

Center Voice

Spring 1995

the newsletter of the Center for Sacred Sciences

Special Focus: Death & Dying

Contents:

CENTER NEWS	2
DEATH: THE GOLDEN OPPORTUNITY..... <i>by Joel</i>	3
HOSPICE	8
<i>by Beverly Forster</i>	
LIBRARY NEWS	10
<i>Updates and book reviews</i>	
DYING SELFLESSLY: A PORTRAIT OF BONNIE..... <i>by Todd Corbett</i>	11

** Plus: **Calendar & Catalog Inserts** **

Joel will be giving a lecture in the Palo Alto area on June 1. His talk will be called "The Grasping and Aversion Cycle: Looking for an Exit." It will be followed by a retreat June 2-4. For further information see the enclosed flyer or contact Sita at (415) 857-1312.

In this issue . . .

As we go to press, new leaves are bursting from their buds, the flowers are opening to the sun, and we are all looking forward to the pleasures of summer. It might seem like a strange time to focus on death and dying. But the very power of change that brings the birth and renewal of spring is the same power of impermanence that brings loss and death. We cannot have one without the other.

The death last fall of Bonnie Linn, a member of our Practitioners' Group, brought the subject of death and dying to the fore here at the Center. The articles presented in this issue arose from the needs and experiences of the members of our spiritual community as we dealt with the loss of our friend and the inevitability of our own individual deaths.

In "Death: The Golden Opportunity," Joel draws upon the mystical teachings of many traditions and eras regarding the actual experience of this transition. In the article you will see that these teachings point to a unique and precious opportunity that awaits the spiritual seeker in the hour of his or her death.

In her article "Hospice," Bev Forster, a member of our Practitioners' Group, writes about the history and philosophy of Hospice care for the terminally ill, and shares some of the insights she has gained in her years of work as a Hospice nurse.

It is rare, in our contemporary society, for any of us to share intimately in the death experience of another person. Todd Corbett, another member of our Practitioners' Group, did just that as he accompanied Bonnie through her last weeks of life. In "Dying Selflessly: A Portrait of Bonnie," Todd shares with us a very personal and moving account of the last weeks of a very remarkable person.

This issue is rounded out with the Library Page featuring reviews of two books specially chosen for our theme, and the Center News column to bring you up to date on selected recent events at the center. We hope you find something of value in these pages!

Center For Sacred Sciences

Staff

Spiritual Director

Joel Morwood

Board of Directors

Joel Morwood,
Jennifer W. Knight,
Mike Taylor,
John Richardson

Newsletter

Editor: John Richardson
Proofing: Merry Song

Retreat Coordinator

Katie Geiser

Publicity

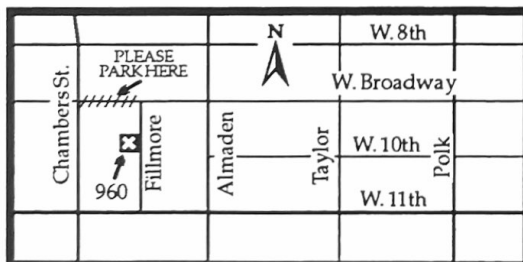
Ellen Taylor

Library

Director: Jennifer W. Knight

Assistants: Therese Engelmann, John Richardson

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, meditation classes and retreats, workshops and study groups. Joel also leads a weekly Practitioners' Group for committed spiritual seekers, as well as being available for individual spiritual consultation. The Center 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.



Meeting Address: 960 Fillmore St., Eugene

Center Voice is published twice yearly, spring and fall, by The Center for Sacred Sciences. Meeting address: 960 Fillmore St, Phone: (503) 345-0102. Submissions or letters to the editor should be sent to the editor's attention: 1430 Willamette #164, Eugene, O R 97401-4049

© 1995 The Center for Sacred Sciences.

CENTER NEWS:

Last fall our spiritual practice was intensified when one of our members, Bonnie Linn, was diagnosed with terminal cancer. Because she wanted her experience to be a meaningful teaching for all of us in the Practitioners' Group, she asked that our regular program be refocused on death and dying. Not only would we study how death is viewed in different spiritual traditions but we would also have her there to share her own insights and feelings. Offering her experience as a teaching was her way of supporting us on our spiritual journey while, at the same time, we were being supportive of her going through her dying process. We read and discussed Bokar Rinpoche's book *Death and the Art of Dying in Tibetan Buddhism* and each of us picked a "death prayer" for our meditation practice. The fall retreat was an intensive five days of reviewing and summing up the teachings and practices we had encountered in the Wednesday night meetings. Bonnie's death before the retreat made our experience all the more poignant. It was a powerful reminder of impermanence. Though she was missed, Bonnie's spirit was with us, and several people had powerful dreams about her.

Fall Retreatants



(top row from left) Mike Taylor, Fred Chambers, Steve Cox, David Cunningham, Therese Engelmann, Joel, Tom McFarlane, George Heaton, Gene Gibbs, Carla Wenzlaff, (middle row) Andrea Pucci, Todd Corbett, Maggie Goswami, Mora Dewey, Beverly Forster, Sita deLeeuw, (bottom row) Katie Geiser, John Richardson, Barbara Dewey, Anita Runyan.

DEATH: THE "GOLDEN OPPORTUNITY"

By Joel

It is commonly said that we have no idea what happens after death because no one has ever returned to tell about it. This, however is not altogether true...

In fact, we have three sources of information for what happens after death: 1) the reports of people who have actually survived "clinical death" (the cessation of all physical life signs) and have reported what are today called *near-death experiences* (NDE's); 2) the observations of practitioners in those traditions (such as Tibetan Buddhism) which have actually developed meditative techniques for mimicking the death process; 3) the postmortem mythologies found in virtually all the world's religions. Furthermore, despite many disparities between these various accounts, there are also certain underlying patterns and motifs which recur from culture to culture and individual to individual with a frequency striking enough to prohibit us from simply dismissing them as mere products of personal fancy.

It is not, however, our intention here to present a full analysis of this body of evidence for what happens during and after death. (Indeed, a truly comprehensive study of the subject has, to our knowledge, yet to be done.¹) Instead, we shall explore one aspect of death upon which at least the mystics of all traditions unanimously agree: for those who are spiritually prepared, death presents a "golden opportunity" for attaining that Gnosis or Enlightenment which frees one from all suffering and death, forever.

In the Tibetan tradition, for example, death is seen to unfold in eight stages, during which the dying person's various physical and mental constituents are absorbed into each other, until finally, there is nothing left but an apparent void. This is the critical moment. If the dying person can Recognize that this 'void' is actually the "fundamental clear light," which is "the nature of the mind, itself," (i.e., Ultimate Reality) then he or she will

achieve full Enlightenment; for, as Bokar Rinpoche explains:

Recognizing this fundamental clear light means "Becoming Buddha in the absolute body at the moment of death."²

In the Hindu *Upanishads*, we find a similar description of what happens during the death process which also leads to a moment in which the Ultimate Nature of Reality can be Realized:

When, dear one, a person dies, his voice is absorbed into his mind; his mind into his breath; his breath into heat; and heat into formless Spirit. That is the Real. That is the essence of this whole world. That thou art.³

According to both the Christian and Islamic cosmologies, believers who die after leading a virtuous life will be admitted into paradise following the world's destruction at the end of time. Now on the face of it, this sounds quite different from the Hindu and Tibetan conceptions. But if we read the "destruction of the world" as a mythological description of what an individual experiences during the death process, the two accounts are perfectly compatible. From the point of view of the dying person, the progressive eradication of all phenomena from consciousness must, indeed, seem like the "end of the world." In fact, this is precisely how Tibetan master, Kalu Rinpoche describes it:

The internal experience for the dying person is of a great wind sweeping away the whole world...an incredible maelstrom of wind, consuming the entire universe.⁴

Moreover, according to the early Christian paradigm, although religious belief may earn one entry into paradise, belief, by itself, is not sufficient to realize the eternal life promised by Jesus. Eternal life comes only through spiritual knowledge (Gnosis), for, as Augustine pointed out, Jesus did not say, "this is eternal life that ye believe in God", but rather, "This is eternal life that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou has sent."⁵ Thus, believers who failed to attain such a "Vision of God" (as Augustine called it) in this life, would be granted it in the hereafter and in this way win salvation from suffering and death.

