

COMPLETE SET OF ABSTRACTS

ART OF LISTENING

“The Art of Listening” explores our ability to listen deeply and compassionately. In the modern world this is not a skill that is encouraged. We rarely listen, and others do not listen to us, mostly because we have not been taught how to do so. The necessary training lies through finding calm and stillness within, so that we can listen to the other rather than to our preconceived judgements. When we are fully present and listen to the other, especially our children, our energy can transform them and heal their deep hurts and neglect. We learn about full presence through meditation, which is the practice of being with our true nature. Then it becomes easy to fully be with others. The Fourth Precept of the Buddha about deep listening and compassionate speech provides a guideline. It directs us to examine our positive and negative seeds of experience, and encourages us to water the seeds of self-awareness, compassion and mindfulness that are there within us. That is the practice that enables us to become internally strong.

CONSCIOUSNESS AS FOOD

If we load our consciousness with toxins and violence we should not be surprised by what occupies the driving seat of our life. If we fill our consciousness with nutriment that fosters the energy of mindfulness, we can look forward to enjoying life with a different energy. The intricate connections between eight levels of consciousness are explored to bring home the reality that how we feed our consciousnesses, shapes our lives and destiny. I begin with the Buddha’s Son’s Flesh Sutra and end with a story about Two Wolves. The bottom line between these stories is awareness about the consequences of our consumption, so that we do not create internal violence to our systems - or to the systems we interconnect with.

CRAVINGS, DESIRES, AND ATTACHMENTS

This essay deals directly with our suffering and unhappiness. The causes are identified as the desire cycles our ego-attachments enmesh ourselves in. The solution is to de-identify with the desire process. How do we do this? I talk about the incorrect perceptions we have of ourselves and of reality. To move out of this we must nurture the capacity to be with our true nature. Mindfulness and daily meditative practice are the keys to get out of this prison. We either eliminate attachments fully, or remain stuck. There are no half measures. Without such understanding we can never take steps to be free, remaining caught in the wrong identifications that allow attachments to entrap us in suffering. Meditation changes their energy, relocates us in heart consciousness, allows the wrong identifications and attachments to fall away, simply because there is no energy to sustain them.

DANCE OF THE CELLS

A paradigm shift in scientific self-awareness introduces a radically different perspective on the cell - one that recognizes the inter-penetration of physical and metaphysical properties. The flaws in our present paradigm are exposed, as it has its basis in separation. I appeal to the authority of the Diamond Sutra, where the Buddha mapped reality as a paradigm of interconnectedness, of Interbeing – not of separation. These understandings are applied to the cellular dance. Physical and metaphysical properties are enfolded in a more inclusive medical model than is presently accepted by medical science. This is applied to the activity of retroviruses in the cell, and to the key provided by meditation to raise the vibrational frequency of cellular templates and boost the immune system. These considerations have a place in current medical research on AIDS,

provided that medical scientists can step into an inclusive paradigm – one that has physical and metaphysical components.

GUIDELINES TO RECREATE OUR WORLD

The growing concern about the absence of Love and Compassion in daily life, in schools, at work, and in the healing professions, preoccupies many citizens and scholars in the new millennium. These same issues were examined with great clarity and depth by the awakened mind of the Buddha, 2600 years ago. His teachings are timeless, as relevant to the modern world as they were when first spoken. The Buddha talked in particular about a set of ethical guidelines – the Five Mindfulness Trainings – as a design for living. There are many ways to discuss them. **Guidelines To Recreate Our World** places an emphasis on global ecology, and post Columbine violence in schools, as contexts where these ethical principles can be applied. I make the point that we do not know how to behave, and draw on the well of Buddhist ethics for guidance - in particular the work of Thay Nhat Hanh and his discourses on the Five Mindfulness Trainings.

HEALING JOURNEYS: SHAMANISM AS THERAPY

An effective therapy for transforming deep seated traumas can be found in shamanic practices that amplify the healing process by placing it in an altered state of consciousness (A.S.C.). This essay is not merely an academic presentation of theoretical building blocks but an endeavor to understand my own healing process. These experiences enable me to construct a general model of healing which illuminates the therapeutic role of an A.S.C. I explicate the significance of breath work, then provide a meditative healing journey based on the preceding building blocks. My understanding of the healing process is in energy terms, and I consider it essential that the power and energy of creative self-healing and mindfulness are brought to bear on transforming the energy of separation and trauma.

INTRODUCTION TO MEDITATION

A preliminary discussion of meditation introduces conscious breathing, cellular memory, the chakra system and the processes at work in meditation, not the least of which is the re-training of our awareness. Living Breath is the key – the umbilical cord between human awareness and the Universe. Diagrams and meditations provide some navigation points. Symbols, mantras, posture and other forms of focus are used at different levels of mental entrainment. Beginner's Mind, without the struggle to get it right, is emphasized as a vital travelling companion – particularly for experts!

