



Center Community News

The Newsletter of the Center for Sacred Sciences

And Yet Another ... Center Practitioner Awakens!

Some Center members were recently heard using the dynamic descriptor "popcorn" to characterize the seemingly accelerating outbreak of Gnostic Awakening in our community. At the nine-day retreat led by Joel last autumn (*see lead article in previous Center Community News vol.19 no.1, "Fall Retreat Transforms Hearts and Lives," by Kiva Michels*), our dear longtime board member and retreat coordinator Fred Chambers had an awakening. On Wednesday evening March 29, he felt ready to step out in front of his sangha and talk about this development, so difficult to convey using words.

Watch for an expanded report on Fred's sharing in the next issue of the Center Community News.

Israeli Mystics Visit CSS



Uri, Dawn, Tom and Merav at the Kurzkas'

Dr. Uri Gelbart and Merav Schreiber came to CSS in early February to share their work in Israel. They first learned about CSS through its Web site and have been exchanging e-mails for several years.

Their group, Amutat Meleut, is a non-profit organization dedicated to working with others in the journey to Freedom. Influences include Krishnamurti, Nisargadatta, Gurdjieff and A. H. Almaas/M. Faisal. The organization has established a communal house in Tel Aviv where people live and work together exploring Consciousness and mysticism.

Uri and Merav met with CSS practitioners in February, leading a guided meditation followed by discussion. They also attended the Center's Sunday meeting and shared at other events throughout their 6-day stay in Eugene. They invite interested CSS members to visit them in Tel Aviv.

--Tom Kurzka

Pilgrims to India

Both Cathy Jonas and Kim Warren made unique pilgrimages to different parts of India during this past winter. Exercising our precept of Charity, each of them dispatched internet updates on their travels. Some of the highlights are featured here.



Cathy Jonas stands before a beautifully reflected Mount Arunachala, in Tamil State, India. Ramana Maharshi saw his beloved mountain as an embodiment of Shiva.

Kim: The coolest part about my trip was probably the serendipity, all of the things that worked out perfectly... like someone was going out of their way to point things out to me. Though I didn't find what I was looking for in India (though I *did* find something else!), the bits of synchronicity kept me going on my path north. I would have missed my train out of Delhi on my second day in India had it not been for some random guy coming up to me and getting my attention to tell me that I had the wrong platform, though I still don't know how he knew which train I was trying to catch! I wound up at a hotel that I had selected on a whim from my guidebook that turned out to be an absolute gem, and ended up getting the only available room, which had just been vacated moments before I arrived. You can't really begin to say how amazing India is, all the ways it shapes and affects you. I hope to go back there again in less than a year, if I can manage it. It seems to have become "home" for me.

Cathy: I'm completing a book based on my trips to India and other spiritual retreats. It will be called **Bringing Home the Mountain: Spiritual Journeys Into the Heart Cave**. But one certainly doesn't need to go to India to open one's heart. Learning how to be with What Is, is an invaluable teaching.

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Tom Kurzka's Satsang

Tom graduated from our practitioners' group several years ago. He awakened following a retreat with Joel at Cloud Mountain. "Nothing to Fear But Fear" (*see the Center website*) was his revealing account of his awakening. After teaching a few times on Sundays and on retreats, he stopped teaching publicly but continued to see people individually. Last year he was at a satsang given by a visiting teacher. Participant Nancy Hager, hearing Tom speak, asked him to begin holding satsangs for a small group that wanted to continue this practice. Since then, Tom has been holding satsangs on Sunday evenings to meet the needs of those who attend, including several of us from the Center. Here is a little description of Tom's approach.

First off, there's silence. Unless you're over fifteen minutes early, Tom's already meditating. You encounter the same silence that we experience at practitioners' group; but it seems to have a little different substance to it, a different feel.

After about a half-hour of meditation, Tom gives a monologue which is notable for its simplicity and slow pace. Nothing is really taught. It is more like an underlining of the meditation. He speaks of "this now," and "this space." "Thoughts are not a problem, just let them go and come back to this space." His style is quite like that of the pilot in the control tower talking the trainee down out of the clouds: "OK, now ease up a bit on the left pedal. Good, now pull back on the stick just a mite. OK, just relax, you're doing great." This calm, slow monologue deepens the meditative space that you entered during the formal meditation.

The talk ends with "So... the chair is open for anyone who has a question or a report." He gestures to the chair next to him. You can almost hear the chorus of egos in the room hissing, "Don't you dare! Don't you dare!" But somebody always does. What can you lose besides imaginary possessions of the ego? Tom cocks his head, listens and responds with evident affection. His advice has the same astonishing consistency as Joel's, calling us again and again into the spacious awareness that we are. Joel visited a satsang and gave his blessing. He remarked, "He's found his own voice." Yes, he has, and a strong and clear voice it is.

[Tom's satsangs are currently held at his and Dawn's home, 2661 University, 7 to 9 PM, Sundays. Turn up 26th or 27th from Hilyard, and left on University. Dana is appreciated, as you are able. To check on any details, call Tom or Dawn at 687-6793.]

