

SUMMER - FALL
2001

Center Voice

The Newsletter of the Center for Sacred Sciences

Special Focus:

The Way of Unknowing

NEW CSS Library Hours:

Tuesday evenings 6:00 - 8:30 p.m.

Contents:

Center News	2
The Gate of Unknowing - by Joel	4
Questioning the Scientific Worldview	8
- by Tom McFarlane	
Center Voices:	11
What Does Unknowing Mean To You?	
In the Words of the Mystics	14
Library Corner	15

In This Issue . . .

What is the ‘way of unknowing’? When this topic was chosen for the current issue of *Center Voice*, it seemed familiar, as many of us have been exploring it through practice. When it came to defining it for articles and interviews, however, we encountered the radical nature of the unknown. And, dear reader, reading about it requires and teaches detachment and surrender of the purest sort. It can’t be defined. It can’t be understood. It is the heart of mysticism itself. To enter into it is to realize humility and encounter Truth: “I don’t know” is the path to the gate.

In this issue, we look at the quest for knowledge in contemporary society and the mystical reality lying eternally beyond it. In “The Gate of Unknowing,” Joel invites us to explore our attachment to beliefs as the cause of this thirst for knowledge and contrast it with the need to release conceptual knowing altogether as the spiritual path unfolds.

In “Questioning the Scientific Worldview,” Tom McFarlane points out the accepted role of science in our society as the provider of answers and discusses the limitations inherent in such a position. In “Center Voices,” four Center members describe their experience of releasing ways of knowing and how it has affected their lives. Finally, this is supplemented “In Their Words” by the timeless voices of the mystics reporting from the depths of the unknown and beckoning us to follow—if we dare. We hope this issue leaves you knowing less and less and bravely confessing, “I just don’t know.”

*Everything I considered as a sign
was finally revealed to be only a veil.
Everything I recognized as a resource
was finally revealed to be useless.*

— Abdullah Ansari of Herat (Muslim)

Center For Sacred Sciences Staff

Spiritual Director

Joel Morwood

Board of Directors

Joel Morwood
Jennifer W. Knight
Fred Chambers
Sheila Craven

Library

Director:

Jennifer W. Knight

Assistants:

Bob Carnes
Deanna Cordes
Therese Engelmann
Gene Gibbs
Wesley Lachman
Miriam Reinhart

Retreat Coordinator

Fred Chambers

Publicity

Sheila Craven

Office Assistant

Maggie Free

Newsletter

Managing Editor:

Dawn Kurzka

Production:

Mike Craven

Photography:

Merry Song
Mike Craven
Tom McFarlane

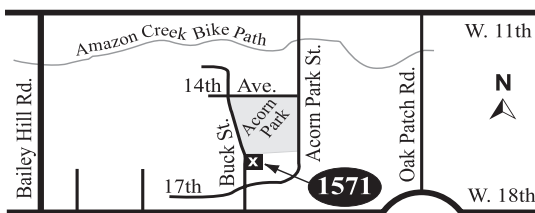
Proofreading:

Karen Fierman
Maggie Free
Wayne Leeds

Mailing:

Wayne Leeds

The Center for Sacred Sciences is a non-profit, tax exempt church 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, informed by the Enlightenment or Gnosis of Joel, our Spiritual Director. Among the Center's current offerings are Sunday programs with meditation and talks by Joel, once-a-month Sunday video presentations, twice-yearly meditation retreats, and weekly Practitioners Groups for committed spiritual seekers. The Center also maintains an extensive lending library of books, tapes and periodicals covering a broad spectrum of spiritual, psychological, and scientific subjects. Joel's teachings are offered freely as a labor of love, and he receives no financial support from the Center. We rely chiefly on volunteer labor to conduct our programs, and on donations and membership dues to meet our operating expenses.



Meetings: 1571 Buck St., Eugene

Phone: (541) 345-0102

<http://www.integralscience.org/css>

Center Voice is published twice yearly, winter and summer, by Center for Sacred Sciences. Submissions or letters to the editor should be sent to:

The Center Voice

1430 Willamette St., #164

Eugene, OR 97401-4049

© 2001 Center for Sacred Sciences

CENTER NEWS

Wild and Sweet Christmas Party

Our almost annual Christmas party was held again at the warm and friendly home of Grace and Ray Mikesell. An amusing event it was when an entire table-full of desserts arrived early for a potluck dinner and the actual "food" appeared little by little and somewhat later. As we don't generally sign up for certain dishes but let it unfold as it does, it was mystifying to contemplate a meal of sugar and wine! It provided, however, simply another teaching on uncertainty.

The evening progressed, with enthusiastic singing accompanied by Gene Gibbs, Vip Short and Wesley Lachmann on guitars, Steve Zorba Frankel on violin, and *lots* of us on rhythm instruments. As the energy quickly became more vigorous, the Christmas carols disintegrated into wilder music. Joel helped by announcing that he'd come to realize all music is sacred music. To the chagrin of *some* of us, Gene didn't bring his humorous songs with him, but Wesley Lachmann came to our rescue with one of his own compositions—about the Center—and had us rolling in the aisles. It's good to know there's another wise guy in the group!



Christmas Party

Practitioner Groups Expanding

Due to the number of members in the Practitioners Group, during October through February there were two separate groups on two separate nights. Having one class taught by Joel and another by Andrea gave members the happy choice of either or both. Andrea taught a course on the teachings of Hui Neng, the 6th Zen Patriarch, emphasizing clinging to nothing as me or mine. With Joel we studied some of the sermons of Meister Eckhart, ending with Sermon 52 in which Eckhart advises us to be nothing, know nothing, and have nothing. Several of us chose a double-whammy and got knocked further into the "I don't know" category. What a way to go!

An Evening with Andrea

During January and February, Andrea Pucci offered three satsangs on Saturday evenings at the home of Maggie Free. These were not official Center functions, but provided an additional format for people to share and receive teachings from Andrea. Judging from the attendance and length of each session, they were well received.

Spring Retreat

Guided by the inspired choreography of Andrea, twenty-five of us practiced “Dancing with the Elements” at the Cloud Mountain Retreat Center in Castle Rock, Washington from April 20-25. Following a spectrum of purification and cultivation exercises drawn from the Tibetan tradition, we experienced the various subtle qualities of energy in our bodies and developed a deeper understanding and awareness of their relationships to each other and to Pure, Primordial Awareness.

This retreat—the first led by Andrea alone—offered us all the opportunity to set aside our ordinary minds and open up to the depths of Awareness revealed by Andrea’s unique and inspiring display. This July Joel, assisted by Tom Kurzka, will lead the Center’s first summer retreat at Cloud Mountain, and in the fall Joel and Andrea will again team up for a nine-day retreat.



RETREATANTS: (Bottom row from left) Todd Corbett, Vip Short, Diana Morris, Niraja Lorenz, Deanna Cordes, Rich Marlatt, Grace Mikesell, (middle row) Megan Greiner, Kate Waterbury, Merry Song, Andrea Pucci, Clivonne Corbett, Hanna Offenbacher, Beth Mackenzie, (top row) Tom McFarlane, Loraine Baker, Janna Latham, Miriam Reinhart, Carla Wenzlaff, Bailey Cunningham, Peggy Prentice, Lewis Bogan, Fred Chambers, Gene Gibbs, and Maggie Free.

