

**Wisdom as a Way of Life
Post Intensive
“Letter to Cyber Athenians”**

Task: Post the Intensive Experience “What Does Wisdom As A Way of Life Mean to Me?”

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Preamble

“To be awakened is to be intimate with all things”. Dogen¹

The best way that I can enter this essay is via a poem by Christopher Fry. This poem summarises the content of the recent Wisdom as a Way of Life Intensive:

A SLEEP OF PRISONERS

The human heart can go the lengths of God.....

dark and cold we may be, but this

is no winter now. The frozen misery

of centuries breaks, cracks, begins to move;

the thunder is the thunder of the floes,

the thaw, the flood, the upstart Spring.

Thank God our time is now when wrong

comes up to face us everywhere,

never to leave us till we take

the longest stride of soul we ever took.

Affairs are now soul size.

The enterprise is exploration into God.

Where are you making for? It takes

so many thousand years to wake.....

but will you wake for pity's sake!

Christopher Fry²

The content I engaged with in this Intensive challenged some of my interior structures by creating inner questions around a few of my views, thinking of and ways of understanding of ancient texts. Most significantly, the Intensive reinforced that 'waking up' and staying 'awake' has never been, and is not, easy and requires an ongoing focus and discipline.

¹ Dogen, Japanese Poet circa 1200

² Christopher Fry, English Playwright and Poet, b 1907 died 2005

In the afternoon the exercises (facilitated by Neil Douglas Klotz) were based on Sufi and early Aramaic Christian body practices used for centuries to create expansion of the heart. The approach is music based, using movement and words as doorways to connect to heart and feeling – all as a means to create the capacity to enter or feel the different universes within and without each of us.

It was really illuminating to work with the ancient texts. Whilst I had mentally understood the concept of exegesis, I felt privileged to see it powerfully and practically applied. I saw how such an approach creates a widening and allowing as opposed to the traditional religious or dogma approaches of literal interpretations which are narrowing and forbidding. If we (including I) have an expansive appreciation of the appropriate historic context and broader understandings of religious and philosophical texts, then this knowledge assists not only our own possibility to embody wisdom but also creates more tolerant 'religions' and greater appreciative of other cultures and wisdom traditions.

Adding to our understandings was the dialectic way in which we traversed ideas and concepts travelling from philosophy to religion and back again – finding similarities and key differences.

From this experience I know that interpretations of all ancient texts benefit from applying a dialectic approach as well as using a version of the Jewish concept of midrash or assuming some of the versions of Gnostic ways of interrogating a text.

Midrash looks at certain Judaic texts in a variety of ways which includes:

1. historic and cultural interpretations (exegesis),
2. lenses of legend and myth (haggadic),
3. interpretation as a parable.

Bruce Chilton told us that Gnostics scrutinize and interpret texts through three possible lenses:

1. historic and cultural interpretations (exegesis),
2. as allegory - which are philosophical or mythical stories that are serving to illuminate, teach or transfer knowledge.
3. inversion of symbolic value. An example of this is changing the role of Judas from the betrayer of Jesus to that of the person brave enough (i.e. the Hero) to set in place the events that created the evolution of Jesus Christ – creating the crucifixion that lead to the resurrection which lead to spreading of Christianity to the world.

I know the importance of centring myself in my body, mind and soul each day and strengthening my connection to spirit. However, what has really stayed with me is how critical this is and how this is *the* most important thing that I do each day. My daily orientation needs to be as strong and true as I can make it. So I have come back to Sydney, deepened, enlivened and committed to spending even more time each morning in spiritual exercises. I have only been back a few weeks but this is already making a tangible difference to my life, leadership and way in which I am influencing and making decisions.

The majority of people in Australia, like many Europeans and Asian societies, are not deeply engaged in formal and organized religion. Our organized religious congregations are generally full of old people and the Catholic Church is treating Australia as a missionary country in as far as needing priests to be imported from developing world countries. So when I start to talk more widely about spiritual exercises, many people have little entry to what this may mean beyond their childhood version of rote prayers and a few verses of the bible or some new age version of sitting cross legged and chanting OM.