--Wesley Lachman

Why does the universe go to all the bother of existing?

--Steven Hawking

The meaning of life is to find the meaning of life.

--Joel

Just like flowers flower, people... just people.

--Bill Hamann

Holos Journal Publishes Interview with Taoism Expert

CSS online journal, *Holos*, recently published an interview with Brown University Professor of Religious Studies Harold Roth, whose research focuses on early Chinese religion, Taoism, and comparative mysticism. In the interview, entitled "Early Taoist Contemplation and Its Resonance in the American Academy," Roth discusses some of the important aspects of the Taoist worldview and their relevance to the modern West. Roth also talks about how he has introduced first-person investigation (such as meditation) into both his academic teaching and research, and why it is so important that the field of Religious Studies more widely accept and integrate this mode of investigation. Towards these ends, he is working along with a group of colleagues at Brown towards developing a new undergraduate major in "Contemplative Studies" that will study contemplative experiences from both traditional third-person and "critical first-person" perspectives. In addition to being the author of several academic books on Taoism, Roth has been a long-term student of the Rinzai Zen Master Jōshu Sasaki and has practiced Transcendental Meditation, Taoist meditation, and Theravada Insight Meditation.

The interview is available online at web address www.holosforum.org.

Ask Dr. Gnositall



Dear Dr. Gnositall,

I've been on many retreats and intensives, attended dozens of satsangs and workshops. I have always thought of myself as an earnest spiritual seeker. Then someone suggested that I am addicted to spiritual seeking. Now I'm confused. Is all this stuff I do a sign of authentic spiritual aspiration, as I like to think, or is it just an addiction? It would be helpful if you could give me a list of signs that I might be addicted to spiritual seeking.

Thank you, SEEKER SAM

Dear SS:

You don't need no signs! Clearly, you are an addict—but that's not the problem. Back when this ol' doc was a mere lad (long before several post-grad years spent studying addictionology), many of my peers struggled with what psychologist Erik Erikson termed the "identity crisis." While you may not have reached the crisis stage, it definitely looks like a case of mistaken identity. Just *whom* do you believe is doing all this seeking, anyhoo? It is the automatic tendency to see one's "self" as "something"—in this case, as a seeker—which should be scrutinized with the power of attention. When called to be empathetic, we used to say "I can identify." Just because we can doesn't mean we must.

Addictions experts will tell you that a 12-step program is one of the few tried and true approaches. So study the third step a bit: it really is the recognition that "I am not the doer." And all those behaviors that get you labeled a seeker? They're perfect, or else they wouldn't be happening. There's no *solution* to your problem, but thankfully there is *dissolution* of the problem.

Dear Dr. Gnositall,

I need your advice. I used to be "OK" with the flow of life. Lately though, I've noticed that I am quite judgmental toward my friends and people I barely know. I find myself being negative, making snide comments and blaming people. It can be at drivers of cars, pedestrians, friends or family. Who am I to blame or judge another? What should I do? Maybe I just need a good antidepressant? Although my friends call me

ANTI-PRO ZAK

Dear A-Z,

Pills are notoriously empty of answers. It's good that you're asking, "Who am I to blame or judge...?" because it's a chance to remember that you're nobody. Fixing blame fixes stuff every bit as effectively as pills do, and blaming oneself for blaming... well, that just gets it flying in all directions, doesn't it? To heal means to make whole. You are consciously aware of your blaming tendencies, which is the lion's share of your challenge. Now keep reminding yourself that when it comes to your psyche, any apparent holes are *also* part of the holiness of the Whole.

[Editor's note: Send your angst-filled pleas and queries to Dr. Gnositall at editor@centerforsacredsciences.org ! Remember, he's a real doctor, even though he's never played one on TV.]

A Dr. Gnositall Special Feature: Are YOU a Spiritual Addict?

Gentle readers, upon perusing "Seeker Sam's" earnest question (at left), I've come to realize that this is a concern for many an astute aspirant. So much so, that the response provided below Sam's question may strike some of you as glib. Therefore, I am going to address this seeker's question at face value. Following is a list of signs to help YOU determine whether you do, indeed, suffer from an addiction to spiritual seeking:

1. Dependency: Do you find that you are unable to function well in the absence of your spiritual-seeking behaviors? Of course, "function well" can mean a lot of things, but generally this means being able to attend to necessary tasks, focus attention, provide for others who depend on you, keep the bills paid, etc. A dependency implies that one's functionality *depends* on the presence or availability of the addiction object—in this case, whatever your personal collection of spiritual seeking routines happens to be.

2. Reinforcement: Have you noticed that engaging in your spiritual practices seems to reinforce the tendency to keep doing them? This psychological principle is true of many things, including answering bodily needs (e.g. sleep or feeding) in a healthy way; or emotional responses that do not necessarily serve us (Ken Kesey once said about anger, "The madder you get, the madder you get"). So the question about reinforcement of seeking is, "Do these practices, at their current frequency, continue to serve the process of spiritual awakening?" Perform such an inventory on a periodic basis, and remain wary of the dangers of *attachment to the forms* of seeking.