Joel Speaks to LIFE

“What the Mystics Say” was the title of a talk given by Joel on Thursday, April 5, 2001, at 7 p.m., at St. Jude Catholic Church in Eugene. With about a hundred people in attendance, including a dozen or more from the Center, a lot of good discussion was generated. This event introduced “A Series on Mysticism,” in which weekly talks were given by local representatives of several religions.

The series was sponsored by Lane Institute of Faith and Education (LIFE), a local interfaith organization dedicated to transcending dogma by fostering dialogue and understanding among religious and spiritual traditions. LIFE is affiliated with Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon and sponsors many presentations. For more information, contact them through e-mail at LIFE@heartofeugene.org or call Barry Nobel at 541-344-3080.

Tom McFarlane—Mystical Math Wizard

When you drive down the street, do you see other cars and drivers, obstacles in your way, buildings you’d like to enter? Distinguishing and labeling forms is a primary way of claiming and grasping things. Tom McFarlane, who (happily for us) moved back to Eugene this past year, offered a class during November and December on “Forms and Distinctions,” based on the mathematical teachings of G. Spencer Brown. At the home of Tom and Dawn Kurzka, the brave participants learned that in deeply studying this material, much of it could be accessed by letting go of understanding. Thank you, Tom, for leading us down this mystifying path and giving us yet another lesson in the unknown.





THE GATE OF UNKNOWING

by Joel

Enlightenment, Realization, or Gnosis is nothing that can be attained through any of our conventional ways of knowing. This is because conventional knowledge is based on imaginary distinctions, which we take to represent reality. The Reality that Gnosis reveals, however, is non-dual, and without distinctions. To the extent that we reify the distinctions of conventional knowledge as inherently existing entities and objects, they act as veils to our Realization of this Non-dual Reality. Thus, to attain Gnosis we must surrender our belief that conventional knowledge gives us knowledge of Reality. This is why the Taoist sage, Lao Tzu, asks:

*When your discernment penetrates to the four quarters
Are you capable of not knowing anything?¹*

And why the great Sufi poet, Rumi, writes:

*Where should I seek knowledge? In the abandonment of
knowledge.²*

Because as Zen Master, Suzuki Roshi, explains:

*If you want to understand it, you cannot understand it. When
you give up trying to understand it, true understanding is
always there.³*

Now many seekers take such teachings to mean that, in order to attain Gnosis, we must stop trying to grasp reality through formal philosophical modes of thinking. This is certainly true, as far as it goes. The trouble is, it does not go far enough. What Gnosis demands is something much more radical. The Christian mystic, St. John of the Cross, explains:

*Those are decidedly hindered, then, from attainment of this
high state of union with God who are attached to any
understanding, feeling, imagining, opinion, desire, or way
of their own, or to any other of their works or affairs, and
know not how to detach and denude themselves of these
impediments. Their goal transcends all of this, even the
loftiest object that can be known or experienced. Conse-
quently, they must pass beyond everything to unknowing.⁴*

In other words, it is not just our philosophical knowledge that must be surrendered. We must surrender belief in *any* of our conventional ways of knowing—including those everyday, ‘common sense’ ways of knowing we take so much for granted.

This is easier said than done for two reasons. The first is that our most primitive forms of knowledge are based on elementary distinctions which, under normal circumstances, we are not even aware we are making. Consequently, before we can surrender our belief in *all* forms of knowledge, we must first become mindful of those subliminal mental processes on which knowledge itself is founded.

The second reason is that even the creation and acquisition of our most sophisticated forms of knowledge is by no means a dispassionate affair. Except in the rarest of cases, it is motivated by a desire to in some way enhance and protect ourselves. The more we think we know about the world, the more we feel we can control and manipulate it to our own ends. By the same token, the less we think we know, the more we feel lost and vulnerable. Consequently, the prospect of surrendering our belief in all forms of knowledge is quite frightening, for it means we must be willing to enter a state of such profound *unknowing* that we literally no longer have the slightest idea of who we are, or where!

Roughly speaking, we create and acquire conventional forms of knowledge within a hierarchy of types or levels. Although these types and levels interact and interpenetrate each other in complex ways, for simplicity’s sake we can think of this as similar to putting on layers of clothing. And because we are convinced that all these various layers of clothing are necessary for our survival in a cold cruel world, we develop strong attachments to them. Our task on the spiritual path, however, is to progressively divest ourselves of these garments until we stand utterly naked and exposed. Only by passing through the gate of complete unknowingness can we open ourselves to the Realization that there is no ‘cold cruel world’ to begin with! Everything, including our supposed ‘selves,’ is only the inexhaustible Radiance of Consciousness, Itself.

So, let us look at some of the different types of knowledge that must be surrendered, as well as some of the major forms our resistance can take when it comes time to do so. It is important to keep in mind, however, that individual seekers can have varying degrees of attachment to different types of knowledge, and so will experience varying degrees of resistance to surrendering them. What’s more, as a practical matter, most seekers do this in a piecemeal fashion, like someone who

might remove his pants before taking off his overcoat. Thus, our progress from knowing to unknowing usually follows a more complicated and circuitous route than can be presented here.

Our highest and most all-encompassing level of conventional knowledge consists of *worldviews*. Sticking with our clothing metaphor, we can think of them as our overcoats. Worldviews come in a variety of forms—symbolic, mythic, religious, or philosophic—and are usually shared by members of a particular culture or sub-culture. The worldview of modern secular culture, for instance, is the philosophy of scientific materialism, while the worldview of medieval Europe was Catholic Christianity. But however different they may be, all worldviews represent an attempt to organize lower levels of knowledge into a coherent picture of the cosmos as a whole and our own place within it.

Most of us inherit our worldview from the culture we grew up in and tend to take its fundamental assumptions for granted. Although often unconscious, these assumptions influence our lives in quite concrete ways. To give but one example, religious worldviews teach us that some part of ourselves—a soul, psyche, or mind-stream—survives death, and so we must be concerned about how our actions in this life will affect the next. According to scientific materialism, on the other hand, we are purely physical beings for whom death is final. Consequently, there is no need to worry about what happens to us in some postmortem state.

In general, it is not too difficult for seekers who come to a mystical path holding a religious worldview to surrender their attachment to it. This is because virtually all religions insist that, in the final analysis, Absolute Reality (God, Brahman, Buddha-nature, the Great Tao, etc.) is a Mystery which cannot be grasped by the human mind. Therefore, all that seekers who are already committed to a religious worldview really have to do is take this teaching seriously. Instead of regarding their religious doctrines as absolute, they have to learn to see them as simply “fingers pointing to the moon.”

Although initially some seekers may fear that making this kind of shift in perspective will compromise their faith, in the end most find that the more they glimpse the Moon of Reality directly, without the mediation of doctrines, the more they actually come to appreciate the richness and depths of the doctrines, themselves.

