

# FINDING THE INNER HERO

A keynote talk given by Emily Fletcher at the conference *Meditation in Action: Finding the Will to Transform*, October 2016

OFTEN WHEN PONDERING what meditation is – one may get a vision of something deeply inward that has little relationship to the outer world. That is why I like the title of this conference *Meditation in Action*. It so aptly unifies meditation to its ultimate purpose – the symbiotic relationship it has to both inner and outer work.

Meditation is a process of reciprocity where the fruits of our inner work informs our outer deeds in the world, and in turn where we can take our outer experiences through a meditative and contemplative process, thereby heightening our perception of Self and worldly phenomena.

## **The Alchemy of self-mastery**

Meditation also relates to what I am going to term as 'the alchemy of self-mastery' – in which one must develop the Will to transform oneself. Many years ago alchemists wanted to understand the nature of matter – whilst one train of thought was that alchemy was the transmutation of base metals into gold another was the realisation that alchemy related to gnosis – knowledge of spiritual mysteries.

The Philosopher's Stone – is a symbol for personal transformation, it is the *stone of wisdom & enlightenment* – and can be represented by the element carbon. The two most well known forms are graphite and diamond. So let us imagine the two – the black opaqueness of the graphite which has a deep, dark density – like a piece of coal with a metallic grey-black lustre which smudges when held and rubs off on your fingers – and on the other hand, the diamond which is transparent and has an extraordinary translucent quality. It is an object that has an affinity to the light. Interestingly carbon has been termed as both the lowliest and noblest of elements – we can relate those terms to human beings if you ponder the good and unredeemed that resides in all humanity – and even more pertinent, the capacity that each and every one of us has for personal transformation.

Diamonds, it is well known, are formed at high temperatures and intense pressure, and subsequently because of their extremely strong structural make-

up, they cannot be contaminated by many impurities. Through the 'fire' of transformation – something so transparent, so beautiful yet so indomitable comes into being. The word diamond comes from the Greek word *adámas* – 'unbreakable'. This is an archetype of not only transformation but of bearing incredible forces.

It is said that the divine mysteries are something that cannot, or at least should not, be obtained in their fullness until one has first purified oneself as a preparation, because if the divine alchemical secrets were to be obtained via a mere passive receiving – kind of like opening up your email and downloading a pdf with all the information – then men in their egoism would gratify their lowest needs through the misuse of these highest mysteries. This sounds like something humankind might do – right? Instant gratification and a quest for power? A few people might come to mind.

Self-mastery demands the development of the deepest moral virtues so that the darkest elements within us can be transformed. This is not a comfortable process but it is imperative if we are to be the holders of such spiritual wisdom – such sacred knowledge. I guess you could say it requires us to become God-like – how else can it be if we are not to misuse it? Yet all the requirements for this pathway of purification are also deeply human and connect intrinsically with our life on earth, with living in the world.

Now it could be you are thinking – *'well that sounds like a lot of hard work – I like diamonds, I do, but not enough that I want to become like one!'* And like the diamond, the path is hard and requires, dedication, consistency, sacrifice; it requires the will to change and it requires believing there is something to change for.

Even if you are not interested in accessing the divine mysteries, this pathway of self-knowledge is essential for everyone. It is integral to a positive future of the world; for human relationships and for 'right endeavour'. Everything that is coming to us through the terrible hardships of today, and through technological singularity and radical scientific discovery, requires a depth of morality to meet

it, otherwise these astonishingly 'clever' developments can be used for so many questionable purposes.

### **Finding the Inner Hero**

Today the theme of my talk is *Finding the Inner Hero*. Through the course of my talk I will be introducing some of my personal outer heroes too – companions of mine you could say – that accompany me when I am at my weariest. I raise them in my mind and I think of their sacrifice, their humility and the creative mastery they have or had over their own suffering. Personal heroes are so important because they embody an archetype of what we too have the capacity to foster in ourselves – though for many of us today heroes can be hard to distinguish.