An almost identical view was held by the mystics of Islam. For instance, the great Sufi philosopher, Al-Ghazzali, insisted that upon entering paradise the true lover of God would receive a "Vision of the Divine Countenance," which, he affirmed, was "none other than the gnosis (*ma'rifa*) already given in an inferior and more fleeting fashion to the saints in this world."⁶

But in order to understand exactly why death should provide such a golden opportunity for attaining Gnosis, we must try to get a better idea of what happens *from the point-of-view of the person who is dying*. Because the Tibetans have developed the greatest expertise in simulating death in meditation, let us begin by taking a closer look at what they have to say about the kinds of internal states death generates.

During the first four stages, as the dying person's body shuts down, he or she begins to lose contact with the external world. Consequently, objects appearing in the five sense fields (sights, sounds, sensations, tastes and smells) progressively drop out of awareness. In their place, the dying person starts to experience various apparitions—lights, sparks, mists, colors, etc. (similar to those reported by NDErs). This continues until the end of the fourth stage when the breath ceases, marking the moment of actual physical death. According to the Tibetans however, this is *not* the end of the dying process.

There are four more stages that take from five to twenty minutes longer to unfold.

In the fifth stage, the ability to conceptualize breaks down. As conceptions disappear, the dying person's mind becomes pervaded by a brilliant white light (also a prominent feature of NDEs). The Tibetans describe this state as being like "a clear autumn sky filled with moonlight," and call it the *mind of white appearance*.

In the sixth stage, all traces of aversion and aggression vanish, and the white light pervading the mind gives

way to a red or golden light. The Tibetans compare this state to an autumn sky "filled with intense sunlight," and call it the *mind of red increase*.

In the seventh stage, cravings and desires disappear. Now the mind has been emptied of *all* phenomena of any kind, and so appears to be a dark void or nothingness—like "an autumn sky without any light whatsoever."

This, the Tibetans call the *mind of black-near-attainment*, and it is this mind of black-near-attainment that provides the "golden opportunity" for Enlightenment, because (as we have already seen) if the mind of black-near-attainment can be Recognized as the "fundamental clear light," then one enters the eighth and final stage of death—called by the Tibetans the *attainment-clear light*—which constitutes full Buddhahood.

The crucial word here, however, is *if*, for according to the Tibetans, it is by no means easy to recognize that the empty mind of black-near-attainment is, in reality, the fundamental clear light. In order to do this one must die with a mind meditating on emptiness, and this, in turn, can usually be achieved only after long practice. If, however, one *can* die with a mind meditating on emptiness, then, as the Venerable Lama Lodö explains:

There will be a spontaneous recognition that the mind which has been meditating on emptiness and the state of emptiness itself [the mind of black-near-attainment] are one and the same. Each will mutually recognize the other. The mind which medi-

"But in order to understand exactly why death should provide such a golden opportunity for attaining Gnosis, we must try to get a better idea of what happens from the point-of-view of the person who is dying."

tates on emptiness during the lifetime is called the son; the natural reality of the mind itself is known as the mother. The person who has accomplished very thorough and profound meditation will experience a merging of the two...When you realize the emptiness of the mind and also the emptiness of the realization, then you attain the highest enlightenment, Dharmakaya.⁷

Let us now try to translate this Tibetan description of the death process into our own more generic terminology. We can see immediately that the "mind of black-near-attainment" is literally *Consciousness-without-an-object*—that is, a state of Consciousness in which all phenomena (both physical and mental) have been utterly eliminated. When this occurs, Consciousness Itself stands revealed in its purest form (or, rather, form-less-ness.) Yet just because there are no objects in this Formless Consciousness, it will seem to the deluded person like an absolute blackness or total nothing. In order to take full advantage of this "golden opportunity," which the rev-

"Of course, it is not necessary to wait for physical death in order to attain such a Gnosis, otherwise 'Liberation in this life' would be impossible. Actually, one may have a Gnostic Awakening at any time."

elation of Pure Consciousness presents, one must die with a "mind meditating on emptiness." But what does this mean?

In the Tibetan tradition "meditating on emptiness" does not mean that the mind itself is empty of all objects. Rather, it means that one meditates on the "emptiness of the inherent existence" of whatever objects do arise—especially those objects considered to constitute a substantially existing 'self'. When this meditation produces a direct experience of one's own selflessness, a state of

Consciousness-without-a-subject arises. Thus, if one can die in (or approaching) a state of *Consciousness-without-a-subject* (the son), then, when *Consciousness-without-an-object* (the mother) appears, there will be no (or few) obstacles to spontaneously Realizing that *Consciousness-without-an-object* is indistinguishable from *Consciousness-without-a-subject* (the merging of mother and son). Put differently, the dying person will Awaken to the fact that he or she is (and always has been) identical to *Consciousness-without-an-object-and-without-a-subject* (or *Consciousness Itself*)—which is the Ultimate, Non-dual Ground of all things.

Now, the reason this Gnostic Awakening (attaining the clear light) "sets one free" from suffering and death is because it makes transparently clear that the experience of being a limited, transitory entity, or 'self' (which could be subject to birth, suffering, and death) has been a delusion from the very beginning. Here is how Bokar Rinpoche expresses it within the Tibetan tradition:

What is suffering? What is death? In reality, they do not have any existence. They appear within the framework of the manifestations produced by the mind wrapped up in an illusion, just as they appear in a dream...In the emptiness of mind, there is no death. No one dies. There is no suffering and no fear.⁸

But the Realization that there is no truly existing 'self' constitutes not only the essential teaching of Tibetan Buddhism, but of all other mystical traditions, as well. Listen, for example, to the great Hindu sage, Shankara:

There is neither birth nor death, neither bound nor aspiring soul, neither liberated soul nor seeker after liberation—this is the ultimate and absolute truth.⁹

And consider this passage penned by Ibn 'Arabi, the Sufi "Shaykh of shaykhs:"

For knowledge of God does not presuppose the ceasing of existence nor the ceasing of that ceasing. For things have no existence, and what does not exist cannot cease to exist...Then if thou know thyself without existence or ceasing to be, then thou knowest God; and if not, then not.¹⁰

Of course, it is not necessary to wait for physical death in order to attain such a Gnosis, otherwise "Liberation in this life" would be impossible. Actually, one may have a Gnostic Awakening at any time. This potential

exists not only because Consciousness is always and everywhere the In-formed Reality of all experience, but also, and more precisely, because all forms of Consciousness are continually being 'born' and 'dying'. Thus, according to the Tibetans, the whole process of birth and death (including a brief glimpse of the mind of black-near- attainment) actually occurs whenever any phenomena arises or passes from Consciousness.