Sometimes seekers who have never been exposed to the mystical dimensions of their own religious traditions become attracted to the mystical teachings of other traditions. The danger for them is that, rather than focus on the essence of the teachings, they fixate on the worldviews in which these teachings are formulated. For instance, westerners who are attracted to Eastern traditions often become fascinated by

concepts of karma, reincarnation, subtle energy systems, etc. While this kind of knowledge can certainly be useful for guiding one’s practice, if a seeker becomes attached to it as representing reality, he or she has merely exchanged one overcoat for another. To avoid this trap we need to heed the great Zen master, Dogen. Although his words are aimed at Buddhists, they apply to anyone walking a mystical path:

To follow the buddha completely means you do not have your old views. To hit the mark completely means you have no new nest in which to settle.⁵

Seekers who come to a mystical path with a scientific materialist worldview often have a much more difficult time of surrendering it than those who hold a religious worldview. The reason for this is that, while it is easy for materialists to regard religious worldviews as imaginary, they believe their own worldview to be ‘true,’ because it is ‘proven’ by science. As a result, they are constantly trying to reduce mystical teachings to their own materialist categories, and so end up never taking off their overcoats at all.

Since seekers who hold a scientific materialist worldview usually pride themselves on being logical thinkers, the remedy for their attachment is to conduct a logical inquiry into the nature of science itself. Such an inquiry, if pursued rigorously, will destroy the belief that science can ever give us any kind of absolute knowledge, let alone an absolute worldview. (See Tom McFarlane’s article in this issue.)

It is perhaps fair to say, however, that most of us in our day-to-day lives are not particularly concerned with worldviews. We are content to let the experts (theologians or scientists) figure out the ultimate nature of the cosmos for us. What really concerns us are matters closer at hand. This brings us to the next level of knowledge which consists of social and political *ideologies*. We might compare our ideological convictions to the dress clothes which we like to wear when making public appearances.

People who are strongly attached to this level of knowledge tend to see the world in quite dualistic terms as a great ethical struggle being waged between diametrically opposed historical forces, such as liberalism vs. conservatism, socialism vs. capitalism, localism vs. globalism, etc. Such people often become ardent activists and spend a good deal of their time writing letters, joining campaigns, or engaging in protests to promote their chosen Cause. Indeed, the knowledge that they are on the ‘right’ side, fighting the ‘good’ fight, is what gives their lives meaning and purpose.

When people with strong ideological commitments enter a mystical path, they tend to interpret the teachings in ways that support their own partisan views. This is especially true when

it comes to teachings about morality and moral precepts. In failing to recognize that, from a mystical perspective, moral precepts are tools for fostering selfless love and compassion in their own lives, they seize on them as reflecting social and political imperatives to which everyone should conform. Thus, instead of softening the hearts of such seekers, practicing moral precepts often has the contrary effect of hardening them.

The antidote for seekers with this type of attachment is not to give up their activism, but to cultivate the virtues of humility and tolerance. Humility is born of the recognition that we do not and cannot ever know whether our own actions are ultimately right or wrong. All we can know is whether they are motivated by self-centered grasping and aversion, or selfless love and compassion. Tolerance comes from the recognition that, although we might not agree with our adversaries' views, we cannot know with absolute certainty that they are false.

In this we would do well to emulate the great Indian activist, Mahatma Gandhi. Gandhi refused to kill British soldiers, not because he felt himself to be morally superior to them, but for precisely the opposite reason. He was humble enough to recognize his conviction that Britain's colonization of India was wrong was only relative in nature. In his eyes, however, killing was an absolute act. Therefore, he reasoned, he could not commit an absolute act based on what, in the nature of things, could only be a relative judgment. If we can be as detached from our own ideological views as Gandhi was, then taking part in social and political activities can itself provide powerful opportunities for furthering our spiritual practice.

Whether or not a person is attached to a particular social or political ideology, almost everyone is attached to that common sense, *practical knowledge* necessary for the conduct of everyday life. We might compare this level of knowledge to a suit of work clothes. It includes everything from learning facts about the products we buy, to acquiring skills needed for getting better jobs, to understanding the people we encounter in our daily lives.

One reason we are so attached to this kind of knowledge is, of course, that all our worldly comfort and happiness seems to depend on it. If we are not reliably informed about the world around us, we may miss opportunities to improve our circumstances, or fall prey to others who will take advantage of our ignorance. But, in addition to its utilitarian value, there is an even more profound reason for our attachment to it. Because everyone in our immediate environment shares in this same pool of practical knowledge, we take for granted that, regardless of the accuracy of any particular piece of information, fundamentally it must reflect a real world of real objects, existing out there, apart from ourselves. Therefore, to question its underlying veracity seems to threaten not only our physical well-being, but our very sanity.

This is why almost all seekers experience great resistance when it comes to surrendering belief in the absolute nature of their practical knowledge. "After all," they insist, "we still have

to live in the relative world!" What Gnosis requires, however, is precisely the Realization that *there is no relative world!*—that the 'objects' so familiar to us are, in fact, reifications of imaginary distinctions. Here is how the Confucian, Kao P'an-lung, described his own direct insight into this truth:

*Suddenly, I realized this and said, "it really is like this, in reality there is not a single thing!" With this single thought, all entanglements were broken. Suddenly, it was as if a load of a hundred pounds had fallen to the ground in an instant. It was as if a flash of lightning had penetrated the body and pierced the intelligence.*⁶

The most effective way to arrive at this insight is to meditate on the moment-to-moment impermanence of all the sensory phenomena we perceive. The more we experience for ourselves how transitory these phenomena truly are, the more we recognize that the 'objects' in our environment which seem so substantial are actually constructs of our minds and, therefore, "empty" (as the Buddhists like to say) of any inherent existence. Then, although we can still make use of practical knowledge, we no longer cling to the belief that it represents a real 'world' of solid 'things' in which we can find any abiding happiness.

Having stripped ourselves of our work clothes, we come down to the next level of knowledge, which we can compare to our most intimate apparel—our underwear. This we might call *personal knowledge*. It consists of what we know—or *think* we know—about ourselves and includes such things as our sensations, emotions, ideas, opinions, feelings, desires and aversions, likes and dislikes, memories of the past, and fantasies of the future—in short, everything we believe constitutes our individual identity.

Needless to say, this is the level of knowledge we are most attached to. In fact, it is almost impossible to conceive of life without it. What would it mean, for instance, not to know what you think or feel, like or dislike, remember, or expect? For most seekers, the prospect of falling into this kind of ignorance is quite terrifying because it seems that if we really didn't know any of these things, we would not exist at all! And, of course, this is just what the mystics say. In reality, we are not our thoughts, feelings, likes, dislikes, memories, or expectations. But until we surrender our belief that we are these things, we cannot discover who we *truly* are.

There are two main methods for surrendering your attachment to this kind of personal knowledge. One is to cultivate such an intense devotion to some form of the Divine that you are willing to totally surrender yourself to it. Eventually, this will bring you to a state where, as St. Teresa of Avila, writes:

*There is a self-forgetfulness which is so complete that it really seems as though the soul no longer existed, because it is such that there is neither knowledge nor remembrance that there is either heaven or life or honour for her.*⁷

The second method is to meditate on the impermanence of whatever internal phenomena you think constitute your 'self.'

Just as meditating on the impermanence of external phenomena leads to the realization that there are no real ‘objects,’ so meditating on internal phenomena leads to the realization that there is no real ‘self’. It is nothing more than an imaginary character in a story which the mind constantly tells itself!