The starting point for many of my recent conversations with colleagues, friends and clients has been to firstly clarify what spiritual exercises mean. I have had some interesting responses when I first mention spiritual exercises. Some of the first off the cuff responses have been "I am not that interested in spiritual exercises as it discounts the feeling function", or "I didn't like them/found them empty when I did such things at school so why would I go back there" or "I don't have enough time to do them, I barely have enough time to physically exercise" or "I don't know what I believe in, so how can I start such a practice" or "I am not sure that self examination or navel gazing aids anything, I think it's better to focus on action". This essay contains my response to the questions and comments I have been fielding and some of the content of the discussions I have been involved in as well as some of my deeper reflections post the Intensive.



Letter to Twenty First Century Cyber³ Athenians:

Dear Cyber Athenian,

³ The word cyber comes from the Greek kybernetes, meaning "steersman" or "governor".

I have recently attended the Wisdom University “Wisdom as a Way of Life” Intensive. The important take away that I had was that the ancients emphasized that to create and foster wisdom requires daily spiritual exercises that build spiritual fitness. Spiritual exercises are not based in a religion or an ideology but are practices that develop and deepen the ability to be connected to self and the greater cosmological forces. Spiritual exercises facilitate the ability to deeply feel and be aware of what it is to be human as well as facilitate the expansion and capacity of the heart, mind, body and soul so we can hold awareness of ourselves and our connection to all contained within the cosmos. (I will use the word cosmos through this letter, but feel free to substitute any name that aligns with and has meaning for you).

Spirituality is not about escaping from the human condition but embracing it. The embrace of humanity means that we can be the most fully human, alive and aware, to our fullest capability.

Examination of multiple religions, philosophies and belief systems show that there are four central tenets to effective spiritual practice – no matter what the path or paths chosen to follow. These are:

- a. Awareness, knowledge/knowing and love of self;
- b. Love of humanity and all life forms;
- c. Love of the earth and all that is contained within it;
- d. Awareness of the connection and expressing love of all.

Another central tenet of most paths is that truth and wisdom must be continually pursued and that every certainty leads to deeper questions. Our task is to continually orientate to the place of the cosmic mind, to touch the place of the timeless and changeless ground of being which is where all emerges and recedes.

We need to heed the ancient Greeks and their instructions to do spiritual exercises, as twenty first century life is even more complex, more connected, more chaotic and more global than what the Greeks were experiencing. We are at a time in history when most of our systems - man made (financial, social, government) and natural (water, climate, ecology, animal, human population) are close to overload or on brink of collapse. All of this is threatening the existence of the human species and other life forms and so we are being asked to create new mores and ways of organizing and living.

It is also true that for those of us that are wanting to birth and usher in new systems and consciousness *all* of our skills, resources and talents are being called on. We are present at a

time in history which requires all of ourselves as individuals to join together with others and evolve human consciousness. We therefore need to be able to last the distance, do what is right as opposed to what is convenient as well as work with incredible insight and wisdom to navigate all the torrid waters of change, complexity, opposition and chaos to usher in the new. Spiritual exercises are and will be foundational to our successful navigation of the current uncharted waters we find ourselves in.

We should move away from focusing on what someone's religion is (or isn't) or what philosophical school they do or don't follow. What we should be interested in is what we individually and collectively need to do so we can orientate ourselves powerfully in life to give life our best and our all. I feel we also need to be very very bold in our inner practices as boldness in external action is required.

Foundation of Spiritual Exercises

"Whenever we are alive on every level, we are spiritual and when we are fully spiritual – we come alive on the highest level of our caring for one another and our caring for this planet". David Stendal-Rast⁴

The Greek spiritual exercises were daily habits which encouraged and built on:

- a) Working with and on foundational texts using exegesis – reflecting, writing, discussing;
- b) Creating attention and awareness to present moment;
- c) Meditation – creating means to enliven and discipline inner discourse and create inner coherence;
- d) Contemplation on and of our death. So that we can seize each moment and fully live;
- e) Daily habits – happiness and wisdom requires focus on habits of excellence.