Nor again is this teaching exclusively Tibetan. Speaking for the Hindu tradition, Ramana Maharshi writes:

The ego in its purity [i.e., the *Atman*] is experienced in the intervals between two states or between two thoughts. The ego is like the worm which leaves one hold only after it catches another. Its true nature is known when it is out of contact with objects or thoughts. You should realize this interval as the abiding, unchangeable Reality, your true Being...¹¹

And the fourteenth century Kabbalist, Rabbi Joseph ben Shalom of Barcelona, taught:

In every transformation of reality, in every change of form, or every time the stature of a thing is altered, the *abyss of nothingness* is crossed and for a fleeting mystical moment becomes visible.¹²

The reason we do not normally notice this "abyss of nothingness" is that, first of all, its appearance is exceedingly brief. More importantly, our attention is conditioned to focus only on *things*, but this abyss of nothingness is not a 'thing', consequently, our attention habitually ignores it in its search for the next phenomenon to arise. If, however, we train our attention through meditation to remain stable and clear, then all that is required to "point to" this abyss of nothingness is an ordinary gesture of the most mundane kind. This is why Zen students, ripened by meditative practice, can attain Enlightenment simply from the whack of a master's

stick, or upon hearing the call of a bird, or by witnessing a candle being blown out. In the "intervals" just before and after the arising and passing of each of these phenomena, pure Consciousness-without-an-object stands unveiled in all its nakedness.

But there are other moments in the course of our lives in which Consciousness-without-an-object is disclosed more dramatically and for longer periods of time. One of these occurs every twenty-four hours during the transition from the waking state to sleep. Here it is not merely a single sound or a single sight that "dies," but the entire waking world! This is why an ancient Hindu text has Shiva instructing his consort, Devi, to observe carefully the moment

when sleep has not yet come and external wakefulness vanishes, [for] at this point BEING is REVEALED.¹³

The trouble is that, here again, when most of us fall asleep our minds are compulsively occupied with reviewing past events, making future plans, or spinning all sorts of fantasies. Because our attention is so absorbed in these mental activities, we fail to recognize Consciousness without-an-object when it appears. Instead, we experience it as a kind of "black out," a state of *unconsciousness*, when, in fact, it is *pure Consciousness*!

Finally, Consciousness-without-an object can be experienced by practicing certain meditative techniques that lead to states of *samadhi* (as they are called in the East) or *suspension* (as they are called in the West). There are two problems with this approach, however. First, these techniques usually require a concerted effort, made over a long period of time, which renders them too difficult for seekers living a householder's life to perfect. The second problem is that states of *samadhi* almost always generate an overpowering sense of bliss. Seekers who attain *samadhi* without having thoroughly practiced selflessness are in great danger of mistaking this bliss for

"It is good to have a reminder of death before us, for it helps us to understand the impermanence of life on this earth, and this understanding may aid us in preparing for our own death. He who is well prepared is he who knows that he is nothing compared to Wakan-Tanka, who is everything; then he knows that world which is real."

-- Black Elk (Lakota Medicine Man)

a Gnostic Awakening. When this happens, not only do they miss the point of the practice (which is not to enjoy bliss but to attain Gnosis), but they fall into one of the worst delusions of all: they imagine they have been liberated, when they have not.

In any case, the point is that although opportunities for Realization arise in many different situations, attaining it "in this life" is (as you probably already know) not easy. The primary problem is that we are constantly being distracted by myriad self-centered thoughts, feelings, sensations, desires, aversions, attachments, etc.--all of which seem rooted in Nature itself. When death arrives, however, everything will be reversed. Nature will actually "cooperate" with your practice (as the Tibetans say) by progressively removing each and every distraction from your mind until there is nothing left but Pure Consciousness. All you will really have to do is wait for this Pure Consciousness to appear, and then Recognize it for what it is. Death will take care of the rest!

Here, however, a word of warning is called for. The fact that Nature will remove all obstacles at the time of death in no way negates the necessity for practicing in this life. On the contrary, if you do not engage in spiritual practices (and thus have no personal insight into true selflessness), you will almost certainly be stricken with anguish and terror when death actually arrives. Rather than surrender wholeheartedly to its operations, your instinct will be to fight against it with all your might. Consequently, when Consciousness-without-an-object finally dawns, instead of attaining Gnosis, you will fall into a state of profound unconsciousness. Nor is this the end of it. Sooner or later Consciousness will again resume its Divine Play, manifesting those worlds and beings which constitute the "heavens" and "hells" of traditional mythologies. And while these states are, in fact, mere self-projections of your own deluded mind, they will certainly seem real enough, for as Bokar Rinpoche explains:

The appearances that manifest [after death] do not depend on our beliefs but on our *karma* which is the positive or negative quality of deeds we have actually accomplished. Even if we do not believe that hell exists, if we have committed negative deeds, that will cause hell to manifest; our mind will produce the false appearances causing immense suffering when the time is right. That is what hell is about.¹⁴

Likewise, Al-Ghazzali writes about those who doubt that unbelievers will be tormented by snakes in the hereafter (as Islamic mythology describes):

They do not understand that these snakes have their abode within the unbeliever's spirit, and that they existed in him even before he died, for they were his own evil qualities symbolized, such as jealousy, hatred, hypocrisy, pride, deceit, etc.¹⁵

In other words, in death as in life, it is we, ourselves, who create our own happiness or suffering; and while the mythological accounts of these postmortem states may vary from tradition to tradition, it is axiomatic among mystics of all traditions that so long as a person fails to attain Gnosis (whether in this life or the next) he or she will continue to have pleasant or unpleasant experiences even after physical death, depending on the selfless or selfish qualities that have been cultivated during life. Therefore, if suffering is to be avoided and death's "golden opportunity" seized, it is imperative that you make spiritual preparations now, for as Simone Weil, one of the great mystics of our own century, wrote:

...the instant of death is the center and object of life...for those who live as they should, it is the instant when, for an infinitesimal fraction of time, pure truth, naked, certain, and eternal enters the soul. I may say that I have never desired any other good for myself.¹⁶

May all beings attain this good. Peace. ❖

Joel 9/94

Notes:

1. For a fuller discussion of how death is viewed in different traditions, listen to Joel's talk, *The Gate of Death*, available on audio tape. (See catalogue page enclosed in this issue.)
2. Bokar Rinpoche, *Death and the Art of Dying in Tibetan Buddhism*, French trans. Francois Jacquemart, English trans. Christiane Buchet, ed. Jennifer Pessereau, (San Francisco: ClearPoint Press, 1993), 19.
3. *The Chandogya Upanishad*, 6:8:6-7
4. Cited in Sogyal Rinpoche, *The Tibetan Book of Living and Dying*, (San Francisco: Harper San Francisco, a division of HarperCollins, 1992), 253.
5. "On Free Choice" in *The Essential Augustine*, ed. Vernon J. Bouake, 2nd ed. (Indianapolis, Indiana: Hackett Publishing Co., 1974), 25.
6. Al-Ghazzali, *The Remembrance of Death and the Afterlife: Book XL of the Revival of the Religious Sciences*, trans. T. J. Winter (Cambridge: Islamic Texts Society, 1989), 250 n.

7. Venerable Lama Lodo, *Bardo Teachings: The Way of Death and Rebirth*, revised ed. (San Francisco: KDK, 1982), 7-8.

8. *Death and the Art of Dying in Tibetan Buddhism*, 75.

9. Shankara's *Crest-Jewel of Discrimination*, trans. Swami Prabhavananda and Christopher Isherwood, 3rd ed. (Hollywood, California: Vedanta Press, 1978), 127.

10. Ibn 'Arabi, "Whoso Knoweth Himself...", trans. T.H. Weir (Gloucestershire, England: Beshara Publications, 1976), 5.

11. Ramana Maharshi, *The Spiritual Teachings of Ramana Maharshi* (Boulder, Colorado: Shambhala Publications, 1972), 69.

12. Gershom G. Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism* (1941; reprint, New York: Schocken Books, 1961), 217—my italics.