But even a seeker who gets a genuine glimpse into his or her own selflessness is still not necessarily out of the woods. So attached are we to conventional ways of knowing, that our minds are apt to seize on this very insight with the thought, “Aha! Now I know that I am nothing!” But *knowing* that you are nothing is not at all the same as *not knowing* anything. Only if you can allow *all* thoughts—even the thought “I am nothing”—to dissolve away without a trace will you be able to enter the gate of true *unknowing*. This is the state of emptiness or *kenosis* in which all conventional knowledge is wiped out, for as the Hindu saint, Lalleshwari, says:

*Neither silence nor yogic postures
enable you to enter there.
In that state there is no knowledge,
no meditation, no Shiva or Shakti.
All that remains is That.
O Lalli, you are That.
Attain That.*⁸

Kenosis, however, is not the same as Gnosis. There remains one last barrier to full Enlightenment. We might call this the *First Distinction*, and compare it to the sensation of our bare skin. Even though we have shed all our clothes, we still feel a nameless, primordial sense of separation. This is how the anonymous Christian author of the *Cloud of Unknowing* expresses it:

*Long after you have successfully forgotten every creature
and its works, you will find that a naked knowing and feeling
of your own being still remains between you and your God.
And believe me, you will not be perfect in love until this, too,
is destroyed.*⁹

The trouble with this First Distinction is that it is prior to thought, language, and all other forms of distinction. As such, it is not something that you create. In fact, it creates you—or rather, the First Distinction *is* that very experience of being a ‘you.’ Consequently, there is no way ‘you’ can surrender it. In fact, any effort ‘you’ make to do so simply serves to keep this distinction in place. This is why Enlightenment always comes spontaneously as an act of grace. And this grace acts only in a state in which, not only has all your knowledge been erased, but even your attempts to attain knowledge have fallen away. Thus, Zen master, Hakuin, writes:

*When all the effort you can muster has been exhausted and
you have reached a total impasse...it will suddenly come and
you will break free. The phoenix will get through the golden
net. The crane will fly free of the cage.*¹⁰

Here is how the Christian mystic, Dionysius the Areopagite, describes the seeker who suddenly finds that the Primal Distinction has been shattered:

*He breaks free...away from what sees and is seen, and he
plunges into the truly mysterious darkness of unknowing.
Here, renouncing all that the mind may conceive, wrapped
entirely in the intangible and the invisible, he belongs
completely to him who is beyond everything. Here, being
neither oneself nor someone else, one is supremely united by
a completely unknowing inactivity of all knowledge, and
knows beyond the mind by knowing nothing.*¹¹

This is also why the Sufis insist that the spiritual path leads, not to greater and greater knowledge, but to greater and greater bewilderment, because as Ibn ‘Arabi writes:

*The bewilderment of the gnostic in the Divine Side is the
greatest of bewilderments, since he stands outside of restric-
tion and delimitations....No curtain and no veil remains for
this most elevated locus of witnessing rends and tears them
all.*¹²

Finally, it should be said that, although Gnosis always dawns in a state of kenosis, like all states, kenosis passes. Gnosis, however, does not pass—nor does the ignorance to which the Gnostic has been brought. Indeed, these two are identical, for even though thoughts arise again and conventional knowledge returns, the Gnostic continues to know nothing, precisely because there is no ‘thing’ to be known and no ‘one’ to know it...and even this is saying too much.

❖ Joel, Spring 2001

1. *Lao Tzu: Tao Te Ching*, trans. D.C. Lau (London: Penguin Books, 1963), 66.
2. William C. Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Love: The Spiritual Teachings of Rumi* (Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 1983), 175.
3. Shunryu Suzuki, *Zen Mind, Beginner’s Mind* (New York: Weatherhill, 1970), 131.
4. *John of the Cross: Selected Writings*, ed. Kieran Kavanaugh, O.C.D. (New York: Paulist Press, 1987), 86-87.
5. Dogen, *Moon in a Dewdrop: Writings of Zen Master Dogen*, ed. Kazuaki Tanahashi (San Francisco: North Point Press, 1985), 43.
6. Rodney L. Taylor, *The Religious Dimensions of Confucianism* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1990), 62.
7. St. Teresa of Avila, *Interior Castle*, trans. E. Allison Peers (New York: Image Books, a Division of Doubleday, 1961), 219.
8. *Lalleshwari: Spiritual Poems by a Great Siddha Yogini*, rendered by Swami Muktananda (South Fallsburg, NY: SYDA Foundation, 1981), 84.
9. Anonymous, *The Cloud of Unknowing And The Book of Privy Counseling*, ed. William Johnston (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday & Company, Inc., an Image Book, 1973), 103.
10. Hakuin, *The Essential Teachings of Zen Master Hakuin*, trans. Norman Waddell (Boston: Sambhala, 1994), 62.
11. *Pseudo-Dionysius: The Complete Works*, trans. Colm Luibheid (New York: Paulist Press, 1987), 137.
12. William C. Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge* (Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 1989), 381.



QUESTIONING THE SCIENTIFIC WORLDVIEW

by Tom McFarlane

Tom McFarlane is a patent agent and author. His book, Einstein and Buddha: The Parallel Sayings, to be published later this year, presents the provocative parallels between modern physics and the Eastern spiritual traditions. Tom has a B. S. in physics from Stanford University, an M. S. in mathematics from the University of Washington, and an M. A. in philosophy and religion from the California Institute for Integral Studies in San Francisco. He has been affiliated with the Center since 1987.

Most of us were raised with the idea that *reality is the material cosmos*. We were all taught that there is a real external world “out there” containing rocks, atoms, cells, animals, plants, etc., and that this material world is all there is. As Carl Sagan tells us in his opening lines of the popular *Cosmos* television series, “The cosmos is all there is, all there was, and all there ever will be.” According to this worldview, which is known as *materialism*, the matter in the cosmos has evolved over billions of years to form galaxies, suns, and planets, and—on our planet—an incredible variety of complex biological organisms. You are one of these organisms. All your experiences, feelings, thoughts, hopes, dreams, and your very consciousness itself, are nothing but the activity of neurons in your brain. That includes any notions you might entertain about a non-material reality such as God, Tao, Brahman, or Primordial Awareness. All such notions—according to materialism—signify nothing real and are no more than wishful superstitious fantasies of a brain that is complex enough to recognize its own inevitable demise. Obviously, this worldview seriously challenges our spiritual aspirations, as well as the claims of the mystics. How, then, do we respond to this challenge? How do we reconcile this materialistic worldview with the spiritual path? Like any obstacle on the spiritual path, let’s inquire into it with an open and curious mind and see what we find.

Our culture’s materialistic worldview is rooted in *scientism*, which is not the same as science itself. Science in its purest sense is not a worldview but a *method* for systematically investigating and organizing aspects of reality that we access through our senses. Simply put, science is a way of knowing reality. Scientism takes this one step further and claims that science is *the only* way of knowing reality. Whereas science is silent regarding the aspects of reality beyond its scope,

scientism asserts that there is *no* reality beyond its scope. According to scientism, if something is not rational, or not verifiable through the physical senses, then it is not real.