Take someone like Kim Kardashian who has 85 million followers on Instagram and was voted one of *Time Magazine's* most influential people last year. Kim was in the top two most googled people in the world in 2015 – one of the 'most searched for' in 26 countries – New Zealand was one of those countries. In *Time Magazine* the blurb that accompanied her photo said '*beautiful in an exotic, totally exaggerated way, Kim exudes energy, sexuality, drama, determination, impetuosity and happiness*' – so are these the attributes of a hero? She published a book last year called 'Selfish' which was basically a non-treatise, full of selfie images of herself. It would be funny perhaps if 85 million people were not hero worshipping her. That is influence!

Now when I opened the actual *Time Magazine* in question and came to the spread with Kim Kardashian on it, I found something quite interesting – whilst on the one side there was a glamorous photo of Kim, on the opposite page was an advertisement – a call for help from the World Food Programme. It is winter and the Syrian refugees need food. And there is a photo of a lovely young girl, only about 9 years old, and she is smiling. But though she has that smile on her face – her eyes say something else, they show such tenderness, and sadness. The more I looked at her eyes the more I found I was connecting to something deeply sad and moving. This is such a pertinent picture of the status quo we live with today. The deeply heart-breaking, and the trivial side by side. If we are not awake we may not discern them from one another.

Now if you don't know who Kim Kardashian is, it is worth doing some research – a person like this has a tremendous activity that lives around her – she may illicit feelings of the ridiculous or the preposterous but she represents a powerful counterforce to individual soul development because of her connection to materialistic impulses – her connection to extreme vanity and self-centredness.

When we study such people and phenomena – with objectivity – we become awake and develop a discernment for the forces that influence and shape our society.

As far as heroes go there are our contemporary fairy-tales that mirror the older fairy-tales we grew up with – take Julia Roberts in the film *Pretty Woman* – one of the most popular movies of all time – in a scene her character says:

*'When I was a little girl I would pretend I was a princess trapped in the tower by a wicked queen. And then suddenly this knight on a white horse with these colours flying would come charging up and draw his sword and I would wave and he would climb up the tower and rescue me.'*

This vision is a dream of millions.

Now idealism has a very important place in the world – idealists can be courageous change-makers in the face of the more conventional routine-afflicted realists – but the time has come to see through this culture where we are inundated and addicted to so much 'romantic idealisation' and come to the realisation that we as individuals are both the wicked queen that enslaves us and the knight that saves us. To recognise that duality in ourselves is very important. We are our own hero and villain, our nemeses live within, and it is our task to find the inner hero within ourselves, to cultivate it, to become the master of that wicked queen (or king) – in turn becoming a hero for others too.

**... we as individuals  
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saves us.**

And to be a hero for ourselves and others is for most of us no romantic novel, we don't inherit a castle of servants, no guaranteed 'happy-ever-after' scenario, and certainly no big fat money transfer into our cheque account. To wake-up can mean to give up so much of what we had hoped for or believed in or wanted to be seen as – there is no place for vanity – only humility, self-honesty and sacrifice and so very often suffering not reward. You can see why it takes so much willpower. To cultivate this inner hero takes some of the greatest willpower that humankind has access to. Courage and willpower.

To be a hero – is – in the words of Christopher Fry: to take '*The longest stride of soul men ever took*'.

In this world today where distraction, instant gratification, selfish desires, complacency and antipathy are strong opposition forces to our self-development and self-mastery – we are being asked – to develop our will and to cultivate our highest, most essential self – our true self – to meet the malevolent forces with honour and strength of perception through that symbiosis of inner and outer work. That is what we are here on planet earth to do.

### **Inner loneliness and challenge**

We are now in a time of great inner loneliness and huge challenge. We are surrounded by global conflict – conflict amongst people, countries, factions vying for control; fundamentalist thinking; power and greed.

We live in a world where the gap between the 'haves' and the 'have-nots' is so wide it is hard to see a way back into equality. There is a huge disempowerment process taking place.