The point of having a spiritual discipline is not to accumulate data and knowledge or any rewards but to prepare the mind, body and soul so that connection is felt, deepened and embodiment of wisdom can occur. We need to continually transform our 'conditioning' and change not just our thinking and consciousness but let that filter into every action in our day to day life. Living with wisdom requires letting go and sculpting our inner ecology so that we can arrive at (and embody) meanings that are deeper, more liberal and which can handle antinomial ideas and concepts. Wisdom also requires that we embrace a love of and for all and wherever possible

engage in creative acts that build potential and possibility. Wise living also requires that we contemplate that our time is limited and therefore it is important to value each day. All so that the evolution of our individual and collective human consciousness can be birthed and embodied through us.

The first aim of spiritual practice is understand what is driving our deepest impulses which are informing how we live, the second aim is to learn how to override and eliminate the faulty programming, with the third aim to develop and create an internal ecology that enlivens and supports the bringing of the best of ourselves into each moment of life. Later in this Letter I examine the concepts further of letting go and eliminating.

As our capacity and capability develops and deepens, then that moves outwards into the external environment honouring and supporting a multi dimensional approach to being human. Our embodiment can then influence all of our external reality and becomes an example to and an influence on others.

One of the best passages on the rationale for daily spiritual exercises quoted in book *"Philosophy as a Way of Life"*⁵ comes from George Friedmann, who in 1942 wrote: *"Take flight each day! At least for a moment, however brief, as long as it is intense. Every day a 'spiritual exercise', alone or in the company of a man who wishes to better himself....Leave ordinary time behind. Make an effort to rid yourself of your own passions....Become eternal by surpassing yourself. This inner effort is necessary, this ambition, just. Many are those who are entirely absorbed in militant politics, in the preparation for the social revolution. Rare, very rare, are those who, in order to prepare for the revolution, wish to become worthy of it"*⁶.

Connecting with Wisdom and Sacred Content

"Attention is the taking possession by the mind, in clear and vivid form of one out of what seem several simultaneous possible objects or trains of thought". William James⁷

⁴ David Stendal-Rast - a Benedictine Monk, writer and teacher - quote from Spirituality and Health Magazine 1996.

⁵ Pierre Hadot, "Philosophy as a Way of Life"

⁶ Ibid page 70

⁷ William James psychologist and philosopher, 1890

The rise of the internet has meant the proliferation of content via podcasts, films, videocasts, books, tests, and magazines/blogs authored and distributed by both mainstream and independent creators and publishers. This means we have the most materials, knowledge, and content available to us of any generation. We are also able to access materials beyond confines of country boundaries and local distribution channels.

It is imperative that we find ways to traverse all of this, making sure that we can sift and filter out what are noise and distraction and focus on that which is 'gold'. Gold is the content, channels and connections that support our personal evolution and development of wisdom. We need to be disciplined to eliminate everything that is a distraction and doesn't feed our wisdom practices and feelings of divine connection.

In addition to a filtering, it behooves us to find the sacred and wisdom content that speaks to us, so we work with and study all that we can use and apply to the times and situations we find ourselves in.

I also recommend we take broadest definition of sacred and wisdom content. Sacred and wisdom content doesn't just mean volumes like the Bible, Qur'an, the Torah, the Vedas, the Sutras or works of the Greek philosophers but includes myths, stories, songs and poems that are capable of imparting and giving wisdoms and learnings.

In addition, we should not ignore oral traditional stories and songs that have informed multiple cultures across millennium which also have knowledge and wisdoms that could assist us. We can take the lead from indigenous people who treat stories and songs as healing medicines, with the ability to heal the human psyche. Such stories are the major carriers of teachings, knowledge and energy from generation to generation.

It is especially important as a personal practice, when working with sacred and wisdom content, to cultivate our ability to engage in poesis. This type of engagement has the capacity in the words of Martin Heidegger⁸, of *'bringing forth of the soul'*. Heidegger further says poesis is necessary as it is *"the process of imaginatively making, shaping, crafting one's perceptions, thoughts and experiences in the medium of words"*.⁹

⁸ Martin Heidegger – *"Poetry, Language, Thought"* – Harper Perennial Classics, 2001

⁹ *ibid* – page 216

At its essence, what we are being asked to do when working with and dialoguing with sacred texts/content is to enter into the heart of things. By this I mean entering the heart of the content and allow it to diffuse in our own hearts and see what comes forth and wants to arise. Through these types of processes we can become more powerful parts of participating consciousness.

