers who become infatuated with these experiences can easily lose sight of the fact that self-surrender, not self-indulgence--no matter how "spiritual" it may seem--is the true goal of the path. This is why in the Hindu Tradition "bliss" (in the sense of an experiential feeling-state) is considered to be the last "covering" or obstacle which must be overcome if Realization is to be attained. For the same reason the *Lankavatara Sutra* warns that the disciple who has "attained this exalted and blissful state (samadhi)...must not give himself up to the enjoyment of its bliss."¹⁵ This is also why Catherine of Genoa prayed: "Lord, Lord, I want no signs from you nor am I looking for intense feelings to accompany your love...They get in the way of Pure Love--for under the guise of Pure Love it is those emotional feelings to which the soul becomes attached. Love must be naked."¹⁶

Finally, there is today a particularly prevalent fallacy which may be called *the fallacy of an earthly utopia*. Actually, this is a recycled version of an older fallacy (found predominantly in the Judaeo-Christian Tradition) which has simply been dressed up in modern clothes. In the original version, the teachings of the Old-Testament prophets (and later those of Jesus) were construed not so much as instructions for attaining "the truth that makes you free," but rather as a series of predictions concerning the "last days," when an Avenging God would literally bring history to a close, punish the wicked, and establish the righteous in an everlasting paradise.¹⁷ In the modern rendition of this myth, the

Avenging God has been replaced by a pseudo-spiritual version of that secular doctrine of "progress," developed by eighteenth and nineteenth century materialists. The result is an interpretation of spiritual teachings as constituting an ethical, social, and political program for the construction of an earthly utopia where everyone will enjoy such things as equal rights, access to education, health care, economic opportunities, and a fair share of the social wealth. According to some of its champions, this state of affairs will come about as more and more people get "enlightened"—a view which effectively demotes enlightenment from being the Supreme Goal of human life to a mere stepping stone on the road to social advancement. Others see humanity's "collective consciousness" as itself evolving in some amorphous way towards a grand utopian denouement. From a mystic's perspective, however, Consciousness cannot "evolve" because, once again, Consciousness is not a "thing" in time, subject to its transformations. On the contrary, Consciousness is that Formless and Infinite Space in which all things arise and pass, including time itself.

But the major problem with *the fallacy of an earthly utopia* is that it ignores one of Mysticism's most fundamental teachings—namely that *everything in this world is transitory*. "So also," as Anandamayi Ma observes, is "worldly happiness: it comes and the next moment it is gone. If permanent, abiding happiness is to be found, That which is eternal will have to be realized."¹⁸ In other words, even if it were possible to establish such an idealistic world order, it, too, would be transitory. Consequently, the instant it was established it would start to unravel. Thus, while mystics have always advocated working to ameliorate suffering at whatever level of being it manifests, the primary purpose for this is to practice a love and compassion which weakens the boundaries between oneself and others. And while some mystics may also dream of one day bringing all of humanity within the embrace of a single sacred society, they are under no illusions that such a society will, by itself, bring a cessation of suffering—only that it will help point the way. For, in the end, the problem of human suffering cannot be resolved through any worldly means: it can only be

resolved through a Gnosis which, in the words of the Sufi poet, Rumi, "lays this world flat."¹⁹ But *the fallacy of an earthly utopia* ignores this crucial teaching. What it really boils down to is B__'s misperception writ large—a program for personal improvement projected as the destiny of humanity as a whole.

Thus, instead of pointing to a Gnosis which destroys the delusion of self and world, all these fallacies actually strengthen this delusion by misrepresenting mystical teachings as a means for enhancing and protecting the self. It is one thing to disbelieve the mystics (a position which is perfectly understandable given that their teachings are far more scandalous than any watered down forgeries could possibly be!); it is quite another to misconstrue what they say. In the first case, the teachings are rejected but left intact for others to follow (or for oneself to follow at a later date.) In the second case, the teachings are distorted and so the Path to Freedom becomes obscure. This is what Jesus complained about when he railed against the scribes and Pharisees: "Woe unto you, you experts in the law, for you have taken away the key of knowledge; you enter not in yourselves, and those who tried to go in, you hindered." It is bad enough when the teachings are falsified by those responsible for preserving them, but it is even more pernicious when the falsifier turns out to be, not some external authority, but our own egoic minds, trying to escape the challenge the teachings present. Worst of all is when, like B__, we ourselves are unaware that this is happening.

And this is precisely why B__'s insight was so important. Summoning the courage to confront the teachings head-on brought her to a turning point—a jumping off place—that psycho-spiritual land's end where the journey from the known to the Unknown really begins. Here, she was faced with a choice: whether or not to abandon her familiar beliefs and plunge into the Mystery. Eventually, this is a choice every seeker must make. False conceptions must be jettisoned before any true progress can be made. Sooner or later, like B__, we must stop splashing around in the shallows of the known, take a deep breath, and commit ourselves to the Unknown,

striking out boldly across that Great Sea towards a shore which cannot be seen, nor, for that matter, ever reached--for, in truth, we are all already THERE. This is what must be Realized.

