



Center Community News

The Newsletter of the Center for Sacred Sciences

Center Practitioner Awakens!

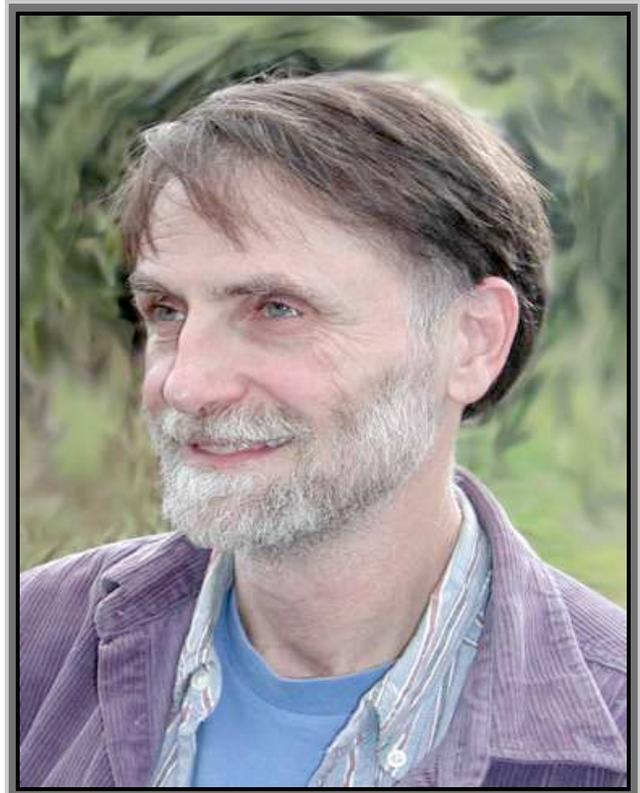
In recent months, people have noticed something different about our fellow Center practitioner Todd Corbett. There is an intangible, yet oddly familiar quality present behind his words. He has a new lightness and ease about him. What some of us suspected was then confirmed when Joel announced that Todd had awakened recently at the 2004 Fall retreat. Todd spoke to the Center's practitioners group shortly thereafter, sharing his account of the Awakening and the events that led up to it. An audio recording of Todd's talk will be available from the Center soon and a transcript is posted on the Center website. Here are a few of the highlights of what Todd had to say.

The evening started with a few words of introduction from Joel. "Of all the afflicted emotions," Joel began, "the one that has dominated Todd's life has been grief. When he first started coming to the Center about twelve years ago, he reminded me of a character out of a tragic Russian novel. He had that tormented look on his face, like some painting of a saint in the Middle Ages who looked like he'd been tortured for years."

"And one of the biggest, most shocking realizations is that death really is life. Death is this space. Death is what gives life its life. It's all coming out of this space. Death is this nothingness that we are. And this nothingness plays all these various tunes."

It was no wonder he looked a bit tortured. As Todd explained, "There were deaths and huge losses every two or three years over a fifteen year period. There was the death of a son, the unraveling of a twenty-year marriage, then the death of a girlfriend, and the death of another girlfriend. Then my brother had a huge stroke and he couldn't speak, and then he committed suicide three years later. So there were all these really dicey, juicy traumas."

As horrible as these losses were for him, Todd gradually realized that these tragic episodes forced him to really examine his life, and taught him some valuable spiritual lessons. "The actual loss of a loved one showed the transience of things in a way that nothing could show to me so clearly. Repeatedly, these losses hammered this truth of transience home and made it real for me."



(photo credit: Mike Craven)

They also helped him see how the grasping mind obstructs reality. After his girlfriend was killed in a mud slide, for example, Todd struggled to understand why he felt closed off from knowing her. "Thinking that I knew who she was," he then realized, "was the blockage to actually knowing her. It was the image of who I thought she was that was the blockage. That had a tremendous impact on everything. By thinking we know what any experience is, we cut ourselves off from it."