13. "Centering" in Paul Reys, *Zen Flesh, Zen Bones* (Rutland, Vermont: Charles E. Tuttle Company, Inc., 1957), 120. (See also Joel's spiritual autobiography, *Naked Through the Gate*, for an account of his own Enlightenment which occurred precisely at this moment.)

14. *Death and the Art of Dying in Tibetan Buddhism*, 35.

15. Al-Ghazzali, *The Alchemy of Happiness*, trans. Claud Field (1964; reprint, Lahore, Pakistan: Sh. Muhammad Ashraf, October, 1983), 63.

16. Simone Weil, *Waiting For God*, trans. Emma Craufurd (1951; reprint, New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1973), 63—my italics.

*Worldly happiness is an illusion,
As soon as you get it, it goes.
Take no pride in the body
Before long it will dissolve into dust.
This life is like the sporting of sparrows
When night comes it ends.
I have taken the Indestructible for my
refuge,
Him whom the snake of death
Cannot devour.*

-- Mira Bai (Hindu Saint)

HOSPICE

by Bev

Hospices were originally established during the 4th century in Christian institutions, often monasteries, to provide care for Crusaders en route to the Holy Land. Care was provided by monks and nuns based on the concept, "Do unto the least of these, as you would do unto Me."

Healing was soon extended to other wounded, ill, weary or dying soldiers and travelers often using herbs grown in the monasteries' own gardens.

The concept of Hospice was reborn in the 1900's at St. Christopher's in England by Dr. Cicely Saunders, recognized as the founder of the modern day Hospice movement. She believed that Hospice care should embody the principles of "Freedom of spirit, openness of mind and sharing of heart."

If one ministers to the terminally ill with this concept as a guide, the experience of Hospice care and death can be an extraordinarily powerful teacher to all involved: the patient, the families, and the caregivers as well.

The philosophy of Hospice care is freeing the spirit, opening/expanding the mind/consciousness, sharing of hearts and a view of death as a spiritual transition. The goal of Hospice care is to provide maximum quality of life, comfort and symptom management to enable per-

sons to live fully until they die, affirming life and healing for however long the person lives and to provide dignity during the dying process by alleviating physical, emotional and spiritual pain. The Hospice caregiver provides compassionate and loving care and tries to teach/support and empower family members to do the same both physically and emotionally.

The more I do Hospice nursing with these concepts in mind, the more I learn how different people live and die, how wide the spectrum of spiritual evolvment is and how important it is to be with people just where they are at. I try compassionately, empathetically, to just BE with their physical, emotional and spiritual pain and listen for openings to gently provide the space for the possibility of transition from body consciousness to spiritual journey, living to dying, pain and suffering to comfort and opportunity, from holding on/attachment to letting go and releasing, from solidity to openness and expansion, from denial to acceptance and peacefulness.

I truly believe that all of these are possible, but for many the increments are small. I've learned that people will die how they choose to die, influenced by how they chose to live, and that I can be with them at many levels according to the moment. We can share the openness, the

possibility for growth and sharing of hearts, the freedom of spirit, both theirs and mine. If my "self" is in the way, it can't happen. If I am open and attentive to their openings, moment to moment, who they are, what they believe, where they are in the living/dying process, and ask for guidance in a meditative way, I feel I can influence their transition in a spiritual way in whatever increment we are open to.

In Hospice, the "unit of care" is not only the patient, but the family and friends as well. All of the possibilities for transition for the patient apply to the family too. The patient's transition can be much more peaceful/spiritual if the family also makes the transition from attachment to release. Counseling the family on resolving issues, forgiveness, compassion, unconditional love, etc. and actually role modeling what they can say to release the person with love, is part of the emotional care provided by Hospice and another opportunity for spiritual growth for all involved.

Sometimes the "sharing of hearts" is, or can only be, nonverbal. Since reading Bokar Rinpoche and Sogyal Rinpoche's teachings on death and dying in the Center's Practitioners' Group, I've become more at ease with praying in the heart *in the moment* for whoever I'm attending for their release from suffering, for their peacefulness, joy and happiness, for their transition on a spiritual journey guided by love, forgiveness and compassion to the Land of Bliss.

In the basically Christian community in which I practice, it would be extremely rare for me to speak of Bardos or the Land of Bliss. However, many Buddhist teachings, my own practice of meditation, quiet awareness of our own true nature, Metta, "taking and sending" and "perfect sacrifice" meditations, as well as my own Christian upbringing have all contributed to my current practice of Hospice. They provide me with a vast resource of insights, teachings and quiet places of the heart to remember and attempt to just BE in the presence of Hospice patients and their families. It can be truly challenging when "doing," like adjusting morphine dosages for pain, and "being," like attentive listening for a precious opportunity for spiritual growth, are simultaneously happening.

A recent "teaching" was presented to me during our last Center retreat when Joel asked us to take on the suffering of another during meditation. After much reluctance on previous attempts, I decided finally to do it. I imagined taking on the pain, suffering and death of one of my Hospice patients who had recently died. I imagined myself in her bed, fearful of pain, fearful of moving,

fearful of dying. I could feel her pain, feel her loss—suddenly it became my fear, my loss, my death—I was going to die and lose my children! I experienced overwhelming sadness, tears, loss. A voice said to me, "Live life fully in the present NOW—then no regrets, no loss. LOVE and BE with the kids fully." I felt a tremendous relief and then saw my patient get up off her bed—healed, alive, and free. Her spirit is now free!! I felt great joy for her—more tears fell, but tears of joy, total joy! It seemed all that was left was the Grace of God—God's presence in my heart, God's presence everywhere—a place and space which I remember well and can share when opportunity arises.

Hospice has provided me with many, many precious opportunities for spiritual growth, for which I am deeply grateful. As I continue to learn and grow in the practice of compassion, I am also role modeling that practice with other Hospice nurses, practitioners, volunteers, families, and other community members who are also in attendance with terminally ill patients. This includes many M.D.'s and clergy, many of whom, surprisingly, do not feel comfortable or at ease with a dying patient. Someday they will, in turn, care for and role model to others and so our awareness of compassionate caring increases from individuals to families, to communities. The Hospice movement at the community and national level, as well as the teachings of many compassionate beings, is increasing our awareness of death and the many opportunities it provides for growth and allows its presence to be more acceptable in our homes and hearts.

How we die and how we care for the dying is influenced by how we choose to live, and how we can "be present" for ourselves and others. How we can "be present" is influenced by our own inner movement to awareness, forgiveness, peace, unconditional love and compassion. And so the practice goes on—in "freedom of spirit, openness of mind, and sharing of hearts." ❖

If you would like to be a volunteer Hospice care worker or for any additional information about Hospice, contact:

Oregon Hospice Association
 Post Office Box 10796
 Portland, OR 97201
 (503) 228-2104



Library Page

CSS Library Hours:

Sunday afternoons
2:00 - 4:00 p.m. & Tuesday evenings
5:30 - 8:30 p.m.

As a result of our yearly bookdrive, we now have over 40 books on death and dying in our library. In keeping with the theme of this issue of the Center Voice, as well as the overall purposes of our organization (a rapprochement between science and mysticism) we have chosen to review two books: *Life At Death* and *Awaken from Death*. The first is a scientific study of near-death experiences. The second recounts one mystic's unique vision of what happens in the afterlife. In addition, we have other books covering such things as the pragmatic and legal aspects of dying; the grieving process; and the death practices found in various spiritual traditions.