Need to Embrace Broader Interpretations Using Tools Like the Lyrical, Metaphoric, Ironical

"Learning to listen between, behind and underneath the words, actively imagining into metaphor what is said, strengthens one's tolerance for ambiguity and enhances the sense of oneself as creator – an artisan of images, of stories". Linda Sussman ¹⁰

"Some go so far as to say that Socrates' ironic personality inaugurated a peculiarly Western sensibility. His irony, or his capacity not to accept everyday values and concepts but live in a state of perpetual question, is the birth of philosophy, ethics, and consciousness". Claire Colebrook¹¹

Wisdom traditions throughout history have never supported literal interpretations of sacred content. All traditions transfer answers to seekers via quests/questions that must be solved. Knowledge is delivered via riddles, koans, parables, allegories and double meanings which the seeker needs to work with to arrive at the wise answer. Even the Delphic Oracle never gave a straight answer and required the seeker to work with the answer given to arrive at what the right answer or outcome was to be.

Part of a spiritual practice gives us skills to deal with life. Life requires the skills and abilities to be able to learn to sit/be with paradox, challenge our own and the collective assumptions, deal with mutual contradictory truths (the antinomial), chaos, and uncertainty. Through discipline we can learn to both deepen and to open to greater possibilities and new truths.

Also the use of the metaphorical, allegorical, ironical and the lyrical opens the ability for a story or parable or song or poem to carry more spaciousness, co-create a deeper response and therefore greater capacity for wisdom. Philip Wheelwright, explains metaphor as this *'sense of*

¹⁰ Linda Sussman – *"The Speech of the Grail"* – Lindisfarne Books, 1995

¹¹ Claire Colebrook – *"Irony: The New Critical Idiom"* - Routledge, 2004

*being addressed – not by hallucinatory voice, but by the silent voice which murmurs in some secret place beyond the inner ear – is felt in one way or another by every person of moral sensitivity*⁴².

Often, in this age of 'quick fix', instant connection, fast food life and speed we are missing out on the nuances and deeper meanings - as working on the surface has become our norm. We are losing our ability to appreciate, learn from, wrestle with and work from the depths that the texts with multiple meanings want to reveal.

Socrates was a master of irony, whereby he would adopt a position of innocence and ignorance in order to find out more, to win an argument or to make a point – all with the purpose of creating greater illumination for himself and his audience. Irony creates a 'double vision' – that is there is one story on the surface and another or several others underneath it. So there is always a duality of meaning. The appropriate use of irony makes the reader or the audience or the counterparty examine multiple meanings of the content and to question what message/s are really being conveyed.

Robertson Davies in his novel, *The Cunning Man*⁴³ describes irony as: "*George Puttenham's Arte of English Poesie shows appreciation for subtle rhetorical irony by translating "ironia" as "Drie Mock." I tried to find out what irony really is, and discovered that some ancient writer on poetry had spoken of ironia, which we call the drye mock, and I cannot think of a better term for it: the drye mock. Not sarcasm, which is like vinegar, or cynicism, which is often the voice of disappointed idealism, but a delicate casting of a cool and illuminating light on life, and thus an enlargement. The ironist is not bitter, he does not seek to undercut everything that seems worthy or serious, he scorns the cheap scoring-off of the wisecracker. He stands, so to speak, somewhat at one side, observes and speaks with a moderation which is occasionally embellished with a flash of controlled exaggeration. He speaks from a certain depth, and thus he is not of the same nature as the wit, who so often speaks from the tongue and no deeper. The wit's desire is to be funny; the ironist is only funny as a secondary achievement*".

Our spiritual exercises in 21st Century need to concentrate on the content that not only contains wisdom depths but also to sharpen our ability to uncover, work with and in the multiple meanings.

⁴² Wheelwright, Philip – *'Metaphor and Reality'* – Indiana University Press, 1962

We can train ourselves to think differently and explore materials outside of the paradigms that we have assumed or been trained in. The reward of working with content and materials in such a manner will provide the skills for us to have greater insights to see and work with the larger cosmic patterns of meaning, connection and causation.