3. Tolerance: This is an offshoot of the previous factor. If the answer to your inventory involves increased frequency or strength, *i.e.*, "I seem to need to do it more than ever," or "I gravitate toward more and more macho forms of seeking," then you'll need to take a serious look at whether tolerance has developed. Tolerance simply means that you require more bucks to get the same bang—not good, although it may signal approaching kenosis! A chat with your teacher may be in order to sort this one out. But if you find yourself needing to firewalk daily just to feel spiritually centered, there's a good chance you've developed an unhealthy tolerance.

4. Withdrawal: Do you ever get the spiritual shakes? When summer break comes and you can't attend the Center or check more books out, does misery ensue? Getting "cut off" from our addiction object "supply" is how we know whether a dependency has developed, as it all *depends* on the arising (or not) of withdrawal symptoms.

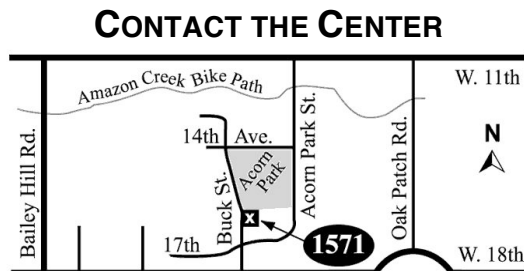
Contrary to what you may hear in some addictions-treatment circles, **cravings per se** are not necessarily a sign of addiction. As we know from our studies and pursuits, craving (and its mirror image, aversion) are merely signs that we exist as suffering beings, period.



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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, saints, and sages of the major religious traditions. The Center endeavors to present these teachings in forms appropriate to our contemporary scientific 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, and—for committed spiritual seekers—a

weekly practitioners' group and regular meditation retreats. The Center also maintains an extensive 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 and resources 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 spiritual director gives his teachings freely as a labor of love and receives 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 2006 – SEPT. 2006

MAY 2006

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
14 Talk 11 am	15	16 Library 6:00–8:30	17 Practitioner 7:30
21 Talk 11 am	22	23 Library 6:00–8:30	24 Practitioner 7:30
28 Talk 11 am	29	30 Library 6:00–8:30	31 Practitioner 7:30 (ALL)

*** Thich Nhat Hanh: Peace Is Every Step**

This wide-ranging documentary recounts the efforts of Buddhist monk, Thich Nhat Hanh, to teach Buddhist methods of mindfulness and compassion in troubled regions around the world.

AUGUST 2006

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

*** David Loy: Zen Philosopher**

In this video interview, contemporary westerner David Loy discusses his personal journey on the Zen path, as well as how Buddhist insights can be applied to current social issues.

JUNE 2006

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

*** Ramana Maharshi: Abide as the Self**

This video, narrated by Ram Dass, explores the life and teachings of the 20th century Hindu sage Ramana Maharshi.

SEPTEMBER 2006

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

*** NO VIDEO**

JULY 2006

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

*** Merton: A Film Biography**

A comprehensive documentary about Thomas Merton, the famous 20th century Christian mystic and monk who reached out to bridge the gap between Christianity and other faiths.

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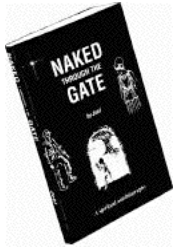


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Center Publications

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 new audio recordings available for purchase. Patrons of the Center's library may also borrow these audios in CD or cassette tape formats, and they may be heard on the CSS website. Items marked with an * are new.

Enlightenment

Direct Pointing

Joel, August 14, 2005*

Foundational Teachings

Four Kinds of Practice

Joel, 2005

Mysticism and Society

The Feminine Face of Mysticism

Joel, July 31, 2005 *

Aspects of Practice

From Relationship to Aloneness

Todd Corbett, November 20, 2005 *

Mysticism and Science

Darwinism, Creationism, & Mysticism

Joel, 2005

DVD Publications

A Sunday with Joel

by Joel, Center for Sacred Sciences. DVD, \$21.95.

Spend a typical Sunday at the Center with meditation instructions, a discourse by Joel, and questions and answers. [Recorded 1993; digitally remastered 2006; 47 minutes]

Who Are You Really?

by Joel, Center for Sacred Sciences. DVD, \$21.95.

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

[Recorded 1992, Palo Alto; remastered 2006; 77 minutes]

The Purpose of the Spiritual Path

by Joel, Center for Sacred Sciences. DVD, \$21.95.

A talk given October 31, 1992 in Eugene, Oregon.

[Digitally remastered 2006; 39 minutes.]

Web Publications

Awakened by Death: Account of Gnostic Awakening

with Todd Corbett, Spring-Summer 2005

In this moving discussion moderated by Joel, Todd shares his spiritual path with assembled CSS practitioners, describing how numerous encounters with the deaths of loved ones ultimately brought him to Awakening.

Breaking Through: A Journey to Awakening

with Andrea Pucci, 1998

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

Nothing to Fear but Fear

with Tom Kurzka, 2001

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

Facing Fear on the Path

by Joel, Spring 2001.

The role fear plays on the spiritual path and advice on how to face it.

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.

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?