We live with environmental catastrophes, climate change and pollution – we see appalling statistics on the impending extinction of animals and insects, due to pesticides, mono-culture and the destruction of habitats. Outdoor air pollution kills 3.3 million people every year. In New Delhi the lung function of half the city's 4.4 million children are so severely damaged that they will never fully recover.

Then we have political hubris that comes to form in someone like Donald Trump – people laughed when he became a candidate, but look at the huge following he acquired – there is an actual chance he could become the President of the United States – the most powerful country in the world. This status quo shows us – that people with power are not necessarily people with developed morality, integrity and insight because the people who support them are not necessarily people with developed morality, integrity and insight.

Astounding technological advances point towards the development of artificial super-intelligence which will soon have the capacity to surpass all human intelligence. There are scientific discoveries so profound that the very understanding of what it means to be human is severely challenged.

Soul attitudes that foster coldness, narcissism, loss of compassion and loss of knowledge of the true nature of love can be experienced everywhere. We hear about how teenage girls are now receiving pornographic content as snap chats or sms messages from their 'boyfriends' – straight into the palm of their hand they are having to navigate a new, disturbing 'norm'. The average age of entry into the sex trade in America is 12 – 14 years old. You can now buy a nail polish that detects date rape

drugs by dipping your finger into a drink – the brand slogan 'wear fashion that ensures protection'.

We live in a time that cultivates the grand subversion of love and the misapplication of sex. Love – the highest form of good – is now one of the most misused words of our time – *'I killed them for the love of God', 'I did it because I love you'*. And love is so often confused with lust of a sexual, physical kind, directed at getting our physical needs met. Rudolf Steiner said, *'The very worst offense committed today is to correlate love and sexuality. This is the worst possible expression of materialism ... Sexuality and love have absolutely nothing whatsoever to do with each other. Sexuality is something quite different from and has no connection at all with pure, original love.'*

But that is not how it is sold to us today ...

## **We live in a time that cultivates the grand subversion of love and the misapplication of sex. Love – the highest form of good – is now one of the most misused words of our time.**

If you are depressed after hearing all this – then you are not alone: In New Zealand there is approximately 400,000 of us on anti-depressant medication in New Zealand. In fact it was in the media last week that we are now in the unenviable position of having the highest rate of teen suicide in the developed world – and it is not only teens. In New Zealand suicide is the third highest cause of death overall and especially prevalent amongst New Zealand men (Maori & Non-Maori). Two advocates of mental health & suicide awareness, ex-All Black John Kirwan & comedian Mike King, talk about the mentality of men living in a culture that espouses the 'harden up' attitude – rather than sharing feelings.

And we live in a culture here in New Zealand, no different to other countries, whereby alcohol consumption is strongly ingrained – we have a 'normalised' heavy drinking culture. Binge-drinking has become a major issue among teenagers – but perhaps alcohol is not the problem per se – the problem is the culture they are born into.

These are just a few of the grim statistics that show NZ –

despite all our potential and opportunity – has a lot of ‘dis-ease’ and some fundamental attitudes that do not serve us. So there is a lot of work to be done.

And I just want to say something here about what is often seen as ‘focusing on the negative’. Often when you talk about such things it can be like *‘but there are lots of positive things happening too! Why just look at the negative!’* And we have to be careful with this kind of statement – I have consciously brought these pictures into the room because these are some of the realities that we are faced with – and suffering is so often the means that provides a propulsion into change and the overcoming of adversity.

Thomas Merton wrote, *‘True love and prayer are learned in the hour when love becomes impossible and the heart has turned to stone.’* Sometimes the bleakest, darkest hour, when all seems lost – that is our time to awaken.

Humanity and the earth are burdened with problems – how gentle do we really want to be with ourselves in terms of our own conscious efforts to become awake?