Life At Death

by Kenneth Ring
published by Quill, 1982

Has science proved that consciousness survives physical death? Not by a long shot. However, Kenneth Ring's *Life At Death* describes the results of one of the first serious attempts to make a scientific study of people who have had near-death experiences. More than just an anecdotal collection of personal stories, Ring identifies a number of recurrent motifs reported by near-death experiencers, which include such things as "out-of-body experiences," "passage through a tunnel," encounters with "other worldly beings," and "visions of light." Next, he makes a statistical analysis of the frequency of their occurrences, their degree of intensity, and what (if any) influence the subjects' own prior personal or

religious convictions had on determining the contents of their experiences. Surprisingly, Ring's results indicate a high level of inter-subjective agreement among near-death experiencers which cuts across differences in background and previously held belief-systems. What's more, many of these motifs occur in traditional mystical accounts of life-after-death. Although those still committed to a materialist paradigm will no doubt dismiss out of hand Ring's work as hokum, open minded readers will find the work both fascinating and readable. Indeed, Ring has pioneered an area where science and religion can work hand-in-hand to give us a clearer picture of what actually happens at the moment of death. The library looks forward to acquiring more recent and comprehensive studies in this exciting new field of research.

Awaken from Death

by Emanuel Swedenborg
published by J. Appleseed & Co., 1990

One of the most psycho-spiritually astute accounts of what happens after death can be found in Emanuel Swedenborg's *Awaken From Death*. In this little volume (selected from his larger work, *Heaven and Hell*), Swedenborg describes what he learned about the afterlife while in a near-death visionary state of his own. As in all traditions, Swedenborg insists that those who have done good in this life are separated from those who have done evil. This separation, however, is not decreed by any Divine Power but happens by a process of self-selection. The good are eager to learn more about God and thus naturally gravitate towards angelic beings who gladly teach them. The wicked, on the other hand, are intent on satisfying their own desires and so are attracted to each other's company. Being released from all social restraints, they are now free to act out all their selfish fantasies. As a result they perpetrate all manner of evil against one another and thus end up creating their own "hell." Interestingly, although Swedenborg was a Christian, his account of the afterlife is much closer to those given in the Hindu and Buddhist traditions in which one's post-mortem destiny is determined by one's own karmic inclinations. ❖

Dying Selflessly: A Portrait of Bonnie

by Todd

Bonnie Linn died of liver cancer on September 21, 1994 at the age of 51. A single parent, she had worked as a registered nurse in obstetrics at McKenzie Willamette Hospital. She had also been a long time member of the Center for Sacred Sciences, which is where I first met her.

Although Bonnie and I only got to know each other well less than a year before her death, somehow from the start, our friendship was very attentive, awake and humorous. We had a lot in common, both spiritually (as members of the Center Practitioners' Group) and professionally (I am also a nurse, though at another hospital in Roseburg). When the idea of "relationship" began to rear its "ugly little head," rather than fall headlong into past habits of relationship-dukkha, we danced lightly with these new perceptions as they arose. By not allowing old images of what a relationship is *supposed* to be, to fully place our spontaneous meetings in stillness, we gave each other the opportunity to see how we reflexively posture and create our interactions. With a sense of wonder, warmth and connection, we watched the expectations and attachments arise and pass through us. Never had I imagined that it was possible to play in relationship in such a way.

When we weren't involved with various activities, we would lay around reflecting on such spiritual questions as, "Who am I?" and, "What is this?" We also tried to examine the neediness that pulls us together; that pushes us towards wanting one state over another and drives us to make something "secure." In seeing how a pure connectedness, joy, and communion would just arise through these explorations, we both experienced a great sense of freedom and well-being. Much of our past "relationship-debris" and many old wounds became perceptual objects in this practice of "mindfulness," and Bonnie's honesty and inquisitiveness allowed few stones to be left unturned. We weren't trying to fix or create anything—just to see how the old relationship delusions kept trying to play themselves out. In the process we found not only friendship and freedom, but also that a deep sense of commitment was growing between us. By the summer of '94, we were spending so much time together that we began to seriously consider taking the next step and becoming "roommates."

In the middle of August, I left for a nine-day Vipassana retreat held at the Cloud Mountain Retreat Center in Washington. When I returned, Bonnie said she hadn't been feeling well. She was often tired and frequently had an acid stomach. We lay around together, discussing it further and decided she should see a physician for a checkup if her condition didn't resolve itself soon.

The next day, Monday, August 29, Bonnie worked overtime at the hospital. When she got home, she complained of severe pain in her abdomen. She went to a local clinic and the physician detected an enlarged liver, and although he suspected cancer, he couldn't rule out other causes. Bonnie called me and I drove up from my house near Roseburg. As things turned out I ended up staying with her for most of the time during the next twenty-three days until she died. At the time, however, we still didn't know what was wrong with her, let alone that it would bring her life to an end so quickly.

Since the clinic physician had been unable to give her a definite diagnosis, we discussed other possibilities—mononucleosis, a severely ailing gall bladder; even liver worms—and watched how the whole world would seem to change as we thought about these various possibilities. We marveled at how each diagnosis conjured up an image of a possible future, dictating its own images and perceptions. But the suggestion of possible liver cancer presented perceptions that were shocking and very hard to look in the eye. The perception of *no future* made thoughts seem to exist in a vacuum. The entire universe shifted when this was taken to be the "reality." *No future*. We talked of the fear caused by our inability to form any image of what this could be. And yet in the end Bonnie's response to it all was one of surrender: "Whatever is happening, it's the Will of God," she said, "and it's ok."

On the 31st, Bonnie went in for a liver ultrasound scan at the hospital where she worked. Afterwards we visited the Obstetrics Unit, where she talked to her friends and coworkers, waiting for the official report. It came 45 minutes later: lumpy liver, probably cancer. Although still not conclusive, this assessment of her condition made the perception of *no future* grow stronger in both of us. At first, we managed to ride the emotional waves through mindfulness, but, confronted with all of

the hospital sights, sounds, smells, and our own mental reactivity, we both became more and more lost in the fear.

We made an appointment with Dr. Fitzgibbons, the Oncologist, for the 2nd of September and left. Becoming aware that we were trapping ourselves by our own need to feel better about the situation, we practiced "noting" our perceptions, as we drove home. But even this broke down and we got stuck in wanting one mind-state over another--the perception of no-death, over death. Yet, once again, surrender seemed to arise spontaneously, no contrivance, no practice--just the truth manifesting itself. Then suddenly there was enough spaciousness for Bonnie's playfulness to resume. "I want a butterscotch sundae from Dairy Queen!" she exclaimed. "If I don't have a future, how can I get fat?" (She had eaten a Peanut Buster Parfait the evening before, with the same rationale!)

Next morning, Bonnie announced that she wanted to: "...go play at the Bandon Zoo since we can't do

anything till we see the Doc tomorrow." So, we went to the coast, to the zoo, and then to my house in Umpqua. In the car we listened to some "cosmic tunes"--old stuff from Bonnie's tapes of Cat Stevens, Donovan and others. The lightness of the day allowed for a greater spaciousness of mind. As on the previous day, we continued noting our perceptions of death and time, but now with less expectations. Through this practice a sense of surrender evolved which would carry both of us through the next few weeks. Overall, we laughed a lot, but there were some tears, too. Because we felt that she had at least a few months left--maybe longer--we took a lot of books and audio tapes on death and dying from my place back to her house, to have around just for reference. In fact, we were only able to read a few pages from one book, and listen to parts of a few tapes, before we ran out of time.

The appointment with Fitzgibbons next morning was short. He was fairly certain it was cancer but wanted a biopsy. He suggested chemotherapy but when Bonnie questioned him, he admitted that not only was there a good possibility it wouldn't work, but it might even make things worse. Bonnie agreed to come back for the biopsy

but told him that for now she didn't want chemo, saying she might try low dose chemo later. We got her labs and chest x-ray and left.