May all of you have the courage to do so!

August 1994

NOTES

1. *Nomos* = law or regularity; hence, a-nomalous = not-lawful or ir-regular.
2. Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1973), 101--his italics.
3. *A Buddhist Bible*, ed. Dwight Goddard, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1970), 297.
4. *Shankara's Crest Jewel of Discrimination*, trans. Swami Prabhavananda and Christopher Isherwood, 3rd ed. (Hollywood, Calif.: Vedanta Press, 1978), 73.
5. Ibn Al'Arabi, *The Bezels of Wisdom*, trans. R. W. J. Austin (New York: Paulist Press, 1980), 124.
6. *Bonaventure: The Soul's Journey into God; The Tree of Life; The Life of St. Francis*, Trans. Ewert Cousins (New York: Paulist Press, 1978), 76.
7. *A Buddhist Bible*, 455.
8. *Shankara's Crest-Jewel of Discrimination*, 64.
9. *The Bezels of Wisdom*, 125.
10. Cited in Evelyn Underhill, *Mysticism*, (1955; reprint, New York: New American Library, 1974), 200.
11. *A Buddhist Bible*, 341.
12. *The Upanishads*, trans. Juan Mascaro, (New York: Penguin Books, 1965), 86.
13. *Anandamayi Ma, Matri Vani: Vol II*, 2nd ed. (Calcutta: Shree Shree Anandamayee Charitable Society, 1982), 172.
14. *Augustine of Hippo: Selected Writings*, trans. Mary T. Clark (New York: Paulist Press, 1984), 326.
15. *A Buddhist Bible*, 323.
16. *Catherine of Genoa: Purgation and Purgatory*, trans. Serge Hughes (New York: Paulist Press, 1979), 122.
17. It is interesting in this regard to note that the eschatological passages attributed to Jesus in the New Testament Gospels are completely absent from the *Gospel of Thomas* which many scholars believe to be an earlier and more authentic account of Jesus' teachings.
18. *Matri Vani: Vol II*, 57.
19. William C. Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Love: The Spiritual Teachings of Rumi* (Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 1983), 59.

Center News, cont'd

A Visit to our Dharma-Sister City

In August, Joel, Bonnie, and I journeyed to the Great Space Center, nestled at the base of the High Sierras in Lone Pine, California, to attend the Franklin Merrell-Wolff Convention. As some of you

already know, Dr. Wolff was an Enlightened mystical philosopher (author of *Pathways Through to Space* and other works). During the early eighties Joel lived at Dr. Wolff's ranch for several years, absorbing his teachings while writing his own book, *Naked Through the Gate*. This was also where Joel first met Amit and Maggie Goswami, who were original co-founders of the Center for Sacred Sciences. Consequently, we at the Center have (as the Buddhists would say) "strong karmic connections" with the town of Lone Pine.

Although Dr. Wolff died in 1986, his granddaughter, Doroethy Leonard, has kept up the tradition of hosting an annual convention of Franklin's old-time students, as well as newer ones who have only recently discovered his work. The theme of this year's convention, "What Role Mathematics Plays in Transforming the Human Heart," was explored in a lively discussion Saturday afternoon by a panel of guest speakers made up of Tom McFarlane (a former CCS member), Dr. Imants Barus, and Robert Briggs (grandson of Dr. Wolff). Dr. Ron Leonard acted as moderator. Other speakers during the weekend included Carolyn Owen, giving a talk on "Pathways into and Through the Feminine Spirit," and John Flinn speaking about "Introceptualism and the Holy Grail." On Sunday morning, there was a formal service (modeled on the kind Franklin used to hold), where a tape of one of his talks was played. The following day Joel led a mini-meditation retreat which focused on one of Dr. Wolff's aphorisms comparing Consciousness to a "SPACE which is unaffected by the presence or absence of objects."

Besides the formal presentations there was plenty of opportunity for informal discussions, which I personally found very special. I really enjoyed meeting the community of people who are interested in Franklin's work, and by the time we left they all felt like friends. There was also a chance to hike up the Sierras to the "Ashram," a granite building constructed in the shape of a balanced cross, which Franklin and his students built back in the nineteen-thirties. The beauty and grandeur of this sacred spot was quite inspiring. Finally, I'd like

cont'd on page 15



Library Page

CSS Library Hours:

Sunday afternoons
2:00 - 4:00 p.m.



Tuesday evenings
5:30 - 8:30 p.m.

Library News & Book Reviews:

This year the bookdrive will focus on two themes: Death and Dying, and Science. Our spring newsletter will be devoted to death and dying, and at that time we will review some of our new acquisitions dealing with this subject. Until then we would welcome any leads or comments on books you've read about death and dying.