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The Center has a convenient form on its website that allows you to add or remove yourself from our mailing list, change your address, or change your subscription preferences. We are also encouraging everyone with internet access to switch to an electronic subscription of the Center Community News to help save paper, postage, and printing expenses. In contrast to the paper edition that needs to be printed and delivered through regular mail, the electronic edition of the newsletter is distributed immediately. Electronic subscribers receive a short email notification as soon as each new issue is available. A single click on a link in the email downloads the newsletter to your computer. The address of the online subscription form is:

<http://www.centerforsacredsciences.org/subscriptionform.html>

Spring 2005 Retreat

The five-day Spring retreat, entitled "Testing the Teachings," was led by Tom McFarlane with guidance by Joel Morwood. A group of 25 students gathered from April 22 through 27 at Cloud Mountain Retreat Center near Castle Rock, Washington. Six participants were on their first CSS retreat, in which the teachers encouraged each meditator to verify the truth of their own experience.

Holos Journal Publishes Interview with David Loy

The Center recently published the first issue of its new online journal, *Holos: Forum for a New Worldview*. In this issue, *Holos* editor Tom McFarlane interviews philosopher, writer, and Zen practitioner David Loy on a broad range of topics, including a detailed discussion of Professor Loy's innovative notion of lack and how it relates to our selves and society. Our sense of lack, Loy explains, arises as a kind of "shadow" of our sense of self. The flip side of our attachment to self is our aversion to our ungroundedness or emptiness of self. And this manifests as a sense of lack which we often find manifested both individually and culturally as futile projects to try and make ourselves real in the world. The implications of this on the personal and collective levels are profound and shed light not only on our history, but also on current events in our world today. To read the interview, simply follow the link from the Center's home page, or go directly to the *Holos* home page at www.holosforum.org. Everyone is also invited to participate in the *Holos* internet forum where readers from around the world can discuss *Holos* interviews and articles.



RETREATANTS: (front from left) Steve Jonas, Vip Short, (bench row) Cathy Jonas, Bill Hamann Sr., Kiva Michels, Joel Morwood, Tom McFarlane, Cathryn Cardellino, Paul Flashenberg, Megan Greiner, (standing left to right) Susan Colson, Alan Mishchenko, Gene Gibbs, Mike Strasburger, Bill Carter, Dave Cunningham, Bill Hamann Jr., Kim Warren, Mike Barkhuff, Fred Chambers, Jim Patterson, Gail Marshall, Ann Everitt, Nick Karhannis, (not pictured:) Emma Leyburn, Mary Moffat

(photo credit: Steve Jonas)

(continued from page 1)

Also significant on Todd's spiritual path was a series of insights on several meditation retreats, starting with one about four years ago. "I was watching the breath very meticulously, very precisely," Todd recounted, "and when I got to the end of a cycle of breathing—on the out-breath—there was a brightening that happened in this space." As he continued with the practice over the following days and months, the bright space between the breath opened up to a pervasive presence of awareness through which the breath would move.

A couple years later on retreat, this presence of awareness became so powerful that it started burning up his experience. "It was a process of seeing a feeling, or seeing a thought, and when I would see it, it was like a laser would see it and burn it up, kind of like a moth going into an electric bug zapper—it was cooked. It was transformed to awareness. The more I became conscious of presence of awareness, the more this would happen. So this reached a peak on that retreat. It just went crazy. At one point I was kind of short-circuiting inside. I started having a lot of fear around it because it was turning everything into nothing."

Although the fear and craziness eventually passed after that retreat, the burning up continued to happen. And by the next Fall retreat, Todd told us, things had settled down. "It wasn't such a big deal. It was just hanging out in presence. It was like, okay, no self, okay, just thoughts passing through."

It was a year later that Todd arrived at the Fall 2004 retreat in this emptied state, with no sense of anything to accomplish. Then, one evening about half way into the retreat, a very strange thing happened. "I walked to my room. I opened the door. As I was getting ready to turn on the light, I looked at my bed, and there was someone sitting on my bed! It was very freaky, and I had this

adrenaline response. Then the light came on, and it was like an Egyptian cave in there—it was just crazy looking, and the guy had beads and robes and big funny eyes, and he was speaking gibberish, like Chinese or something."