Afterwards, we just sat in the car for awhile, sensing an ongoing clarity and even peace with all of this new information floating in it. It was still very sad in a deep sense, but without as much fear as before.

So far, Bonnie hadn't wanted to worry her family about all this, but now that the diagnosis was fairly certain, she felt it was time to tell them. So we immediately drove out together to her mom's house. I knew this was going to be really hard for Bonnie, but when we got there we sat down at the kitchen table with her mom and sister Nancy and she said: "I need to tell you all that I've been diagnosed with cancer of the liver and there is no curative treatment for it. I don't know how long I have-

maybe six months." Time seemed to stop. As they questioned her about the details, she and I explained the medical findings and treatment options as well as we could.

"Becoming aware that we were trapping ourselves by our own need to feel better about the situation, we practiced "noting" our perceptions, as we drove home."

Despite their intensity, the mind-states of fear, longing, aversion, and restlessness washed through me as we spoke, passing through like bubbles. Beneath it all was just a profound sense of recurring sadness.

We came home and then began the task of telling friends. We only informed a small number at first, trying to keep the commotion to a minimum. Joel and Jennifer were away camping, but we told Mike and Ellen, and Ellen (who is a lawyer) began to help Bonnie with her will. John came by daily for a while and did some healing work, which Bonnie found very soothing and meditative. Katie came and gave her massages which she also found very healing. As word spread, more and more of Bonnie's friends started coming by to visit. Meanwhile, Bonnie's mom, brothers, sisters and their families all pitched in with housework. The support was truly tremendous.

After the first few days of telling people about the diagnosis, Bonnie noted feeling irritated when people would sometimes cry in front of her. "I get carried away in the perceptions of sadness when people cry. Can't they see that it makes it worse for me? I'm the one who's dying!" She told me it drained her energy. She even talked of sending out notices to all her friends asking

them to leave their tears at home! But, this same day, after taking a nap, and after reflecting on it further, she recognized that to deny these tears was to create more separation within herself. She recognized that the fear and dismay that others' tears would unveil in herself were just more perceptions and mindstates arising from a sense of self. "To deny their tears and feelings is selfish and pointless. I want to help them in any way I can. I want to foster openness and Truth." At this realization, she expressed a distinct sense of relief, release and surrender which seemed to stay with her right through till the end.

Bonnie had her biopsy on Tuesday, September 6. A lot of anxiety kept coming up about this, and this anxiety played through both of us. I guess I could say that I was "mindfully neurotic." It was ok, though: the biopsy was painless and quick, and we were out of short-stay surgery within a few hours. Next, we went over to the Obstetrics Unit and visited with her nursing friends again. After finishing up some business Bonnie left for the last time. The sadness was warm and gentle.

Bonnie's daughter had been away in Connecticut but came home just after the biopsy. Bonnie told her that she was sick and that it was probably cancer.

On Sept. 15th, Bonnie had an appointment at the dentist to have her teeth cleaned. She said she wanted to go; so I took her. Driving along in the car, she told me that although it might appear silly to have her teeth cleaned in these circumstances (laughing), she couldn't see the point in canceling the appointment since it was already made. "Besides," she said, "the dentist is expecting me, they can use the business and it's covered by my insurance!" I think the staff at the dentist's office was profoundly amazed by her attitude. Despite her pain, weakness and nausea, she carried on quite normally, joking and talking, warning the hygienist that she might bleed because "my liver isn't working too well." When she was finished, the staff was fully informed about her condition and were all somewhat wide-eyed and very kind to Bonnie. They even gave us a beautiful bouquet of flowers from their desk as we left the office and said our good-byes in the parking lot. Bonnie never stopped smiling through the entire visit. A sense of peace and serenity emanated from her.

As Bonnie's condition continued to deteriorate over the next few weeks she began having peculiar, recurrent dreams of dying while being a kind of "tour guide" for other seekers on the spiritual path. Sometimes she would wake me up in the middle of the night and tell me about them. As we talked, she would often slip back into dreaming, and I, half-asleep, would start to dream, too, and we'd end up somehow dreaming and talking at the same time. Images of people from the Center or other friends would filter through along with "cosmic dialogues" about "non-local awareness," eternity, death, and God's Will. The strange part was that I was never sure if she was "really" speaking to me or if I was "really" speaking to her. It was as if we were in the same dream together although upon waking I could never remember more than a few isolated images and feelings from these episodes. I found being with Bonnie in this dreamy sort of way to be somehow very nourishing.

As her illness progressed, Bonnie got steadily weaker and more nauseated. On September 17th, she began taking morphine tablets for the pain which helped greatly, but also increased her drowsiness. Despite drugs and weakness, however, she was able to remain lucid much of the time. During these periods she smiled a lot and always seemed to be more concerned for others than for herself. At one point, she noticed a small hole in the knee of my pants and asked if she could fix it for me. I would have let her, too, if I'd thought she had the strength and steadiness of hands to do it.

In the first week of her illness, Bonnie had continued to read *Waiting For God*, by Simone Weil, (the reading assignment for our Practitioners' Group) and also the *Little Book of Life and Death* by D.E. Harding. During the second week, however, she started having trouble focusing on the words, so I began reading to her out loud. By now, Joel and Jennifer had returned from camping and Joel was coming over regularly to assist Bonnie with her spiritual practices. When it became clear that Bonnie was dying, the whole Practitioners' Group shifted gears. Joel gave us all death meditations to do, both so we would be prepared for our own eventual deaths and to support Bonnie. We also began reading *Death and the Art of Dying In Tibetan Buddhism* by Bokar Rinpoche.

There exists no medicine which will induce one to contemplate death with one's heart comparable to that of looking to those of one's peers and companions who have passed away, and to the manner in which death came to them at a time they had never expected.

-- Al-Ghazzali (Sufi sage)

Bonnie was very interested in the stages of re-absorption, as outlined in the Tibetan tradition, and felt that all but the last one were already occurring. When she closed her eyes, she saw a "light show" and at times felt as if she were passing through "smoke" or "clouds," exactly as the Tibetan lamas described.

At Joel's suggestion, Bonnie also began practicing a "death prayer" to help stabilize her attention so she wouldn't get distracted when the moment of death actually arrived. After trying out several different versions, she settled on, "Holy Spirit, I surrender all to you," sometimes alternating it

with "Divine Spirit, I surrender to you." We worked on this together a lot, practicing it during the daytime, at night, and in the morning. Eventually, however, it grew too difficult for her to remember the whole prayer, so she just concentrated on the word, "surrender," and it became clear that this little word said it all. *Surrender.*

During the following week, Bonnie's ability to tolerate food dwindled steadily. Still, none of us realized (or maybe we weren't willing to recognize) how quickly her disease was progressing. I continued to encourage her to take some nourishment in the hope that it would give her more strength, and her neighbor, Marissa, made her a milk shake out of eggs which she could drink. On September 18th, she had a little instant breakfast, but that was the last time she was able to eat anything solid.

The next evening Bonnie and I went into the backyard and lay on a blanket and watched the nearly full moon come up in the clear sky. She was lucid and sweet, and full of smiles. We lay together for several hours in dreamy appreciation of this moment.

On Tuesday the 20th, I was scheduled to go back to work at the hospital in Roseburg. I hesitated to drive all the way down there, but the "thinking mind" won out. Before I left, I drew a sample of Bonnie's blood to take with me, so we could get some idea about her chemistries and cell counts. The results came that evening while I was

still on duty. Her labs were dangerously out of balance. I called one of her nurse friends, who was staying with her, and gave her the results to pass on to Bonnie.