In the last issue we promised to review some of our Art books, which was last year's bookdrive theme. One of the reasons for our Art section is to understand a spiritual culture through its art. *Shaker: Life, Work, and Art*, by June Sprigg and David Larkin, is just such a book. Baskets, chairs, staircases, cupboards, and fences made by Shakers--although not your usual objects of art--exemplify the Shaker maxim, "hands to work, hearts to God." They show us a spirituality that embodies a deep peacefulness, practicality, and simplicity.

Another purpose of the Art section is to study how religious art is/was made, what it means, and how the culture used it. The video, *Sandpainting: Sacred Art of Tibet*, by Sheri Brenner, documents the creation of a Kalachakra sand mandala and explains the meaning of some of its symbols. A complementary book, *The Wheel of Time Sand Mandala: Visual Scripture of Tibetan Buddhism*, by Barry Bryant, explores in depth both the creation and meaning of the Kalachakra mandala, as well as its place in Tibetan Buddhist philosophy and practice.

Perhaps the most important reason for having an Art section is to make available books of religious iconography for spiritual seekers to use in meditation and contemplation. *Tantra Art*, by Ajit Mookerjee is a collection of art from several tantric schools of India, both Buddhist and Hindu. *Images of Primordial and Mystic Beauty: the paintings of Frithjof Schuon* is a collection of art by a modern mystical author and painter. A major theme of Schuon's book is the perennial philosophy as expressed through the feminine form. *The Light of Christ: Iconography of Gregory Kroug* contains paintings by a Russian Orthodox Christian of this century. All of these books have beautiful, large color reproductions suitable for contemplative practices.

Gnosis: Two Personal Accounts

Bernadette Roberts, a Catholic nun for ten years, describes her spiritual quest in *The Experience of No-Self, a Contemplative Journey*. Starting first with her own religion, she must journey to other traditions seeking support and confirmation for her experience of self dropping away never to return. This is a relevant and readable account of a modern Christian woman's struggle to understand and integrate into contemporary life her mystical experiences.

Pure Heart, Enlightened Mind: the Zen Journal and Letters of Maura "Soshin" O'Halloran, is the monastic journal of a young, Irish-American woman's three year training in Japan. Scant on Zen doctrine, this book records her deepening awareness and selflessness as they grow moment by moment, task by task. The book concludes with the following poem about her enlightenment:

Creaking to the Post Office
on my rusty bike
I saw one purple iris
wild in the wet green
of the rice field.
I wanted to send it to you.
I can only tell you
it was there.

--Maura O'Halloran

In Memoriam

Bonnie Linn, a long-time member of our Practitioners' Group and a dear friend, died on September 22, 1994, at the age of 51. She had seemed in fine health. Suddenly she was taken ill and diagnosed with metastatic liver cancer. The prognosis was not hopeful, and it looked like she might have only a few months to live. We could not foresee then how drastically even that timetable would prove over-optimistic. In fact, she only lived three more weeks.

Bonnie was a very special person to all those who knew and loved her. As per Bonnie's wishes, her friends and family gathered on October 2nd for a memorial service, led by Joel, at her mother's home on the river. Judging from the huge turnout, there were a great many of us whose lives had been touched by her. After Joel's moving address, many others also spoke in her memory, recalling a person of exceptional open-heartedness and compassion, as well as a youthful zest for adventure. The beautiful weather, the sharing of reminiscences, and the company of so many loving people (not to mention a fantastic pot-luck smorgasbord) combined to make it a send-off party that Bonnie would really have appreciated. I know that many of us found it very healing.

In the twelve years she had been my friend, Bonnie had always been interested in the spiritual aspect of life. In her final weeks she expressed deep gratitude that her yearning had finally found its focus, many years ago, with Joel's spiritual guidance and her own work with the Practitioners' Group. Her commitment to her spiritual path was deep and true, and our conversations about our worldly trials and joys were always grounded in our shared quest. In listening to the stories at her memorial, I could see that in her own quiet way, she was a spiritual guiding light to many friends and co-workers.

Bonnie wanted her death to be of service to others. She wished to have her passing be an example to each of us, and she shared this most personal of experiences with selfless honesty. Among other things, she hoped we would truly contemplate



the impermanence of life, the fact that none of us knows when our time will be up. She hoped her sudden illness would be a wake-up call to others, that we might be serious about our spiritual work while we are still able.

Her last few weeks of life were, to me, an inspiring model of spiritual detachment, of acceptance of the impermanence of these worldly forms. Rather than cling to what might have been, or feel cheated of some expectation of a ripe old age, she expressed only sincere gratitude for all that she had been given. Firmly rooted in her spiritual practices and the many insights grace had granted her, Bonnie accepted the end of her life without fear. Peaceful and serene, having bid farewell to all the many loved ones around her in her last days, she faced the journey that each of us must take alone. With Joel by her side to offer her guidance through the transition, she slipped peacefully from her worldly form.