Developing Body/Soul/Mind/Spirit Structural Integrity

"And my soul, I have come to see is both spirit and flesh" St. Teresa of Avila¹⁴

"The Self is not a fixed entity, but a dynamic process of relationships.....People are equipped to experience the sacred, to have moments of elevated experience when they transcend boundaries and overflow with love". David Brooks¹⁵

We are human beings alive in the world. So for me spiritual exercises and discipline must embrace that which it is to be human – which is to have a body, a soul, a mind and a spirit.

A well rounded spiritual exercise practice contains elements that serve all the different aspects and parts of our selves. Our spiritual exercises should therefore contain different elements, so we have a holistic practice and we build the capacity and capability of mind, body, soul and spirit.

Earlier in this essay I wrote that spiritual exercises are foundational. We know when we construct a building that it is essential that it has structural integrity. The greater the strength of the foundation; the more 'able' for the building to be multi-storied. In my past I financed large commercial property developments and one of the facts of skyscraper construction is that the below ground per floor costs of construction of a building double every floor as you go underground. Most of the construction, even when finished, remains unseen to the naked eye but without proper structural foundations no building can rise upwards and withstand the effects of time, the movements of the earth and the impact of the elements. I feel is an appropriate metaphor for the costs of and need for our own life structural integrity.

So it's what we do that is often unseen which builds our foundations and this costs a lot (effort, discipline, focus, wrestling with ourselves) - but if we want to not only withstand what life offers us, but to live in grace and realize our innate potential we must continually work on our

¹³ Davies, Robertson – *'The Cunning Man'*, Viking Press, 1995

¹⁴ St Teresa of Avila, Spanish mystic, writer, painter, abbess born 1515, died 1582

¹⁵ David Brooks, NY Times May 13, 2008

foundations of body, mind, soul and spirit. We also get to know that any ascension is only possible if we do the descents into what lies buried deeply within us and within the dimensions of the psyche.

Letting Go, Pain and Simplification

"The coming consciousness is not a discovery of some new thing; it is a long and painful return to that which has always been". Helen Luke¹⁶

"We look with uncertainty, beyond the old choices for clear cut answers, to a softer, more permeable aliveness which is every moment at the brink of death" Anne Hillman¹⁷

Meister Eckhart agreed with the Greeks, in that he saw that development of enlightenment required processes of subtraction. Modern life focuses on additional and on gain, not emptiness, so undertaking spiritual exercises means we are already swimming against the current of majority consciousness.

Spiritual exercises allow us to explore what is informing our deepest impulses. And when we find out what these are, we can then bring them to consciousness and decide what to keep or what to transform. Acceptance of what it is to be human and welcoming all of our human impulses, has incredible healing and transforming power. The wisdom path requires that we continually let go of the internal impediments which are outdated or unevolved or holding us captive. This includes views, beliefs, ideas, concepts, notions, feelings, habits, responses and any held rigidity which confines us from moving with flexibility and deeper truths. Our spiritual exercises must help us to break free from and let go the habits that are keeping us stuck, trapped and in false realities.

Therefore it is vital to adopt a position of unlearning, not just learning – so that we can create the space for internal expansion. Such an unlearning facilitates a remembrance of source and an ability to feel connection to what it means to be human and part of the cosmos.

It is very easy to become distracted and entangled in cares and concerns of day to day life. Besides undertaking spiritual exercises each day it is also important to continually focus on

¹⁶ Luke Helen, Psychologist and Author born 1904 died 1995

simplifying our lives. This way we have the not only the most space and time available for our heart work but so that our life becomes the most meaningful and joyful. It serves us best to adopt a disciplined approach by continually eliminating unnecessary activities, outdated relationships/friendships, work that is not edifying and habits that confine us. It is my personal experience that much of what I think of as limitations are not real and empower false beliefs and thought forms – which in turn means the right actions are not done. Examples of this abound more broadly in our society where we don't do the actions that could to create more life affirming/giving situations. This poem summarises what the process of unlearning is all about:

Unlearning

*Unlearning comes in steps,
I think,
putting our weight
on floors that give way
like trapdoors. With each fall
we shed something.
As ee cummings says:
.....let all go
dear
so comes love.
Colin Oliver¹⁸*

In my own spiritual practices I have found that they are greatly enhanced when I am prepared to recognise exactly how I feel in every moment, however, unpleasant. Such noticing gives valuable insights as to what is going on for me and what I need to attend to and let go of. I have found that the only way that I can effectively let go is to fully feel any old or residual pain and move through it. The same is true in across life. The truth is that the more that we are prepared to 'name the elephants in the room' and interrogate the reality that the situation is presenting, however disagreeable, inconvenient or damaging it appears, the more possibility for transformation we awaken. By feeling and recognizing what is afoot we are then more able to evoke the wisest solution or a way forward. Such practices requires a letting go of what we wish or wanted for in a situation - to focus on what is so that we can enter what is, feel through the negative situation and enter into transformational processes. The more we are 'able' via spiritual exercise foundations to not only feel pain but to engage with it and allow it to have its way and

¹⁷ Anne Hillman, *"The Dancing Animal Woman: A Celebration of Life"* – Bramble Books, 1994

work through it; then the more freedom we create for ourselves and for the situations we find ourselves in.

A poem from the Confucius poet/philosopher, Wu Ming Fu from the book, 'The Way of Life of Wu Ming Fu'¹⁹ summarises the processes of letting go and the pain of loss that often accompanies transformation:

*The seed that is to grow
must lose itself as seed;
And they that creep
may graduate through
chrysalis to wings.*

*Wilt thou then, O mortal,
cling to husks which
falsely seem to you
the self?*

Practices that Can be Deployed

"Routines are human nature. Why not create some that will mint God?" Hafiz²⁰

"The first task, though not the most important task, is to quiet the busyness in your mind. The second is to find your song, and the third task is to sing your song". Harry Roberts²¹

There is no prescription for what is a proper spiritual exercise as any exercise must suit the needs of the individual and their lives. The practice must enhance our ability to connect us with our selves and all that is.

¹⁸ Colin Oliver, contemporary English poet

¹⁹ Stanwood Cobb – 'The Way of Life of Wu Ming Fu', Avalon Press, 1935

²⁰ Hafiz – Persian Sufi Poet, 1315 to 1390

²¹ Harry Roberts, contemporary Native American, historian and poet

What is essential is that the exercises we choose are ones which make us feel fully alive, are designed to work with what we need to work with internally, are appropriate to the circumstances we find ourselves in and are in the modalities that we enjoy.

Not the rote practices that we may have grown up with, but ones that create 'aliveness' and an expansion via connection to the deepness of all aspects of our selves through to the Cosmos. Each day should be started with a spiritual exercise, so that the tone and intent for each day is set at the beginning. I find it best to make spiritual exercises as part of my daily ritual of getting ready to go out in the world. At night I review what has happened in the day and do some reflection or further work but my main practice is in the morning.

To describe what a spiritual exercise seeks to do, I like the word sacraments. A sacrament is '*a rite in which God (for the word God substitute the word that makes sense to you) is uniquely active*²². A sacrament gives us a means to make tangible that which is intangible and to reflect on and find the deeper ground. Here is a list of potential sacraments that can be used to create and build your menu of personal spiritual exercises:

- Writing, journaling, reflecting
- Painting, drawing, collage, image making
- Art making in any medium that we are drawn to
- Poetry – reading, writing, reciting
- Dream work – activating and working with dream images and stories
- Sacred/Ancient texts – working with them in a deeply in ways outlined in this Letter
- Movement of the body – yoga, dance, walking or any physical exercise which facilitates and allows connection to all that is
- Prayer and Blessings – labyrinth walking, body prayer, traditional prayer, ceremony, ritual and creating sacred intentions
- Meditation and breath exercises
- Imaginative, mindfulness or attentive exercises
- Music – listening, chanting, playing instruments, singing
- Story making/telling
- Nature – connecting to nature through solitude, walking, reverence and living/being in nature

²² See Hexams Concise Dictionary of Religion

What Does a Spiritual Practice Provide?