The first thing to notice about scientism is that it makes a fundamental assertion about reality. Scientism says, “science is the *only* way of obtaining true knowledge of reality.” This statement, however, cannot itself be verified by the methods of science. It is like a blind man who claims that *only* through hearing, touching, tasting, and smelling can one know anything for certain about the world. Using only his four senses, though, he obviously cannot prove that there is no fifth sense. It is just the same with scientism. Its claim that the only way to arrive at true knowledge is through the senses cannot itself be verified through the senses. Thus, scientism is based on a “truth” that—according to its very own standard of truth—cannot be true. If we acknowledge this contradiction, then we must admit that scientism has no rational, scientific basis. It is a completely unjustified assumption about reality. We are thus free to let it go.

The second thing to notice about scientism is that it results in a limited view of reality. This is a consequence of the fact that how we look at the world determines what kind of world we find. As Heisenberg, the inventor of quantum mechanics, cautions us,

We have to remember that what we observe is not nature in itself but nature exposed to our method of questioning.¹

So, if the questions we put to nature are limited to strictly scientific questions, then we will only see the limited part of reality that is revealed by that method of questioning. Like the blind man who learns about all sorts of sounds and tastes and textures, but no colors, the method of science reveals a world accessible through our physical senses, but nothing beyond

that limited scope. Now, because scientism clings to the scientific way of knowing reality as the *only* valid way, the limited world that science discovers is mistaken for *all* of reality. And this is historically how scientism resulted in our worldview of materialism: after the limited methods of classical physics discovered a material world, scientism took this world to be all of reality, and materialism was born.

Our materialistic worldview thus rests upon two assumptions: (1) science reveals a material world, and (2) scientism is true. The first assumption has been seriously challenged by the discovery of quantum theory.² As for the second assumption, we have already seen that scientism is no more than an unjustified assumption about reality. And we must be careful to remember that scientism can just as easily fool us into taking a quantum worldview as reality as a classical materialistic worldview. No matter what worldview science might offer, if we mistake it for all of reality, we have bought into scientism.

We see, then, that scientism blinds us to everything in reality that is beyond the scope of the scientific method, no matter what that method may reveal to us. So, how much of reality is left out? Almost all of it! Einstein, for example, tells us

All our science, measured against reality, is primitive and childlike.³

And Heisenberg echoes his words:

The existing scientific concepts cover always only a very limited part of reality, and the other part that has not yet been understood is infinite.⁴

Yet, even though the limited view of materialism isn't ultimately true, it is obviously still very useful to *assume* that things exist in an external world. We don't deny any of this. The question is not whether materialism is a *useful view*; the question is whether it corresponds to *reality*, as scientism might lead us to believe. Because the assumption of a material reality is so useful, we forget that it is just an assumption, and then habitually take it for granted as a reality. It is the same with any scientific theory. It is very useful for a wide range of experience, and this usefulness is evident in the technological success of science. But is this any reason to believe that the scientific theory corresponds to *reality*?

Most of us are sophisticated enough to know that science never provides us with the final theory of reality, and that our ideas about the world can be mistaken sometimes. But we

normally attribute those errors to minor problems with our theory, and believe that our theories are getting closer and closer to the truth. In other words, even if our ideas of reality are never perfect, because they work so well most of the time, we still think they must be *close* to the truth about reality. And since they seem to improve with time, we have the sense they are getting closer and closer to reality. Scientists will often express similar faith in the progress of science—that they are getting closer and closer to the true laws of the universe. They believe that the old theories are wrong and the current theories right, or at least somehow “closer” to reality. As the history of science tells us, however, this isn't actually true. To see why, let's consider an example.

Imagine you discover a remote island whose inhabitants believe that the sun, moon, planets, and stars all move around the stationary earth.

(This is the *geocentric* view of the cosmos.) These clever people show you how they can make accurate predictions of celestial events such as eclipses. They then confidently tell you, “Because it works so well, it must be true.” You see that it does, in fact, work very well. But you don't think it is true. You explain to them, “Actually, the sun is at rest in the center of the solar system, and the earth moves around it with all the other planets.” (This is the *heliocentric* view of the

cosmos.) When you tell them how the earth is going around the sun at 66,000 mph, and spinning around on its axis at 1,000 mph at the equator, though, they laugh at you. “How do you explain,” they say, “why we don't feel these giant spinning motions? It obviously is far simpler to assume that the earth is at rest, they say, than to explain why we don't feel these motions. After all, why deny our direct experience that the earth is at rest?” Their view, you begin to see, has its merits. It explains the positions of the planets and doesn't have all these other complications. And you can't find any way to convince them that your heliocentric view is the right one.

The moral to the story, of course, is that the usefulness of a theory doesn't prove that it is true. In addition, we see that two theories might be just as useful, but correspond to totally different views of reality. According to the geocentric view, the earth is *really* at rest, and the sun is *really* moving. When we look in the sky and see the sun move, that is a *real* motion through the sky. According to the heliocentric view, on the other hand, the sun is *really* at rest, and the earth is *really*

“... even if our ideas of reality are never perfect, because they work so well most of the time, we still think they must be close to the truth about reality. And since they seem to improve with time, we have the sense they are getting closer and closer to reality.”

moving. When we see the sun moving through the sky, that is not a real motion at all, but an *illusion* due to the motion of the earth. These are two very different realities, both compatible with the same facts. Since the facts can be explained by both of these theories, we are not justified in claiming that one particular theory is the true description of reality.

Nevertheless, you might be thinking that the heliocentric view is still the *true* one, and that the geocentric view is *false*. After all, we *do* teach the heliocentric view in schools and talk about the earth's orbit around the sun. In fact, however, Einstein's theory of general relativity has demonstrated that neither the heliocentric nor the geocentric theory is ultimately correct. There is only the relative motion of the sun and earth, and we cannot scientifically justify the statement that the sun is *really* at rest, or that the earth is *really* at rest. We are free to assume either point of view; but neither point of view is absolutely true, neither one is more real than the other. So it makes no sense to say that one of these views is ultimately "closer" to the truth than the other. They are simply different points of view, and each may be more or less useful depending on the circumstances.

The whole idea that a scientific theory is a true or false description of reality is itself an illusion. Even if a new theory is more comprehensive and elegant than prior theories, that is still no guarantee that it is closer to the truth in any absolute sense. We can only judge a theory's degree of truth by using some criteria for what makes a "good" theory; but there are no absolute rules for selecting such criteria. One theory may be more comprehensive or convenient or useful for our present purposes—but what if those purposes change? One theory might strike us as more elegant or beautiful—but what happens when our aesthetic sensibilities change?