Wishing to be of service even after her death, Bonnie asked that her corpse be left in place for a day after her passing, so that all could meditate on it and contemplate the reality of death. Many of her loved ones took advantage of this final gift, and I am sure

cont. page 15

WHAT IS GNOSIS?

by Mike

If you visit the Center for a Sunday program, you will hear about two fundamental characteristics of our teachings in the introductory remarks. One of them is that, as all traditions teach, there is an answer to human suffering to be found on a spiritual path. The other fundamental teaching is that, as the mystics of all ages and traditions have testified, there is an end to the spiritual path, in what we call Gnosis. Mystics and scriptures from all traditions point to this ultimate goal. In the Hindu Upanishads, it is written: "Man must find his own Soul. He who has found and knows his Soul has found all the worlds, has achieved all his desires." It is said in the Buddhist sutras that "the purpose of the Holy Life does not consist in acquiring alms, honor, or fame, nor gaining morality, concentration, or the eye of knowledge. That unshakable deliverance of the heart: that, verily, is the object of the Holy Life, that is the essence, that is its goal." This unshakable deliverance referred to is deliverance from the delusion of self. This is not an easy task. Jesus instructs: "Let him who seeks, not cease seeking until he finds, and when he finds, he will be troubled, and when he has been troubled, he will marvel and he will reign over the All."

After his own Enlightenment, Joel chose the Greek word Gnosis (meaning knowledge of the Absolute) to refer to this ultimate fruit of the spiritual path. But what exactly is this Gnosis? For thousands of years mystics have tried to communicate the essence of this Knowledge. But, because the very nature of the Reality that is spoken of is beyond the grasp of the senses and the conceptual systems of the mind, Gnosis cannot be communicated with words or conceptualized with logic. Anything said about Gnosis or Enlightenment and the Reality it reveals will be inaccurate, incomplete, or paradoxical.

The 16th century Christian mystic Teresa of Avila acknowledged this when she said, "... all I say falls short of the truth, which is indescribable." And Dionysius the Areopagite wrote, "That which is beyond all thought is inconceivable by all thought." However impossible it is to describe the indescribable, name the unnameable, or conceive of the inconceivable, out of infinite compassion mystics through the ages have tried to guide other beings to this supreme Knowledge. But, ultimately, each seeker must discover this same Truth for him or herself.

Despite the immensity of the challenge, mystics have given teachings, written books, led communities of spiritual seekers, and dedicated their lives to guiding others. Indeed, among the very oldest writings of humanity are the religious scriptures of each tradition, carefully passed from generation to generation for thousands of years, a testament to the riches hidden in their verses. But because this ineffable Truth cannot by its very nature be spoken of directly, but only metaphorically, the Buddhist *Lankavatara Sutra* reminds us that, "These teachings are only a finger pointing toward Noble Wisdom... they are not the Truth itself, which can only be self-realized within one's own deepest consciousness." Still, there has been a tendency over time for those without the guidance of an enlightened spiritual teacher to lose sight of what these teachings are pointing at, and, instead, to worship the teachings themselves. Metaphors are taken literally, and exoteric fundamentalism becomes a lifeless crust obscuring the deep esoteric significance of the mystical teachings. If a tradition is fortunate, periodically there will arise an individual who "gets it," and points the way back to the true meaning of the scriptures.

Even though Gnosis cannot be accurately spoken of, it is of great importance to try. It is in this trying that the teachings are kept alive, and the one destination of the many paths is held up as the Supreme Goal of this precious human life, a beacon to guide the practice of each spiritual seeker. It is also important to speak of what Gnosis is not. In the subtlety and profundity of the spiritual quest there are many traps, detours, and dead-ends that lie in wait for the seeker without guidance. The teachings are designed to help us avoid these traps, laid out by nothing other than our own ego, which is a formidable foe we should not underestimate.

In our attempt to get some sense of what this Gnosis is, what better place to start than with the words of the mystics themselves? Shankara, a Hindu mystic from the eighth century A.D., is particularly eloquent in recounting his own Gnosis:

The ego has disappeared. I have realized my identity with Brahman and so all my desires have melted away. I have risen above my ignorance and my knowledge of this seeming universe. What is this joy I feel? Who shall measure it? I know nothing but joy, limitless, unbounded! The Ocean of Brahman is full of nectar — the joy of the Atman. The treasure I have found there cannot be described in words. The mind cannot conceive of it. My mind fell like a hailstone into the vast expanse of Brahman's ocean. Touching one drop of it, I melted away and became one with Brahman.