"Then, suddenly," Todd continued, "it was just Abdullah sitting on the bed and I was in his room. So I backed out of the room. Anyway, that was the point where things were different. I walked to my room, opened my door, went in, and sat on the bed. And there was no sense of self. Before this happened, there was this mystical sense of no self. But after this, there was none of that. There was no sense of me having a mystical experience. And the sense of experiencing stillness was gone. There just *was* stillness. It was like sitting in a huge auditorium with the lights out—just this big, empty space. The mind would quiver once in awhile, like it was going to say something, but it never said anything because it was just so little, so unimportant. Then, the next morning, the mind stirred and said, 'This is different. This is significantly different than any of those other no-self experiences, because there's no self here.' It feels different when there's really no self. There's just awareness looking out at these thoughts. And these thoughts *are* the awareness that is looking."

"Thoughts continued, but they're not as big as they were. They don't have that real quality that they had before. So a thought like, 'Is this enlightenment?' is just a joke. It's absurd. These are just thoughts. Whenever the mind is speaking, whatever it knows, it knows it. I don't know anything. It's really true. Really, there's just this space and that's what we are. And if the self wants to come, it's fine. It's just an emotion-thought. That's all it is. It arises and it passes away. I can conjure up a sense of self any time. It's fine—not a problem."

"And one of the biggest, most shocking realizations is that death really is life. Death is this space. Death is what gives life its life. It's all coming out of this space. Death is this nothingness that we are. And this nothingness plays all these various tunes."

The 4 Noble Truth tellers... (Listening to the non-Stones)

He's a real Nowhere Man
Sitting in his Now-Here land
Making all his nowhere plans for nobody.
—John

And though she feels as if she's in a play, she is anyway.
—Paul

Life goes on within you and without you.
As each unconscious sufferer wanders aimlessly,
beware of Maya.
—George

All I gotta do is act naturally.
—Ringo (words by Carl Perkins)

Turn off your mind, relax and float downstream...It is not dying....
—John

Let it be.
—Paul

All through the years
I me mine, I me mine, I me mine.
—George

You know it don't come easy.
—Ringo

I am he as you are he as you are me and we are all together.
—John



LIBRARY CORNER

Library Hours:
Tuesdays 6:00 – 8:30 p.m.

Library News

Guiding this library's growth is like living on a boat. There's never been much extra space, so one has to make each inch as productive as possible. Then one waits for a little vision, a good bookcase builder, some extra funds, and ... voila!

This winter all the pieces came together. We've gained a bit of counter space and breathing room as the books reach toward the sky.



Books that reach toward the sky!

(photo credit: Vip Short)

New Video Arrivals

The Real Bottom Line: Host Jim Hartz Talks With Dr. Jane Goodall
Trinity Church 2003

Five Suzuki Roshi Films

Five short films produced by film/zen students, including archive footage of Suzuki Roshi.

The Secret Is There Are No Secrets
by Cheri Huber

Best video introduction to meditation that I've seen.

Others Before Self: A Village of Compassion
by Anahata Iradah, Prema Dasara, Tara Dhata

Documentary film on the Tibetan Children's Village in Dharamsala, India.

Reviews

Beyond Words: Dzogchen Made Simple

by Julia Lawless and Judith Allan. Element Books, 2003.

For those interested in exploring the approach known as Dzogchen ("Great Perfection," or "knowledge of the individual's real condition"), here is an overview that is accessible to the beginner. The book's subtitle is humorously redundant, since simplicity is the essence of these teachings, which are sometimes described as a Tibetan form of Zen. The authors are students of Chogyal Namkhai Norbu, arguably the best-known disseminator of Dzogchen teachings in the West. The presentation is very well organized and includes basic Buddhist principles, a look at practices, and a good historical summary of the lineage of Dzogchen gurus. I highly recommend this book.

VIP SHORT

Mystic Iran: The Unseen World

A film by Aryana Farshad. Wellspring, 2003.

I had the privilege of seeing this film at the Parliament of World Religions last summer. The film, banned in Iran, was well received by the Iranian Parliament participants who were seeing it for the first time.