LEVELS OF MEDITATIVE EXPERIENCE

This essay explores the pilgrimage from the “I” of ego-attachment to the “I” of the soul, and investigates the drives and patterns of ego-attachment. The first level of meditative experience is learning how to Stop. The next level is that of self-healing - the other side of the meditation coin. We store our traumas and psychological life histories deep in our unconscious where they form blockages. These blockages have to be surfaced and cleared if we wish to journey further on our pilgrimage. The deep rest of meditation helps to unravel the knots of suffering, and supports self-healing. The many levels of healing prepare us for a major encounter with the ego – the third level to consider. The ego was there in the distractions of the initial level of learning to stop. It

was also there in our self-healing, hanging on grimly to every drama of our life history. Yet, these prior levels of experience have empowered us to become stronger, to be more spiritually mature, and capable of transcending and transforming ego-attachments.

MANTRA AND CONSCIOUSNESS EXPANSION IN INDIA

The Gayatri mantra is the main component of the Sandhya–Upasana ceremony, currently used as a practice to train meditation teachers and initiators in Siddha Samadhi Yoga – a meditation tradition in South India. The intent of the ceremony is to expand consciousness in multiple directions. The Gayatri is a meditation on OM, and the Sandhya ceremony is regarded as the most effective means of integrating with the universal consciousness connoted by OM. The author describes his experience of preparing for and participating in the ceremony – with attention to physiological, perceptual and cognitive shifts.

MEDITATION FOR GAIA

The immediacy of global ecological crises provides two considerations, which I refer to as Soft Edge and Hard Edge arguments. The Soft Edge explores my consciousness. The Hard Edge examines the reality of drastic Earth changes, and points to a different leadership to deal with issues of human adaptation that are scarcely comprehensible at this time. The thread of changing consciousness is woven through both arguments. I reflect on the cybernetic lunacy of a global economy driven by the collective greed of corporations that operate without ethics, responsibility or accountability. I note the ecological illiteracy and indifference of our economic and political leaders, while knowing that business as usual is no longer an option. Yet my first choice is the stillness and silence of meditation. I write about why meditation provides the basis of my activism, touch upon mythology for guidance, and know that the present global turmoil is a catalyst for a different leadership to emerge – one that has responsibility, compassion and integrity at its core. These qualities arise through the cultivation of mindfulness and meditative practice.

MEDITATION, LEADERSHIP AND ETHICS

New leadership emerges when ethics are rooted in spiritual practices that allow our true nature - truth, integrity, happiness and wisdom - to be expressed. We have to re-educate ourselves about this, first, by examining our addictive behaviors, then by recognizing what we are truly seeking. We create the conditions for this to happen through silence, meditation and mindfulness practice. I explore the interconnection between leadership qualities and ethics, and chart a path to a sense of internal freedom that can re-construct society with a different form of leadership. This leadership is sculpted from the deep experience of oneself in meditation. This is how we re-educate the world. I refer to ethical guidelines provided by Thich Nhat Hanh as signposts for the spiritual traveler, so that we know how to behave and honor our interconnectedness with everything. I like Greenpeace's motto of "We All Live Downstream!"

NUTRIMENTS FOR THE SPIRITUAL PILGRIMAGE

If we load our consciousness with toxins and violence we should not be surprised by what occupies the driving seat. If we fill our consciousness with nutriments that foster the energy of mindfulness, we can look forward to enjoying life with a different energy. The Buddha talked about four kinds of nutriments – edible food, sense impression food, food of desire and consciousness food. I begin with the Buddha’s Son’s Flesh Sutra and end with the story of a Thousand Sword Thrusts. The bottom line between these stories is awareness about the consequences of our consumption, so that we do not create internal violence to our systems - or to the systems we interconnect with.

PREFACE TO “ANTHROPOLOGY AT THE EDGE”

From the Publisher: “In thirteen essays Prattis creates an orchestral piece with five movements, which sweep the reader through the current tempests of science, civilization and the conduct of anthropology, preparing a different foundation for scholarship in the 21st century. The first movement – *Beyond Structuralism* – has two essays about the structure of the human mind, the limitations of structuralism, and endorses the transformative power of the experience of symbols. The second movement – *The Poetic Turn and Postmodern Reflexivity* – consists of four essays in which the author pioneers the place of anthropological poetics in the postmodern deconstruction of redundant axioms in theory and methodology. This vital spark rethinks anthropology’s foundations. In four chapters, the third movement – *Process and Form* – examines the mythic enactment of cultural festivals, sacred dance and shamanism before identifying a process that underlies all ritual enactment. The model puts transformation and order in a dialectical relationship of symbolic process, and inserts the phenomenology of the investigator into the equation of doing science. This ushers in the fourth movement – *Paradigms* – a chapter on bias and distortion in science and the necessity of a paradigm shift to expand scientific self-awareness. The finale – *Gaia and the Environment* – has two essays that take the implications of deconstruction, process, form, and paradigm shift into the arena of environmental issues. It comes full circle to the theme of human adaptation in the first movement – *Beyond Structuralism* – but examines it from the perspective of consciousness transformation. This orchestral piece plays out on multiple levels, finishing with a crescendo of human consciousness that takes anthropology through the twenty-first century with a new sense of responsibility and practice.”