Shankara tells here of the disappearance of the ego. Mystics commonly refer to Gnosis as being the cessation of a delusion. The delusion they refer to is the delusion that we are a separate self, an ego. The mystics all say that this self we think we are is nothing more than an illusion, an imagination of the mind, the substance of a dream. They speak of awakening from this dream, permanently, completely. The Buddha, after his enlightenment, spoke of the ridgepole of the house of self being shattered, the house never to be built again. Ramana Maharshi,

a great Hindu saint of this century, spoke of the totality of this awakening as follows: "It is firm and effortless abidance in the Self... That is, just as everyone usually and naturally has the idea 'I am not a goat nor a cow nor any other animal but a man,'...[the jnani knows]... I am not the... [body or mind]... but the Self which is existence, consciousness, and bliss."

Shankara also tells of realizing his identity with Brahman. Other mystics, too, speak of this Gnosis as being knowledge of identity with God, Brahman, or what we at the Center refer to as Consciousness Itself. When the falsely imagined identity with the delusion of self disappears forever, our true identity is known. This is not an intellectual knowledge, but an identity of being that is deeper than thought or the senses. In speaking of this identity with Consciousness Itself, Hui-Neng, the sixth patriarch of Zen Buddhism, said, "Our very self nature is the Buddha, and apart from this nature there is no other Buddha." Meister Eckhart, the Christian mystic, said "Some simple people think that they will see God as if He were standing there and they here. It is not so. God and I, we are one." And Catherine of Genoa testified after her Gnosis: "My being is God, not by simple participation, but by a true transformation of my being."

When we realize our identity with Consciousness Itself, we realize that there is not and has never been anything other than Consciousness Itself. Consciousness Itself is no-thing, and all the impermanent objects of the mind and senses arise from nothing and return to nothing, and are correctly seen to consist of nothing. God, having no attributes, no distinctions, eternally present before time and space, is seen to be the very substance of all that appears in consciousness. The distinction between subject and object is seen to be falsely imagined, and the mystic is one with all that arises in consciousness, one with the universe itself.

As part and parcel of this realization of identity with Consciousness Itself, there comes a realization of eternal life. This teaching is the same in all traditions, because the direct mystical insight of the one Reality is always the same. Jesus is quoted in the *Gospel of Thomas* as saying, "Whoever finds the

explanation of these words will not taste of death." In the *Bhagavad Gita*, from the Hindu tradition, Krishna says:

I shall teach you the goal of wisdom.
When you know it you reach the immortal.
It is called neither existent nor nonexistent,
It is the beginningless, the Supreme God.

In truth you are not your body, or your mind. What is born, grows old, and dies is not you, is not ultimately real. It is our deluded identification with this body/mind that gives rise to the belief that we die. What the mystics point to is that our true identity, Consciousness Itself, is not born and never dies. God is eternal, changeless, unstained by the infinite play of the myriad creatures. Consciousness Itself, while manifesting as all the infinite forms of experience, is itself unaffected by these manifestations, as the movie screen is unscorched by an inferno projected onto it.

Other aspects of Gnosis universally noted by mystics are qualities of bliss, joy, peace, and effortlessness. This joy is an unreasonable joy, a deep, self-originating bliss that is not dependent on conditions. In fact, the Hindu tradition speaks of the very nature of the Self as "being, consciousness, and bliss." The Christian tradition refers to "the peace that passeth all understanding" as one of the ultimate gifts of God's grace. In speaking of the Reality, the mystics say that all of this world of form is the spontaneous and effortless manifestation of God. Any sense of effort can only come from a deluded sense that there is some "I" to make the effort. As the *Dhammapada* says, "Deeds are done, but no doer is to be found." This is why the great 20th century Hindu mystic, Ramana Maharshi, says, "Your effort is the bondage."

One of the most frustrating aspects of Gnosis is that ultimately, the seeker cannot make it happen. The self cannot by force of will transcend the self.

"One of the most frustrating aspects of Gnosis is that ultimately, the seeker cannot make it happen. The self cannot by force of will transcend the self. Gnosis finally happens only by Grace."

Gnosis finally happens only by Grace. The Buddhist scriptures say, "All sentient beings are ever abiding in Nirvana. Nevertheless, the thing called Enlightenment is nothing that can be attained by practising, nor can it be created by human hands," and in the Lankavatara Sutra, "...[Gnosis] is a purification that comes instantaneously by the grace of the Tathagatas." Even though we cannot make it happen, the mystics all teach that we must strive with our whole being toward that goal. Theophan the Recluse, speaking from the Christian tradition, states that "you will achieve nothing by your own effort alone; yet God will not give you anything, unless you work with all your strength. This is an unbreakable law." Meister Eckhart, asked how a man of detachment can cooperate with God, said, "The answer is that there is still one work that remains proper and his own, and that is annihilation of self. Yet this annihilation and diminution of the self, however great a work it may be, will remain uncompleted unless it is God who completes it in the self."