Aryana returns from exile to her native Iran for a personal pilgrimage, and to document in film the various religious traditions of her country. During her travels, she's granted an unusual level of access to various shrines, teachers, and rituals of Islamic Sufi and Zoroastrian traditions, including the women's chamber of the Great Mosque, and a Sufi women's dhikr circle.

Though they seem foreign and exotic to a westerner, the rituals are spiritual technologies designed to dissolve a sense of self, and create conditions for awakening. Aryana's pilgrimage and film are beautifully summed up by this quote from Rumi "If you could get rid of yourself once, the Secret of Secrets would open to you."

JENNIFER KNIGHT

New Audio Cassette & CD Arrivals

Awareness of Body, Mind, Heart & Soul
by Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche

Kosmic Consciousness
by Ken Wilbur

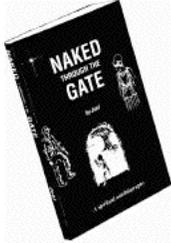
Exposing the Essence of Mind
by Lama Tsering Everest

Satsang with Isaac Shapiro: Hamburg 2004
by Isaac Shapiro

Center Publications

For a complete catalog of our current publications and for pricing and ordering information, please visit our website at www.centerforsacredsciences.org

Book Publications



Naked Through the Gate: A Spiritual Autobiography

by Joel, Center for Sacred Sciences, 1985. Paperback, 262 pages, \$11.95

Joel's personal account of his remarkable spiritual path, ending with a Gnostic Awakening.

Through Death's Gate: A Guide to Selfless Dying

by Joel, Center for Sacred Sciences, 1996. Paperback, 83 pages, \$6.95.

A guide to death and dying from a spiritual perspective, including fundamental teachings and practices from the world's great mystics.

Audio Publications

The following are audio recordings available for purchase. Patrons of the Center's library may also borrow these audios in CD or cassette tape formats.

There Is Only One Enlightenment

Joel, 1991

"My" Enlightenment

Joel, 1992

Enlightenment: A Thirteen-Year Perspective

Joel, 1996

Are There Levels of Enlightenment?

Joel, 1995

How Does a Gnostic Live?

Joel, 1998

The Journey In God

Joel, 1998

What's Inside My Head?

Joel, 1999

Three Fruits of Enlightenment

Joel, 1999

Video Publications

A Sunday with Joel

by Joel, Center for Sacred Sciences. VHS, \$19.95.

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

Who Are You Really?

by Joel, Center for Sacred Sciences. VHS, \$19.95.

Joel speaking in Palo Alto on an essential question in all mystical traditions.

Web Publications

Breaking Through: A Journey to Awakening

by Andrea Pucci, 1998

Joel and Andrea Pucci discuss her spiritual path and her Awakening.

Nothing to Fear but Fear

by Tom Kurzka, 2001

In this interview, Tom recounts the role of fear on his spiritual path and his experience of Gnostic Awakening.

Lack and Liberation in Self and Society: An Interview

with David Loy, February 2005

An Interview with Zen philosopher David Loy on our sense of lack and how it manifests both individually and culturally.

Integrating Science and Religion: An Interview with Alan Wallace

Winter-Spring 2004

Buddhist teacher, scholar, and practitioner Alan Wallace talks with Tom McFarlane about Wallace's lifelong endeavor to integrate science and religion, and his hopeful vision for their future collaboration

The Gate of Unknowing

by Joel, Summer-Fall 2001

Surrendering what commonly passes for knowledge to enter the Unknowing that opens the way to Gnosis.

To Practice or Not to Practice?

by Joel, Winter-Spring 2002

Are your spiritual practices a barrier to Enlightenment?



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MISSION AND PROGRAMS

The Center for Sacred Sciences is dedicated to the study, practice, and dissemination of the spiritual teachings of the mystics of the major religious traditions. The Center endeavors to present these teachings in forms appropriate to our contemporary culture. The Center also works to create and disseminate a sacred worldview that expresses the compatibility between universal mystical truths and the evidence of modern science.