We, as a culture, agree on a given worldview as a convention. It becomes our conventional reality. But when we are not aware of its conventional nature, we mistake this conventional reality for ultimate reality. This mistake—confusing the relative with the absolute—is what the mystics call ignorance or delusion. Materialism, like any other worldview, is ultimately no more than a way of interpreting experience that fits our conventions. Other radically different interpretations of experience can also account for our experience and be very useful for their own purposes. But any view—whether scientific or spiritual—is ultimately just a view, and not reality itself. As the Buddha said,

*These teachings are only a finger pointing toward Noble Wisdom . . . they are not the Truth itself, which can only be self-realized within one's deepest consciousness.*⁵

In the process of deepening our inquiry into the nature of reality, we are limited only by assumptions we cling to, whether they be assumptions about the object of our seeking or about the method we're using. We can only continue to deepen our knowledge by acknowledging that our worldviews,

theories, and methods of investigation are, at best, only provisional, and eventually must be surrendered. As Heisenberg tells us,

*Whenever we proceed from the known into the unknown we may hope to understand, but we may have to learn at the same time a new meaning of the word "understanding."*⁶

So if we wish to become ever more intimate with reality, we must continually go beyond our current way of understanding, our current mode of inquiry, and our current notions of reality. In an unlimited inquiry, the very method of science itself must finally be surrendered, leaving us simply with *science*, which literally means *knowledge*. This suggests that *science* in its most radical sense is not limited to any particular method of science, any assumption about reality, or even any idea of what "knowledge" means. Only when we surrender everything and open ourselves to the unknown without any fixed method or framework or preconception, can Reality then perfectly reveal itself as the *Knowingness* that is inherent to *Consciousness, Itself*.

❖ Tom, Spring 2001

1. Werner Heisenberg, *Physics and Philosophy: The Revolution in Modern Science* (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1962), 58.
2. Thomas J. McFarlane, "The Illusion of Materialism," *Center Voice* (Eugene, Oregon: The Center for Sacred Sciences, Summer-Fall 1999), 7-13.
3. Albert Einstein, *The Expanded Quotable Einstein*. ed. Alice Calaprice (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 261.
4. Heisenberg, *ibid*, 201.
5. Dwight Goddard, ed, *A Buddhist Bible* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1970), 292.
6. Heisenberg, *ibid*, 201.

Visit Our Web Site!

<http://www.integralscience.org/css>

The Center's web site includes:

- General information about the purpose, activities, and philosophy of the Center.
- Details about Joel's books and other Center publications.
- Previous newsletters.

What Does Unknowing Mean To You?

In February, we spoke with four Center members about their experience of unknowing. We asked them to describe the following: the impact of the spiritual path on knowledge and experience in their life; the appearance of conflict related to mystical claims of the uncertainty of knowledge; and the presence of bewilderment in their practice and experience of unknowing. How do their statements resonate with the puddles or oceans of the unknown encountered in your journey?



Wesley Lachman is a retired Presbyterian minister who was in an experimental family order for two decades. He is a husband, father and grandfather. He is still active in his church and has been a member of the Center for about two years.

The spiritual path has introduced me to the idea of direct knowing, and I think I've experienced that a little bit. There was one time when I was lying in bed thinking about an appointment that I was looking forward to later in the day. I remembered a practice from Meister Eckhart where you say something like "I choose not to long for this appointment." When I said that to myself, I was just instantaneously thrown back into the flowing sensations of my body and the sounds of my wife breathing next to me in bed and the sound of the heater throwing air through the vents. There wasn't any thought: "Oh, let's see, I'll stop now and concentrate on the present." I was just thrown into it, and it was startling and exciting to find such a quick trip.

I used to habitually see the world as these things and people out here [gesturing] and I was trying to respond to that world out of all the stuff and memories and ideas and imaginings that were going on in my head. That is no longer the world. There isn't this kind of substantial world out there and this kind of substantial Wesley in here—the boundaries are much foggier. Now I think of the world as something that's showing up in my awareness. I'm very aware that my past doesn't exist, that what I have is really my fantasies about what happened. And my thoughts about the future are surely fantasy. So now all I have is this present. And I don't really exist as this individual. Wesley is a collection of thoughts from my experience, which take the form of personality, ego, etc. I don't have to worry about him so much. So, in a sense, a lot has been cleared away.

Steindl-Rast says that when we talk about light and the darkness, it's not that the darkness is taken away but that the darkness itself is an illumination. It darkly shines with some kind of message, or blessing. And that seems to be what the mystics are saying: that it's in coming into contact with this thing that we can't know, this darkness that's at the bottom of unknowing, that we *really* find ourselves in our true home. That's a beautiful thing.

The God that we imagine is never going to be the God that is. Like our fantasies about the past and the future, we also have our fantasies about God. And, if we really believe in that fantasy, it's kind of an intellectual idol. Even the best image we have is probably always going to give us distress sooner or later because it will show up false. Maybe the author of *The Cloud of Unknowing* was right—that it's actually through unknowing and not knowing that we know. Maybe that's part of the predicament—that we have to erect some kind of image for God—because sooner or later you have to let go of that image.

One of our biggest mistakes is we think we know. You and I are always coming into situations thinking that we know something. We even sit down in meditation and think that we know what to do there—we know what this is. And yet probably the truest meditations are when we surrender everything we think we know about what we're doing and simply participate in what is given in that moment. It's like this little story in the Bible where Jesus and his disciples were watching people bring gifts to the temple. This poor widow put in a cent and Jesus said, "Look at that widow—she put in more than anyone else, because she put in her whole living."

That's what you and I are asked to do in every moment. To live that moment before God, you lay down all the stuff you thought you knew. You lay it down. The practices that you thought you could do, you just say I'm surrendered here. So, maybe that's even harder than to surrender our possessions. But to give up what we think we know and surrender to the God of now—to surrender this up and become some kind of fool for God or for the sake of Truth—maybe that's what we're being asked to do. Maybe *that's* the unknown.



Fred Chambers has been married 24 years and is the father of a son soon entering college. He works as a mental health counselor and is a pilot who is building a plane. He has been a member of the Center for about nine years, serving on the Board and as retreat coordinator for four of them.

I'd been doing a dream practice for a couple of years and, two or three months ago, I noticed hesitancy when I stated this resolve to awaken in my dream—there was a little fear of what would really happen if I became lucid. So I started saying the resolve deeper into my being. I had a lucid dream about three weeks ago, and a lot of joyousness came out of that whole experience of feeling more free. The next day, I was reading Arnold Toynbee's *A Study of History*. He was talking about how he'd always seen all the civilizations that had risen and fallen as the main actors on the stage of history, but then he'd shifted his awareness to the great religions as the protagonists of history and how all the civilizations related to them. When I was going to bed that night I was saying goodbye to this world, and I was going to go into the dream world and do the lucid dream practice. But then it struck me that the dream world and the waking world weren't the main characters in life that I'd been seeing. It was the awareness that continued throughout the waking world and the dreaming world that was really the main actor on the stage.

My view of knowledge has had a similar shift. Knowledge used to be the main thing: to increase my knowledge of facts and figures, to gain spiritual knowledge, used to be something that I really valued highly. But this all has shifted into seeing that all these thoughts and perceptions and ideas we have are really ephemeral. The more I've done practices and been on retreat and had experiences of my own, it's shown me that what the mystics are saying really is true. I've had a little taste of that and so it's allowed my confidence in the mystical way to increase. Reading a book and gaining new knowledge or new understanding about a certain practice or what a mystic is trying to say—it's valuable to have that knowledge to use it as kind of a guide to go somewhere. But knowledge is limited because it is ephemeral. Awareness is the ground of all these ideas.