Finally, and maybe most importantly, the defining characteristic of Gnosis is that it is the *permanent* end of the delusion of a separate self. This results in a complete and effortless cessation of acting from the self-centered nature. Now, it may happen, in the course of our spiritual path, that we are granted the grace of spiritual experiences, what some of the Christian mystics refer to as "spiritual consolations." Seekers throughout the ages have reported experiences of visions or voices, states of incredible clarity, deep tranquility, out of body experiences, psychic powers, ecstasies, samadhis, unity experiences, and much more. Some experiences may even seem to be "it," the end of the path, having some of the experiential characteristics of Gnosis. But if the experience fades and the seeker is making an effort to hold on to a certain state of consciousness, it is important to remember the teachings of the permanence and effortlessness of Gnosis.

Impermanent as they are, these spiritual experiences and gnostic flashes can be very helpful on our path. They are often doorways to deep and profound insights that can be of great aid to our spiritual growth. They are arrows pointing to the true nature of Reality. But beyond their instructive value, the experiences have no ultimate existence, they are still of the realm of maya and illusion just like any other objects arising in consciousness. If grace grants you such experiences, (and not everybody is granted them, they are not a requirement), use the opportunity to see what you are shown, and to incorporate the insights that will arise. Do not mistake the finger for the moon it is pointing at, and do not mistake any impermanent experience for the goal.

It is also important to realize that Gnosis is not about the end of the body, the mind and personality, or any of this world of form. It is not about the end of pain and pleasure. There is ultimately nothing at all wrong with this world of form, except our deluded identification with a particular limited form. Enlightenment is not about entering some Nirvanic state of mush and emptiness. Form will indeed disappear in certain states of consciousness, such as samadhi and dreamless sleep, and these experiences can be very instructive about the nature of form, if we are paying close attention. But this is not Gnosis. The Enlightened One, manifesting as the body and mind of the guru, inhabits the same world of appearances as you and I do. The fundamental difference is that we are fooled by these appearances and take them for real, especially the appearances we think of as "I." The One who has achieved Gnosis knows all of these appearances to be nothing other than the imaginary manifestations of the one true Self and is no longer bound to this world of appearances. Even though the mystic is free of this world, he or she is of this world as a manifestation of the Divine. Having transcended the self, the veils are removed and the mystic expresses the boundless intelligence, love and compassion that flows freely through him or her, doing God's work in the world.

It should also be mentioned that Gnosis is not about getting anything. In truth, you are already That which you seek. Nonetheless we all enter the spiritual life looking for something. Maybe it is an

end to our suffering, or a desire for completion. Maybe we desire adventure, or want the highest high. Maybe we have a feeling that there is much more to life than we are aware of, and we have a deep curiosity to know more. The call to God takes many forms, depending on the needs of the individual. And often we don't even realize it is a spiritual call until we are well established on our journey. But as we travel this path we may come to understand that it is not about *getting* at all. We come to see that the spiritual journey is about relinquishment, getting rid of that which separates us from our goal, from God. Ultimately it is about transcending the delusion of self, which is truly the only thing that stands between us and God. So, rather than getting something, we discover that it is giving up of this fundamental selfishness that brings us joy. As we catch the scent of our goal, we come to realize that this is an *absolute* surrender that is required of us. As Jesus said, "For whosoever will save his life shall lose it, but whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall gain eternal life."

In our practice we will undoubtedly find that this surrender is easier spoken of than accomplished. We will discover attachments that we never dreamed we had. We will be confronted with frustration, confusion, and fear. Teachings that we understood at one point on our path will be seen to hold contradictory and equally valid meanings at a later point in our journey and we will see that the highest teachings are full of paradox. We are told that we are already That which we seek and that Gnosis is effortless. Yet we are urged to persevere with our practices, and to strive for our goal until the sweat runs down our back. It is taught that Gnosis comes by Grace alone, but that we must strive to remove the obstacles to that Grace.

This is why the guidance of a teacher who has attained Gnosis is so very important for seekers who are serious about this path we walk. And this is why the teachings about Gnosis are so vital. The seeker who would attain the far shore will be tested mightily. The teachings about the end of the path serve as a North Star to navigate by, so that we don't stop rowing when we have just gotten our oars wet. Using

the teachings in a disciplined practice can insure that we don't squander this precious life in an eddy.

Ultimately, only the seeker can know, deep in his or her heart, when they have reached the end of the path. The words of Shankara, describing his abiding experience, may be helpful as a touchstone. When you know the same unshakable truth he describes, you too will have reached the far shore of Gnosis.

I am reality without beginning, without equal. I have no part in the illusion of 'I' and 'you', 'this' and 'that'. I am Brahman, one without a second, bliss without end, the eternal, unchanging truth... I dwell within all beings as the Atman, the pure consciousness, the ground of all phenomenon, internal and external. I am both the enjoyer and that which is enjoyed. In the days of my ignorance, I used to think of these as being separate from myself. Now I know that I am All.