Among the Center's on-going events are Sunday public services with meditations and talks, monthly video presentations, a weekly practitioners' group, and regular meditation retreats. The Center also maintains a lending library of books, audios, videos, and periodicals covering spiritual, psychological, and scientific subjects. In addition, the Center provides a website containing teachings, information, and other resources related to the teachings of the world's mystics, the universality of mystical truth, and the relationship between science and mysticism. The Center publishes a newsletter containing community news, upcoming programs, book reviews, and other information related to the Center's mission.

The Center for Sacred Sciences is a non-profit, tax-exempt church based in Eugene, Oregon, USA. We rely chiefly on volunteer labor to support our programs, and on public donations and membership pledges to meet our operating expenses. Our teachers offer their teachings freely as a labor of love and receive no financial compensation from the Center.

Center Community News is published three times a year by the Center for Sacred Sciences. Submissions, comments, and inquiries should be sent to:

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CSS CALENDAR

MAY 2005 – SEPT. 2005

MAY 2005

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday
1 Video* 11 am	2	3 Library 6:00–8:30	4 Practitioner 7:30
8 Talk 11 am	9	10 Library 6:00–8:30	11 Practitioner 7:30
15 Talk 11 am	16	17 Library 6:00–8:30	18 Practitioner 7:30
22 Talk 11 am	23	24 Library 6:00–8:30	25 Practitioner 7:30 (ALL)
29 Talk 11 am	30	31 Library 6:00–8:30	

*Joseph Campbell: Love and the Goddess

The fifth of the six-part series “The Power of Myth,” renowned scholar Joseph Campbell talks with Bill Moyers about sacred images of woman as Goddess, Virgin, and Mother Earth.

JULY 2005

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday
3 Video* 11 am	4	5 Library 6:00–8:30	6 Practitioner 7:30
10 Talk 11 am	11	12 Library 6:00–8:30	13 Practitioner 7:30
17 Talk 11 am	18	19 Library 6:00–8:30	20 Practitioner 7:30
24 Talk 11 am	25	26 Library 6:00–8:30	27 Practitioner 7:30 (ALL)
31 Talk 11 am			

* Suzuki Roshi: Five Vignettes

In these five short film segments we get insightful glimpses of the life and work of Suzuki Roshi, the Japanese Zen Master who founded the San Francisco Zen Center.

JUNE 2005

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday
			1 Practitioner 7:30
5 Video* 11 am	6	7 Library 6:00–8:30	8 Practitioner 7:30
12 Talk 11 am	13	14 Library 6:00–8:30	15 Practitioner 7:30
19 Talk 11 am	20	21 Library 6:00–8:30	22 Practitioner 7:30
26 Talk 11 am	27	28 Library 6:00–8:30	29 Practitioner 7:30 (ALL)

*Mystic Iran

In this remarkable video, filmmaker Aryana Farshad takes us on a spiritual tour of her native Iran, documenting rituals and practices never before recorded on camera.

AUGUST 2005

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday
	1	2 Library 6:00–8:30	3 Practitioner 7:30
7 Video* 11 am	8	9 Library 6:00–8:30	10 Practitioner 7:30 (ALL)
14 Talk 11 am	15	16 CLOSED	17 CLOSED
21 CLOSED	22	23 CLOSED	24 CLOSED
28 CLOSED	29	30 CLOSED	31 CLOSED

*Joseph Campbell: Masks of Eternity

In this video, the sixth of a six-part series called The Power of Myth, renowned scholar Joseph Campbell discusses the relationship between the manifest and the unmanifest in the world’s mythologies.

MEETING ADDRESS:

1571 BUCK ST., EUGENE, OREGON



PHONE: (541) 345-0102

SEPTEMBER 2005

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday
4 * CLOSED	5	6 CLOSED	7 CLOSED
11 CLOSED	12	13 CLOSED	14 CLOSED
18 CLOSED	19	20 CLOSED	21 CLOSED
25 Talk 11 am	26	27 CLOSED	28 Practitioner 7:30 (ALL)

* NO VIDEO