It was past midnight by the time I got back to Bonnie's house and I was surprised to see that quite a crowd had gathered there—including her son (who had just gotten an emergency leave from the army), other members of her family, Joel, and her nurse friends (who had arranged to be with her in round-the-clock shifts). Someone had cooked up a lot of food and laid it all over the kitchen counters, buffet style. People were standing around

"Bonnie had requested that her body be left in the house for 24 hours so that her friends and relatives could say a last good-bye, and her fellow practitioners from the Center would have a chance to meditate on her corpse as a vivid example of the impermanence of all life."

eating and drinking almost as if they were at a party. I made my way into Bonnie's bedroom and asked her how she was doing. She smiled brightly and said, "Except for having liver cancer, I'm doing pretty good!"

Earlier in the evening, she told her friends from work, (Geri, Kay and Jan) that she had had a dream that they were all out together tooling around in a red convertible, celebrating a graduation, but there was no one driving the car! Joel's interpretation of it was that Bonnie's death would indeed be a spiritual "graduation," and the fact that no one was driving symbolized that it would be a graduation into true selflessness.

Later, some of the people left and I crawled into bed next to Bonnie, but the night was restless for both of us. She talked in her sleep some. The fact that Joel had gone to sleep in the next room was somehow reassuring.

When we got up on the morning of September 21st, Bonnie was so weak she could hardly make it into the bathroom. She asked for a catheter and her friends from the hospital took care of that need quickly. Around noon, Bonnie wanted to go out to the family room. With a little help, she was able to walk there and we set her up on the couch. Although she was pretty fuzzy much of the time, occasionally she would brighten up enough to make a little joke and smile. As the day went by, however, she seemed to be getting weaker and weaker. Also her pulse

became a little irregular, and her mind less clear. Around 2 P.M., I called Joel, who had gone back home for a couple of hours, and told him that things seemed to be changing quickly. He returned immediately and stayed close by her side. Members of her family and other friends were also notified and the house began to fill up again.

The hospital bed that we had requested from hospice the previous day arrived about 3 P.M. and we lifted Bonnie onto it. She started feeling hot so we put cool, wet towels on her forehead and took turns holding her hands while Joel periodically reminded her of her practice of Surrender. As the afternoon wore on, her pulse slowed and became more irregular, and she would increasingly drift off into a dream world of her own. Sometimes her facial expressions would change rapidly. She would reach out her arms and we would help her to sit up for a while. At other times she seemed to be seeing visions. Whenever she appeared distressed, Joel would remind her not to be afraid, that it was all "only an illusion" and nothing could really harm her. Somehow, through her dreams she would hear him. The anxious look would leave her face, and she would say "Oh, ok," and smile.

One time when she moaned, someone asked, "What is it?"

"Just pain," she replied wearily, as though it were nothing more than a toothache. Another time when she seemed particularly distraught, someone asked her the same question. "I don't know," she said, looking frightened and confused.

"Ah, 'don't-know-mind'!" Joel exclaimed, quoting a Zen saying, and told her: "Don't be afraid of don't-know-mind." Again she smiled and relaxed.

Soon after that Bonnie stopped moving completely. Her son cradled her head in his arms while her friends and relatives gathered closer around the bed. A profound silence settled over the room. All that could be heard now was her breathing, which had become shallow and even more irregular. At 7:04 P.M., her breathing stopped, and a few moments later, her pulse was gone.

Bonnie had requested that her body be left in the house for 24 hours so that her friends and relatives could say a last good-by, and her fellow practitioners from the Center would have a chance to meditate on her corpse as a vivid example of the impermanence of all life. I stayed over at her place that evening and the next day, spending short sessions with this empty manifestation of form. "Where did she go?" was the question that kept arising spontaneously in my mind. Sitting quietly with her late into the night, the question continued in other forms: "Where then am I?"—Along with the old puzzle, "Who am I?" Somehow, the sense of grief that was coursing through me didn't point towards Bonnie's death so much as it did towards my own tragic way of viewing the world: my perceptions, attachments and mental habits. I also realized that Bonnie had shared a most intimate secret with me (and probably with many others), through her last weeks of life: surrender can't really be learned; it must be found and allowed within oneself. It is the heart of the Heart. ❖

And Jesus said to them: There was a certain rich man whose land was fruitful. And he deliberated within himself, saying: What shall I do since I have no place where I can store all my crops? And he said: Here is what I will do. I will tear down my granaries and build bigger ones, and I will bring all my grain and my goods together there, and I will say to my soul: Soul, you have many good things stored away, for many years: rest, eat, drink, enjoy yourself. But God said to him: You fool, that soul will be demanded of you this very night. Who will have what you provided? So much for him who stores up treasures for himself rather than being rich for God.

-- Luke 12:15-21

“Since everything is impermanent, there is nothing that can be relied upon. Like a dew drop on a blade of grass along the path that vanishes quickly, who knows when this life will end? This body is surely not my possession. Life, changing in time, does not stop even for an instant.”

from the *Shusho-gi* of Soto Zen

THE CENTER FOR SACRED SCIENCES
1430 WILLAMETTE # 164
EUGENE OR 97401-4049

ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

*If this mailing no longer interests
you, please help us save trees by
writing to be removed from our list!*

**NON PROFIT
US POSTAGE
PAID
EUGENE OR
PERMIT # 185**

CENTER FOR SACRED SCIENCES

May 1995

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday
			WORLDVIEW SEMINAR
VIDEO 11 am LIBRARY 2-4 pm	2	LIBRARY 5:30-8:30	3
7	8	LIBRARY 5:30-8:30	10
TALK 11 am LIBRARY 2-4 pm	9	LIBRARY 5:30-8:30	CLOSED
14	15	16	17
TALK 11 am LIBRARY 2-4 pm		LIBRARY 5:30-8:30	PRACTITIONER A 7:30 B 8:00
21	22	23	24
TALK 11 am LIBRARY 2-4 pm		LIBRARY 5:30-8:30	PRACTITIONER A 7:30 B 8:00
28	29	30	31

June 1995

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday
			WORLDVIEW SEMINAR
VIDEO 11 am LIBRARY 2-4 pm		LIBRARY 5:30-8:30	
4	5	6	7
TALK 11 am LIBRARY 2-4 pm		LIBRARY 5:30-8:30	PRACTITIONER A 7:30 B 8:00
11	12	13	14
TALK 11 am LIBRARY 2-4 pm		LIBRARY 5:30-8:30	PRACTITIONER B 7:30 A 8:00
18	19	20	21
TALK 11 am LIBRARY 2-4 pm		LIBRARY 5:30-8:30	PRACTITIONER A 7:30 B 8:00
25	26	27	28

July 1995

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday
			WORLDVIEW SEMINAR
VIDEO 11 am LIBRARY 2-4 pm		LIBRARY 5:30-8:30	
2	3	4	5
TALK 11 am LIBRARY 2-4 pm		LIBRARY 5:30-8:30	PRACTITIONER B 7:30 A 8:00
9	10	11	12
TALK 11 am LIBRARY 2-4 pm		LIBRARY 5:30-8:30	PRACTITIONER A 7:30 B 8:00
16	17	18	19
TALK 11 am LIBRARY 2-4 pm		LIBRARY 5:30-8:30	PRACTITIONER B 7:30 A 8:00
23	24	25	26
TALK 11 am LIBRARY 2-4 pm		LIBRARY 5:30-8:30	
30	31		

August 1995

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday
			PRACTITIONER A 7:30 B 8:00
VIDEO 11 am LIBRARY 2-4 pm		LIBRARY 5:30-8:30	2
6	7	8	9
SPECIAL TALK 11 am LIBRARY 2-4 pm		LIBRARY 5:30-8:30	PRACTITIONER A 7:30 B 8:00
13	14	15	16
CLOSED		CLOSED	CLOSED
20	21	22	23
CLOSED		CLOSED	CLOSED
27	28	29	30