August 1994

Center News, cont'd

to extend a warm thanks to my two traveling companions, Bonnie and Joel, who made the journey even more memorable.

Fred

In Memoriam, cont'd

that we all found it profound in whatever way we needed. This teaching was brought home to me with utter finality at her memorial service. After placing a handful of her ashes under the tree that was to be her final resting place, I contemplated the gray powder coating my hands. This was all that was left of the once beautiful form of a dear friend. Impermanence was gritty, undeniable.

While Bonnie's bodily form may have vanished like a marvelous dream, she is very much an inseparable part of every person whose life she has touched. I believe she knew, as she made her transition, that she was not this body and mind that she was leaving behind like a now useless overcoat. The love, compassion and open-heartedness that Bonnie manifested in her life were doorways to, and manifestations of, a Truth that underlies all of these impermanent forms. This Truth, this Love, is what Bonnie truly was, what we all are. And while her loss is painful to those who loved her, she would not want us to turn from what is painful, but to keep the door of our heart open to her memory, to our love. For it is through that door that we may find that place where we are all One, in Truth. And Bonnie very much wanted her death to help each of us to grow closer to that Truth in our own heart. This was the gift she wanted to share with all of us.

Thank you, Bonnie, and good-bye. I will miss you, my friend.

Mike



A Visit to Anacortes

Last June, Joel and Jennifer traveled to Anacortes, WA where Joel was invited to speak by David Cunningham. The talk, "The Way of Selflessness," was well attended and included two groups from Seattle. After the talk, people stayed around for informal discussion and meditation instruction.

On their way home, Joel and Jennifer retraced the Olympic Peninsula portion of Joel's original pilgrimage. They stopped in Shelton looking for the Italian restaurant where Joel ate the evening of his Gnosis. The restaurant was gone but they found the old Mill Creek Motel where, as Joel describes in his book, *Naked Through the Gate*, "The metaphorical world came to an end, and I was AWAKE in the REAL WORLD, the world without end."

“The moment was unheralded, unrecognized, and unknown; it was the moment ‘I’ entered a great silence and never returned. Beyond the threshold of the known, the door upon self was closed, but the door upon the Unknown was opened in a fixed gaze that could not look away. Impossible to see the self, to remember the self, or to be self-conscious, the mind was restricted to the present moment. The more it tried to reflect back on itself, the more overpowering the silence.”

Bernadette Roberts
The Experience of No-Self

THE CENTER FOR SACRED SCIENCES
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CENTER FOR SACRED SCIENCES

November 1994

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday
		LIBRARY 5:30-8:30	PRACTITIONER 7:30
VIDEO 11 A.M. LIBRARY 2:00-4:00	1	LIBRARY 5:30-8:30	2
6	7	CLOSED	CLOSED
13	14	CLOSED	CLOSED
TALK 11 a.m. LIBRARY 2:00-4:00	20	LIBRARY 5:30-8:30	PRACTITIONER B 7:30 A 8:00
27	28	CLOSED	CLOSED
	29	LIBRARY 5:30-8:30	30

December 1994

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday
VIDEO 11 A.M. LIBRARY 2:00-4:00	5	LIBRARY 5:30-8:30	PRACTITIONER A 7:30 B 8:00
4	6	LIBRARY 5:30-8:30	7
TALK 11 a.m. LIBRARY 2:00-4:00	11	LIBRARY 5:30-8:30	PRACTITIONER B 7:30 A 8:00
18	19	CLOSED	CLOSED
CHRISTMAS SERVICE 11:00	25	CLOSED	CLOSED
	26	CLOSED	CLOSED
	27	CLOSED	CLOSED
	28	CLOSED	CLOSED

January 1995

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday
CLOSED		LIBRARY 5:30-8:30	PRACTITIONER A 7:30 B 8:00
1	2	LIBRARY 5:30-8:30	4
VIDEO 11 A.M. LIBRARY 2:00-4:00	9	LIBRARY 5:30-8:30	PRACTITIONER A 7:30 B 8:00
8	10	LIBRARY 5:30-8:30	11
TALK 11 a.m. LIBRARY 2:00-4:00	15	LIBRARY 5:30-8:30	PRACTITIONER A 7:30 B 8:00
18	16	LIBRARY 5:30-8:30	17
TALK 11 a.m. LIBRARY 2:00-4:00	22	LIBRARY 5:30-8:30	PRACTITIONER A 7:30 B 8:00
25	23	LIBRARY 5:30-8:30	24
TALK 11 a.m. LIBRARY 2:00-4:00	29	LIBRARY 5:30-8:30	31