Fear always arises on the path and it arises in relation to that place of letting go of everything, that place of realizing that everything is uncertain. It's a continual working with that fear, to try to relax and feel more comfortable with this great spaciousness which is an unknowing. It's like always coming up against this paradox—you get this spiritual practice to do and the more you do it the more you kind of understand, you see the paradox of it—that “you” can never do this practice. And so there's a little distress, or a little uncertainty, or you feel kind of lost or confused and there's no way to figure it out. I guess that

place where you need to go is right there—that ‘don't know mind,’ not knowing what to do is the place to really be. If there is any advancement to be made, it is to kind of rest in this place of unknowing and to just feel at home there.



Diana Morris works as a mental health specialist in Eugene doing diagnosis and referral. Raised in the Jewish faith, she embraced atheism as a young adult, and finally began her spiritual path about twenty years ago, following many teachers along the way. She moved to Eugene from Alaska two

years ago to be with her mother and has been a member of the Center for about a year.

Rumi talks about the play between being close to God and then feeling the distance from him. Bewildered and distraught is when I don't feel the closeness, but then as soon as I say that, I know that isn't true, because if I'm not feeling any closeness there's no issue—there's no dismay or distraught. But if you get a taste of something sweet, and you're in union and have a connection and there's that sweetness, and then the next moment it's not there, then the grasping to bring that back is like your lover just said “I don't want to see you anymore; it's over with.” It's that sort of angst, so it feels like being shut out. It must be me who's doing the shutting out and, if I know on some level that I'm the cause of my own suffering, that's more suffering [laughing].

The spiritual path has definitely changed my experience of the world incredibly—a softening, more at ease, accepting, not as identified with all my training in psychology. I went through a thing where I just wanted to throw psychology out. I thought it had totally intensified my identification with the body/mind. But now, as I try to say that, I realize that it's just psychology and I really don't have any energy for it or against—my spiritual experience has loosened that.

I used to have the belief that I really didn't know something unless I could articulate it, unless I could say it in a way that it could be grasped by someone else. If I couldn't do that, then I really didn't have it myself. And then, there was a moment, and I just saw that I knew, and that that knowing couldn't, nor did it need to be put into words or conveyed. Then it didn't matter whether what I was saying could be proved or couldn't be proved. It did not concern me at all. And that has just totally changed my view.

It's something of a paradox. I know that the way is of unknowing. When I think I know something, then I'm in my mind, trying to recreate a past experience and relate it. And, I

know that knowing isn't it. So where does that leave me? [laughing] The truth of that is to just have faith and surrender. Byron Katie has a four-question inquiry and the second question is "Can you really know that?" I find that practice to be very, very valuable for me. For instance, I have ideas about my own process. There is something in the way that my mind works that wants to make things linear and logical so they make sense. The real power in the question is when I turn it back on myself. It's a reverse thing. Take depression: I have a feeling of being depressed, my mind searches for a reason, and it says "Oh, I haven't seen-so-and-so for awhile" or "I haven't had a spiritual connection for awhile, so that's why I'm depressed." When actually that's just the story that I attach on the end so it makes sense. That's how I think my mind creates this illusion of knowing.

Sometimes when I hear things questioned, I get that "You mean I have to let go of that, *too*?" I didn't realize I'd had a fear that there would be some kind of overthrow of the status quo—I'm so much a part of the status quo that I couldn't see myself outside of it. And in the process of throwing out all the sacred cows as they come up—it's akin to falling into the void. To me, that's the place where I feel fear inside. There's someone hanging on for dear life to a few of these sacred cows. This really has been a big part of my spiritual journey. You know, part of being an atheist is thinking that you really know something. So, not knowing has sort of been a journey in reverse.



Carla Wentzlaff lives with two cats and two birds in the woods in the suburbs. She works part-time at Oregon Research Institute doing computer support and intervention and teaching computer classes. Outside the job, she paints with watercolors—flora, fauna, still life—and has been a member of the Center for 11 years.

The spiritual path has definitely changed how I am in the world. Instead of thinking of knowledge as acquiring more through reading or through experience, knowledge is getting in touch with my intuitive inner wisdom. And that's more of a letting go. It's made me more trusting in things that come up in my life—that I don't need to know how it's going to turn out in the end—like going into a new job, I just need to act in accordance to what's true right now. I don't have to manipulate.

It's more like dancing with life. It is more of a trusting almost in the cells of my body in everything, a deep trusting that whatever's gonna happen is gonna happen. I've been through lay-offs at work and, before the spiritual practice, I

would have gotten all upset. Now it was more like, "Oh boy, this is great, now I can see what else I can get into." And it's a lot more fun, joyous. So my attitude about things has changed greatly.

I was just commissioned by someone to do a painting of his wife's favorite cat who died. To me, it's frightening to do commissions. Are they going to like this or not? And, when I started the painting, I struggled with it for a couple weeks. All I had was photographs. I was nervous, and it showed in what I was doing. I was coming into it with an attitude "I don't want to do this, I don't want to do this." [laughing] And, then I just went in there one day and it dropped off and I was having fun with it, throwing paint at it—"Oh, I'll try this"—suddenly I was playing with it and it worked.

The unknowing I've definitely had experience with. There's a birdfeeder on a pole [in the yard] and it goes into two hoops at the top and the feeders hang from that. So there's a V in the middle. Recently, there've been two gray squirrels coming around, and last Saturday one kept going up the pole, reaching over with his forefeet and grabbing hold of the feeder and eating. So I kept going out there and scaring him away; this happened half a dozen times.

Sunday morning, I looked out and there he was again. So I went out to scare him and he didn't go. I went right up to him this close [gesturing a couple of feet] and he didn't move—then I realized his hind foot was wedged in that V and just totally stuck. Here I was not knowing what to do. And my mind was going through, "Gee, I wish I had these really heavy gloves" (I used to work at a wildlife rehab), and I didn't, and I knew from past experience that they can really gash you up.

I ran in the house not knowing what to do, knowing something had to be done. I grabbed a towel and some old, little gloves and went outside and reached up with the towel under him, and he immediately grabbed onto the towel like a lifeline. So I grabbed a hold of his back and at the same time reached under and was trying to get his foot out and it wasn't moving; I was afraid of being attacked as well. Suddenly the fear disappeared and I realized something had to be done now. I let him settle more into the towel; then I let go of his back and pushed hard with the palm of my hand under his toes, and finally he was free. He just jumped out of the towel and was off. He hasn't been up that pole since! So this not knowing worked.

There're times when the unknowing is uncomfortable or frightening—suddenly being so aware that you have no control over things, or your ideas or your supposed knowledge about something may be totally wrong. That can be frightening. It's usually when I'm in that unknowing, and I let go of needing to know things, that's when my best work happens—spontaneously.

In the Words of the Mystics

What is the ultimate limit of knowledge? It is the stage represented by the view that nothing has ever existed from the very beginning.