September 1995

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday
CLOSED		CLOSED	CLOSED
3	4	5	6
CLOSED		CLOSED	CLOSED
10	11	12	13
CLOSED		LIBRARY 5:30-8:30	PRACTITIONER B 7:30 A 8:00
17	18	19	20
TALK 11 am LIBRARY 2-4 pm		LIBRARY 5:30-8:30	PRACTITIONER A 7:30 B 8:00
24	25	26	27

October 1995

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday
			PRACTITIONER B 7:30 A 8:00
VIDEO 11 am LIBRARY 2-4 pm		LIBRARY 5:30-8:30	
1	2	3	4
TALK 11 am LIBRARY 2-4 pm		LIBRARY 5:30-8:30	PRACTITIONER A 7:30 B 8:00
8	9	10	11
TALK 11 am LIBRARY 2-4 pm		LIBRARY 5:30-8:30	PRACTITIONER B 7:30 A 8:00
15	16	17	18
CLOSED		CLOSED	CLOSED
22	23	24	25
TALK 11 am LIBRARY 2-4 pm		LIBRARY 5:30-8:30	
29	30	31	

MEETING ADDRESS: 960 FILLMORE ST. EUGENE, OR
 (PLEASE PARK ON W. BROADWAY) PHONE (503) 345-0102
 * Special Enlightenment Day service, Sunday, August 13, 11 a.m.

CENTER FOR SACRED SCIENCES

PROGRAMS AND EVENTS: SPRING 1995 -- FALL 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.

Enlightenment Day Celebration. Each year we honor the enlightened mystics of all traditions on the anniversary of Joel's awakening. On Sunday August 13th we will have a special Sunday program followed by a party. Join us at 11 a.m. or drop in from 1 - 4 for a potluck and the Center's annual report. Everyone is welcome.

+++++

SUNDAY VIDEO SCHEDULE

MAY 7---*Hildegard of Bingen*

This video explores the life of the 12th century German Benedictine saint, oracle, healer, writer and composer, who confronted the religious politics of her time.

JUNE 4---*Conversations with Howard Thurman*

An interview with the pioneering 20th century African-American mystic, professor and preacher who called on all people to transcend their religious and racial prejudices in order to find a deeper community of faith.

JULY 2---*The Jesus Summit*

Internationally renowned Jesus scholars, including Marcus Borg of OSU, discuss the question, "What does the historical Jesus mean for contemporary Christian faith?"

AUGUST 6---*Clouds of the Mind*

American born Buddhist teacher Jack Kornfield discusses Buddhist psychology and how to use the practice of mindfulness to create peace and understanding in our lives.

SEPTEMBER---NONE

OCTOBER 1---*Faces on Faith*

Professor Huston Smith, author of the best selling book, *The World's Religions*, discusses the genesis of his personal interest in comparative religion.

NOVEMBER 5---*Understanding Islam*

This fascinating video, designed for Western audiences, examines many common misunderstandings about Islam, the fastest growing religion in the world today.

CENTER FOR SACRED SCIENCES

Audio Tape Catalog Spring 1995

All tapes are by Joel unless noted

Single tapes \$6.50 each

THE MEANING OF SACRED SCIENCES
60 min, 1/90

BEGINNING OF WISDOM
90 min, 6/90

TRUE RELIGION
90 min, 3/91

TOWARDS A SACRED WORLDVIEW
90 min, 10/91

THE INFINITE AND THE FINITE
90 min, 3/92

THE PARADOX OF PARADIGMS
90 min, 3/93

FREEDOM'S GATE: BETWEEN FEELING
AND DESIRE, 90 min, 6/93

TWO TRUTHS: THE RELATIVE,
THE ABSOLUTE, 90 min, 6/93

KOAN OF SELFLESSNESS
90 min, 8/93

THE PURPOSE OF PRECEPTS
90 min, 11/93

TIME AND ETERNITY
90 min, 1/94

DUALISTIC MIND
90 min, 3/94

TOLERANCE
90 min, 4/94

BEAUTY
90 min, 4/94

Q&A #15: PRACTICAL ADVICE
FOR THE PATH
60 min, 5/94

PEACE
90 min, 5/94

GO AS NOTHING
90 min, 5/94

FOR THE LOVE OF GOD
60 min, 7/94

GNOSIS AND COMPASSION
90 min, 7/94

THE HEART OF YEARNING
90 min, 9/94

REALITY, KARMA AND REBIRTH
90 min, 12/94

Tape sets, \$12.50 for set:
(unless otherwise noted)

WHAT IS LOVE? &
WHAT IS SPIRITUAL LOVE?
2 tapes, 60 min, ea. 11/89

CONSCIOUSNESS IN FORM &
CONSCIOUSNESS WITHOUT FORM
2 tapes, 90 min, ea. 5/90 & 1/92

THERE IS ONLY ONE ENLIGHTENMENT
& "MY" ENLIGHTENMENT
2 tapes, 90 min, ea. 8/91 & 8/92

IS THERE HELP FROM ABOVE?
2 tapes, 90 min, ea. 7/93

THOUGHT #1 & #2
2 tapes, 60 min, ea. 12/93

DEATH: A GOLDEN OPPORTUNITY
3 tapes, 60 min, ea. 10/94
\$18.00

CENTER FOR SACRED SCIENCES

Publication and Supply Catalog Spring 1995

Naked Through The Gate

A spiritual autobiography by Joel, \$11.95

Center Voice

The CSS newsletter, published fall and spring, free.

MEDITATION PILLOWS

Traditional Zen meditation pillows, handmade at a Zen monastery in California.
 * Regular: 11" diameter, 7" high, \$22.00
 * Large: 12" diameter, 8 1/2" high, \$23.50

▲ Incense, prayer benches, and other meditation supplies are available on request.

VIDEOS:

The Purpose of the Spiritual Path \$29.95

Interview with Joel, spiritual director of the Center for Sacred Sciences, about the nature and purpose of spiritual enquiry.

Meditation Lessons 1,2,3 (one tape) \$29.95

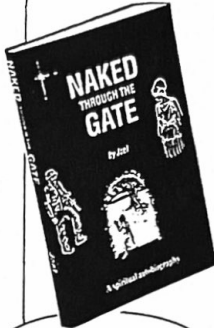
Practical instructions and helpful tips for the beginning stages of a meditation practice by Joel.

A Sunday With Joel \$29.95

Spend a typical Sunday with Joel at the Center giving a discourse, meditation instructions and answering questions.

Who Are You Really? \$29.95

Joel speaking in Palo Alto on an essential question of the spiritual quest in all mystical traditions.



"Highly-recommended."
L. A. Resources

"A remarkable, unremittingly honest and, at times, beguilingly ingenuous, autobiography."
Monk Magazine

"...so entertaining, so seamlessly woven, so compellingly written, that it reads like a fiction bestseller."
Meditation Magazine

QUALITY PAPERBACK
\$11.95

CENTER FOR SACRED SCIENCES

1430 Willamette Street #164
 Eugene, OR 97401-4049
 (503) 345-0102

Free

Name _____

Address _____

City _____

State _____ Zip _____

Phone _____

ORDER FORM

QNTY	TITLE	PRICE
	Center Voice	
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

Subtotal _____

Shipping _____

SHIPPING: Books, tapes and videos will be sent separately.
 Books: \$1.75 for the first, \$1.00 for each additional.
 Tapes: \$1.75 for the first \$ 50 for each additional