February 1995

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday
			PRACTITIONER A 7:30 B 8:00
VIDEO 11 A.M. LIBRARY 2:00-4:00	6	LIBRARY 5:30-8:30	1
5	7	LIBRARY 5:30-8:30	PRACTITIONER B 7:30 A 8:00
TALK 11 a.m. LIBRARY 2:00-4:00	12	LIBRARY 5:30-8:30	PRACTITIONER A 7:30 B 8:00
19	13	LIBRARY 5:30-8:30	15
TALK 11 a.m. LIBRARY 2:00-4:00	20	LIBRARY 5:30-8:30	PRACTITIONER B 7:30 A 8:00
26	27	LIBRARY 5:30-8:30	28

March 1995

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday
			PRACTITIONER A 7:30 B 8:00
VIDEO 11 A.M. LIBRARY 2:00-4:00	6	LIBRARY 5:30-8:30	1
5	7	LIBRARY 5:30-8:30	PRACTITIONER B 7:30 A 8:00
TALK 11 a.m. LIBRARY 2:00-4:00	12	LIBRARY 5:30-8:30	PRACTITIONER A 7:30 B 8:00
19	13	CLOSED	CLOSED
CLOSED	20	CLOSED	CLOSED
CLOSED	27	CLOSED	CLOSED
26	28	CLOSED	CLOSED

April 1995

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday
VIDEO 11 A.M. LIBRARY 2:00-4:00	3	LIBRARY 5:30-8:30	PRACTITIONER B 7:30 A 8:00
2	4	LIBRARY 5:30-8:30	5
TALK 11 a.m. LIBRARY 2:00-4:00	9	LIBRARY 5:30-8:30	PRACTITIONER A 7:30 B 8:00
16	10	LIBRARY 5:30-8:30	12
TALK 11 a.m. LIBRARY 2:00-4:00	17	LIBRARY 5:30-8:30	PRACTITIONER B 7:20 A 8:00
23	18	CLOSED	CLOSED
CLOSED	24	CLOSED	CLOSED
TALK 11 a.m. LIBRARY 2:00-4:00	30	CLOSED	CLOSED
31	25	CLOSED	CLOSED

MEETING ADDRESS: 960 FILLMORE ST. EUGENE, OR
(PLEASE PARK ON W. BROADWAY) PHONE (503) 345-0102
 * Special Christmas Day service, Sunday, December 25, 11 a.m.

CENTER FOR SACRED SCIENCES

PROGRAMS AND EVENTS: NOVEMBER 1994 - APRIL 1995

Sunday meditation and talks. Sunday programs begin at 11 a.m. and include a short meditation and discourse by Joel followed by questions and answers. While donations are appreciated this event is free and open to everyone.

Sunday video presentation. On the first Sunday of most months the Center shows a video featuring one of the world's major religions or a well known teacher. This program includes a short meditation, an introduction to the video's topic, and an informal cold-plate potluck. This event is open to everyone.

Library. The Center maintains a lending library of over 2,500 books as well as extensive audio and video collections that is open to the public. For more information see the Library Page in this issue of *The Center Voice*.

Practitioners' Group. This is an ongoing study group for those who want to make a long term commitment to meditate, practice precepts, and study sacred texts together. An interview with Joel is required before joining this group.

Serving the Dream. Approximately twice a year Joel leads a course in dream interpretation from a spiritual point of view. Call for more details.

Retreats. Twice a year the Practitioners' Group goes to Cloud Mountain in Washington for a one week meditation retreat. The library also has resource files for those not in the Practitioners' Group who are interested in going on retreats.

Christmas Day Service. Joel will give a special service on Christmas Day, December 25, at 11 a.m.



SUNDAY VIDEO SCHEDULE

November 6 --- *Heart of the Koran*

In a manner accessible to Western seekers, Lex Hixon, author of "Heart of the Koran," discusses Islam, Sufism and the Koran. Also contains rare footage of Sheikh Muzaffer Ozak leading Zikr.

December 4 --- *Mahamudra*

Kalu Rinpoche, one of the most revered teachers of Tibetan Buddhism in both the East and the West, explains the doctrine of Emptiness leading to the realization of Primordial Mind.

January 8 --- *Anandamayi Ma*

A vivid and moving portrait of the life and teachings of the most famous woman saint of 20th century India.

February 5 --- *The Making of a Modern Mystic*

Best selling writer Andrew Harvey, author of *Journey to Ladakh* and *Hidden Journey*, talks about his own spiritual odyssey.

March 5 --- *Sand Painting: Sacred Art of Tibetan Buddhism*

The most sacred of Buddhist sand paintings, the Kalachakra Mandala, is recreated by monks from the Namgyal Monastery at the Asian Art Museum in San Francisco.

April 2 --- *Islam: A Pictorial Essay*

Filmed on location, this stunning video captures both the inner and outer aspects of Islamic faith.