"See where you do not see, hear where no sound comes through, go where you cannot go, and God will speak to you". Angelus Silesius²³

Spiritual practices enlarge human life, as practices move and shape us and embolden the way we live in the world – making tangible differences in how life is experienced. This is my list of what spiritual exercises give us, make us aware of and connect us with:

- a) Appreciation of and awareness of beauty. Beauty has a generative power and is all around us if we have the senses to see, feel and appreciate it.
- b) Reverencing and respect of nature, the natural world and all it contains. Nature has its own intelligence and can commune with us, if we are open to this and are prepared to treat elements as living beings. It requires the discipline of our deep listening (which is the inside listening) to hear the voice of the earth and all it contains. The recent movie Avatar²⁴ showed the other realities that we could connect with and which many indigenous people already experience.
- c) Development of love and the heart. Love is the connective tissue between our self, the other, the many and other life forms. Spiritual exercises and embodiment of love increase our capacity to not just receive more love but to give more love by developing the capacity of our hearts. The heart expands when we are able to be open, be intimate, vulnerable and trusting. It is also about us centring in and living from the heart, with the thinking mind descended into the heart.
- d) Respect for and honour of the body. This includes preparedness to live the word and live the sacredness of life through movement, breath, voice and appreciate what it is to have this human body.
- e) Development of Presence. The greatest gift we can give another is that of full presence. Intimacy requires presence. It is also the best gift we can give ourselves, as it's through presence we feel connected and supported by the earth and all that is.
- f) Letting Go – to engage in practices that allow us to take away, eliminate and take away the dross.
- g) Development of gratitude which includes sharing, thankfulness, prayers and blessings. To develop the ability to see and feel our multitude of blessings even in difficult times.

²³ Angelus Silesius, German mystic and poet 1624 – 1677

²⁴ Avatar, movie directed and written by James Cameron, 2009

- h) Engaging in creation and creative practices. Most traditions appreciate that each person has a gift or essence to incarnate which needs to be unfolded. We must bring this gift or essence fully to embodiment.
- i) Lightheartedness and Play. Ability to turn things on their head, find the joy in life and have lightness of spirit and heart.
- j) Humility – developing and fostering humility. Putting ourselves in the shoes of the other and avoiding arrogance of any sort.
- k) Build Trust – trust in self, in the connection with and to the cosmos/universal intelligence and trust in instinct/intuitive feelings
- l) See ways in which we can assist in creation of meaning of life that is deep, worthy and strong enough to engage with. Where is it that we can touch the ground of our being and through this touch the vastness and depth of all being.
- m) Inspiration. Being able to inspire ourselves, finding inspiration in that which is around us, being inspired and inspiring others.

In summary, this Letter exhorts us to engage in our exercises each day to shape ourselves with the highest intentions we are capable of and to allow us to make our unique connection to the divine, to the cosmos and to ensure our human hearts can go the lengths of God.

I opened this essay with a poem which speaks so deeply to me of this time that I wish too close using it. My aspiration is that I and we not only wake but stay awake so we are individually and collectively 'able to take the longest stride of soul we individually and collectively ever took'.

A SLEEP OF PRISONERS

The human heart can go the lengths of God.....

dark and cold we may be, but this

is no winter now. The frozen misery

of centuries breaks, cracks, begins to move;

the thunder is the thunder of the floes,

the thaw, the flood, the upstart Spring.

Thank God our time is now when wrong

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Lindley Edwards – Essay

Affairs are now soul size.

The enterprise is exploration into God.

Where are you making for? It takes

so many thousand years to wake.....

but will you wake for pity's sake!

*Christopher Fry*²⁵



In answer to the question posed by this essay; wisdom as a way of life, to me, means the daily willingness and ability to broaden and deepen inner capacity and capability. Such capacity and capability (foundation or platform building) allows and facilitates wise holding (internally and externally) of conflict, confusion, uncertainty, fear, opposing views/ideologies/forces, chaos and complexity so that the wisest path can be navigated which will allow the best resolution or an elegant solution to be created.

Thank you to Wisdom University, faculty, staff and fellow students for another amazing, broadening and deepening Intensive.

Lindley Edwards

June 2010

²⁵ Christopher Fry, English Playwright and Poet, b 1907 died 2005

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