— Chuang Tzu (Taoist)

*If the mind makes no discriminations,
the ten thousand things
are as they are, of single essence.
To understand the mystery of this One-essence
is to be released from all entanglements.*

— Sengtsan (Buddhist)

*Wholly intent upon God, this simple blind love beats
unceasingly upon the dark cloud of unknowing,
leaving all discursive thought beneath the cloud of
forgetting.*

— Cloud of Unknowing (Christian)

*For within the spirit is no separation or joining, but
thought cannot conceive of other than these
two...How should the intellect find its way to this
connection? For it is in bondage to separation and
joining.*

— Rumi (Muslim)

*If the mind is turned in, towards the Source of
illumination, objective knowledge ceases, and the
Self alone shines as the Heart.*

— Ramana Maharshi (Hindu)

*This knowledge cannot be arrived at by the intellect
by means of any rational thought process, for this
kind of perception comes only by divine disclosure.*

— Ibn 'Arabi (Muslim)

*There all things are as one; Distinctions between
"life" and "death," "land" and "sea," have lost their
meaning. But none of this can happen as long as you
remain attached to the reality of the material world.*

— Hasidic Master (Jewish)

*The speakable is deniable, for it is the determinate.
The ultimate truth which is indeterminate is the
unutterable dharma. There the sphere of the speak-
able ceases, the activities of the mind come to an end.*

— Nagarjuna (Buddhist)

*Brahman is beyond the grasp of the senses. The
intellect cannot understand it. It is out of reach of
thought. Such is Brahman, and "That art Thou".*

— Shankara (Hindu)

Be still, and know that I am God.

— Ps. 46:10

*Only when the soul has stripped itself of all limita-
tion and, in mystical language, has descended into
the depths of Nothing does it encounter the Divine.*

— Gershom Scholen (Jewish)

*Self-realisation of Noble Wisdom is not comparable
to the perceptions attained by the sense-mind, nei-
ther is it comparable to the cognition of the discrimi-
nating and intellectual-mind. Both of these presup-
pose a difference between self and not-self and the
knowledge so attained is characterized by individu-
ality and generality. Self-realisation is based on
identity and oneness.*

— Lankavatara Sutra (Buddhist)

*Let me wash my heart of all knowledge, let me make
myself heedless of self; One must not go before the
auspicious Beloved as a master of all sorts of sci-
ences. The spirits of madmen know that this spirit is
the shell of the spirit: For the sake of this knowledge,
you must pass beyond knowledge into madness.*

— Rumi (Muslim)

*So long as there are the opposites of knowledge and
ignorance, in other words distinction and the idea of
difference, the Brahman cannot be realized. By
merging in the Brahman, all differences dissolve into
It and one is forever established in one's true being.*

— Anandamayi Ma (Hindu)

*Intellect is good and desirable to the extent that it
brings you to the King's door. Once you have reached
His door, then divorce the intellect! From this time on
the intellect will be to your loss and a brigand. When
you reach Him, entrust yourself to Him! You have no
business with the how and the wherefore.*

— Rumi (Muslim)

*This perception of the essence of mind takes place
when all previous thoughts have come to a stop and
the next thought has not yet appeared. The mind is
in the spontaneous present, its own reality. It is the
mind which sees its own essence, and this is what we
call primordial wisdom.*

— Lama Gendun Rinpoche (Buddhist)





LIBRARY CORNER

NEW CSS Library Hours:

**Tuesday evenings
6:00 - 8:30 p.m.**

Here we offer reviews of two books demonstrating the mystifying nature of mysticism. Following these, we present evidence of the ongoing and increasing popularity of our library!

presents a series of injunctions or recipes that point back to this moment's direct experience of Original Ground.

With his British colloquialisms, and imaginative lines of thought, he elucidates what may be found by anyone, through recognizing that "I have no Head." The book's theme is based on the simplicity of direct inquiry and direct experience to assist awakening through not ignoring what is obvious to us always.

Face to No-Face—Rediscovering Our Original Nature: Dialogues with Douglas E. Harding

Edited by David Lang. Inner Directions Publishing, 2000.

Face to No-Face, a new book by contemporary mystic, Douglas Harding, is a series of dialogues taken from talks and interviews conducted over the past 20 years. Harding's previous works are numerous and generally pertain to an oft-recurring theme, which may be summed up in the title of his 1961 book, *On Having No Head*. In *Face to No-Face*, the same essential revelation presented in previous books is re-examined, but with more light and clarity.

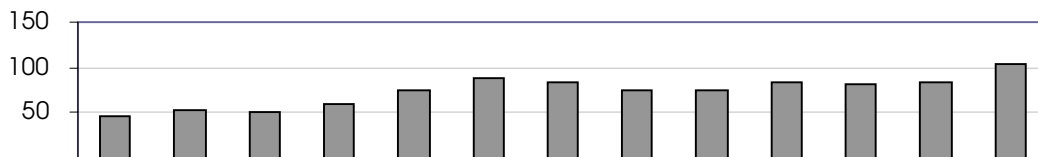
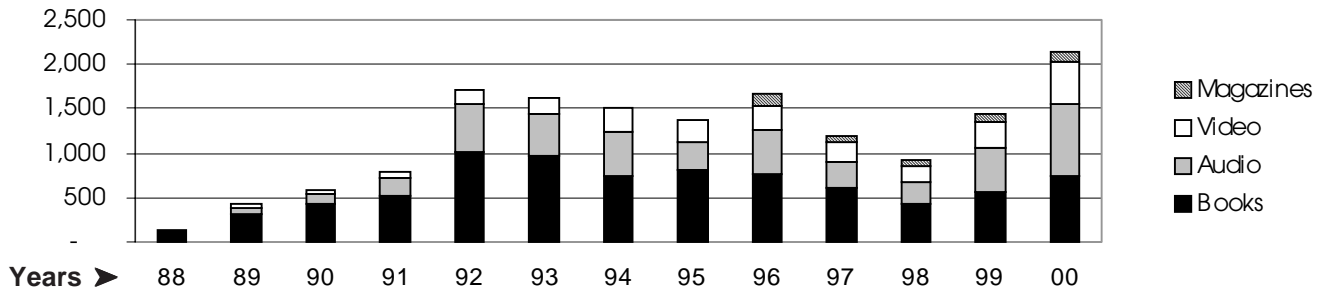
His approach in teaching, true to mysticism and true to his previous style, is using down-to-earth investigations separating our direct experience from "what we've been told." He presents guided investigations into the identification with "me here and you there." Using cardboard tubes, a hand mirror, a few Zen proclamations, and a good deal of humor, Harding

Crooked Cucumber: The Life and Zen Teaching of Shunryu Suzuki

by David Chadwick. Broadway Books, 1999.

If you've read Suzuki Roshi's *Zen Mind, Beginner's Mind* and find it a treasure, this book is for you. If you want a good story, this book is for you. If you want to be brought into the embrace of sorrow, joy, humility, disillusion, bewilderment and amazement, this book is for you. If you want to know what it's about, I can't tell you. The essence of this Zen Master cannot be defined. For both he and this very full story of his life by one of his students are soft and strong, gentle and fierce, yielding and firm, despairing and so, so funny. If you read it, it'll knock your socks off. I bow to David Chadwick for his very alive story of a humble giant. And I bow to Suzuki Roshi in a bow that can never end.

Annual Library Circulation



September 1987 to August 1988: 46 Library users checked out 138 items

September 1999 to August 2000: 104 Library users check out 2,151 items

C
E
N
T
E
R

V
O
I
C
E



S
U
M
M
E
R

2
0
0
1

*The truth
of experience
is written upon
the unknowing
mind of a child.*

 Center for
Sacred Sciences

1430 Willamette, #164
Eugene OR 97401-4049

CHANGE SERVICE REQUESTED

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

**NON PROFIT ORG
US POSTAGE
PAID
EUGENE OR
PERMIT NO. 185**