Available from:

University Press of America Tel: (301) 459 3366

4720 Boston Way Fax: (301) 459 2118

Lanham, Maryland 20706

U.S.A.

Professor D. Price-Williams, UCLA: “Prattis has woven a worldview.... that extends beyond the accustomed boundaries of anthropology, into physics and cosmology, psychology and the humanities. Anthropology At The Edge is aptly named.”

Professor D. Smith, University of Wales: “.....delivered with such clear affection for the subject matter that the reader is rapidly drawn in and swept along. A challenging read but a deeply rewarding one.”

PUNK PALACE IN THE MOONLIGHT

The adventure with my son in Glasgow's drug world showed me how interconnected I was with a world I scarcely knew. It also brought home to me that when all else fails, there is still mindfulness - and it can work miracles. The story of Punk Palace has squalor, despair and alienation woven into it. Yet, I also found humor, goodness, and wonderful surprises. I provide a meditation for "Young People Who Are Lost", that I invite the reader to do. The Divinity we quest for is found in places such as Punk Palace. It is difficult to come home to our true nature without discovering, from firsthand experience, how interconnected we are with everything. If we can stop discriminating against others, we can know wholeness. This is a life experience, not an intellectual construct.

SURRENDER AND A LOTUS

In "**Surrender and a Lotus**" I pay homage to my Buddhist teacher, Zen Master Thich Nhat Hanh. Before leaving for India in 1996 to study and teach meditation, at the last moment I picked up his book of meditations, *The Blooming of a Lotus*, and placed it in my backpack. In December of that year I became terribly ill in India. My companion for this passage with death was Master Hanh's book of meditations. To this day I am still astonished by the calmness and lack of fear. I include a number of diary entries, written in a small ashram in Mumbai, and hope that I can find a similar equanimity for death's next visit. This was also a time for concepts and perceptions to shatter, and I felt a depth not previously known. This is something I remember and call upon, when perceptions and judgements crowd into my consciousness.

TEACHERS AND GUIDANCE

"**Teachers and Guidance**" provides a cautionary note about understanding the nature of spiritual teachers, in order to avoid an insidious form of attachment. The ultimate teacher resides within, and this is what a true spiritual mentor guides you to. Teachers who seek not followers, and live as an example of wisdom and understanding are perhaps the teachers to hold our attention. Choose well your teacher.

UNDERSTANDING SYMBOLIC PROCESS; METAPHOR, VIBRATION AND FORM

Metaphor, Vibration and Form identifies a process that underlies all ritual enactment. Whether it is Joseph Campbell's analysis of the Hero's journey, Victor Turner's theoretical and experiential interest in symbols, or Charles Laughlin's cycle of meaning, there is at work a particular kind of behavioral transformation system. It begins with the mind and the meanings provided metaphorically for symbols, then proceeds to an intense focus on symbolic sequences in meditation or in ritual dramas, so that the metaphor is taken into the body as physical experience. From this physical "ownership" of the metaphor, the properties associated with it are encouraged, socially and ritually, to come to the surface and be enacted in the form of everyday behavior. Questions of symbolic appropriation, the redundancy of symbol and professional responsibility are addressed in the concluding remarks.

YES IT CAN HAPPEN HERE: MINDFULNESS TRAININGS AND THE COLUMBINE SHOOTINGS

The specter of children shooting children in high schools shocked North America, yet very little institutional change has been effected, once the platitudes of politicians receded. This essay examines the consumption of violence by our children through the media, video games, and internet, showing how it can lead to the deadly carnage of high school shoot-outs and murder. Young people, their parents, and society at large are unaware of the necessity of guarding their sensory doorways. I illuminate the very dangerous environment we have created, and offer practical measures of mindfulness practice as a way out, so that young people have simple tools to deal with their hate, anger and distress without resort to guns. I talk about a program for mindfulness practice in schools and draw on the Fifth Mindfulness Training from Thich Nhat Hanh, which directs our attention to the nature and consequences of our daily consumption.

MY PRACTICE IN THE ULTIMATE AND HISTORICAL DIMENSIONS

The waves and water analogy used to describe the interconnection between the Ultimate and Historical dimensions makes intellectual sense but does not correspond to experience. So this analogy is either incorrect or there is something missing from my practice of mindfulness. The latter is explored through the careful cultivation of silence and how that then impacted my responses to the Columbine High School shootings, the post 9/11 world and the Lotus Sutra.

THE SMALL GOD LIMITED DHARMA SYNDROME

The ego-laden reality of the small god limited dharma syndrome permits conservatism and fundamentalism to assume responsibility for spirituality. This contention is explored in the context of North American spirituality particularly in light of the sexual abuse scandals of the Catholic Church. Conservatism and fundamentalism in Buddhism and Islam are also examined to make it clear that challenges to such distortions are an essential revitalization of any religion to make dharma a living, ongoing organic expression of truth. A small god, a restricted dharma is hardly worth the effort.