### **Desensitization**

All this terrible news, this information has become like fodder – to dip into and then get on with life as usual. This ‘dipping’ into, skimming on the top of things, also manifests in other pervasive ways of being – for example, the empty phrase, the cliché, the idiom, the acronym. These are so ubiquitous today and it is so hard not to be mindlessly using them. It penetrates our language –

*OMG, BFF, LOL*

*It’s all good*

*Each to their own*

*What doesn’t kill you makes you stronger*

*With all due respect ...*

True meaning becomes ambiguous.

Then we have the aphorism – one of the most ubiquitous posts on Facebook today is the pithy observation, the thoughtful life affirming quote which gets 1000 likes but doesn’t really leave anyone instilled with the transformative power of its meaning. To partake mindlessly without bringing awareness, or a thoughtfulness to these things can lead to a desensitization. Meaningful phrases become empty. Unless we really contemplate them they are just ‘ah’ moments that float away like a cloud in the sky. Rudolf Steiner said, *‘With the vogue of the cliché a lack of thought develops, a lack of principle, a lack of will. When cliché, the empty phrase begins to dominate – the inner soul experience of the truth dies away...’*

The book ‘Man’s Search for Meaning’ by Viktor Frankl, is one that I believe everyone should read. Frankl was

a Jewish neurologist and psychiatrist as well as a Holocaust survivor. He tells of how quickly the prisoners in the concentration camp became used to the horrifying acts around them. It was merely days after having arrived that one did not even turn away from the sight of another being shot or brutalized. To me the book spoke, in quite an extreme measure, of the capacity of mankind to become desensitized as a means of protection and acceptance of the status quo. And this is happening all over the world.

### **Distraction**

There is so much distraction and attacks on our will. We live in a world where distraction is literally at the push of a button. Let’s take TV shows, movies, Playstation games, sports – on our big flat screens or our more modest laptops, we are passively taken into worlds where we can become completely absorbed and manipulated from one emotion to the next. Movies are pros at this – they manipulate us into feeling happy, then sad, then scared at any given moment. Play a certain piece of music during a particular scene and the adrenaline kicks in. It is an emotional rollercoaster. And doesn’t it feel good!? People are spending hours a day travelling deep into artificial worlds, even creating relationships with avatars. And if you are not particularly conscious then you have no idea of the forces at work. We can very easily lose our sense of reality for what is true and what is false.

Just like alcohol and drugs affect our cognition and inhibitions – our mental acuity and our discernment – so can entertainment spoon feed us an artificially stimulated emotional life (so I am not saying the emotions we have are artificial but that the form that stimulates them in us are). These situations can weaken our own capacity to engender ‘true’ feelings, particularly in relation to compassion, devotion and love.

These manipulated processes can also enfeeble our capacity to create our own imaginations, as the impressions of what we saw are imprinted upon us rather than created out of our own will to imagine. To keep an imagination alive, to keep thoughts living, takes real efforts of will. Digital imagery today has a powerful effect on us especially on young people who live so fully into this online realm, and it has been spoken of more and more, that we are losing the ability to imagine!

So how do we manage a life with technology – becoming a technophobe is not realistic – it would hinder a life that requires full ‘engagement’ in worldly activity, and so the answer is to meet it with the utmost consciousness. Which is hard because being on call, online, plugged in – being coaxed to interact constantly – is something that is having an invisible and insidious attack on the very core of

our being while laming our personal willpower.

Many of us experience how these forces are undermining our capacity to breathe out, find space, seek inner nourishment. Our experience of 'space and time' has become 'squeezed' through technology. We pack our lives full – so that time is all used up. Used up with all the 'busyness' and instant gratification

And I just want to talk about the deferment of gratification as a fundamental exercise in the development of the will – arresting a desire – it could be something quite small like not having that extra biscuit or not clicking into Facebook. Next time you are in a situation like this become aware of it – so for example when you are reaching for that biscuit you then arrest the whole process and deny the desire its fulfilment. It is a very tangible thing where the will meets the desire and arrests the process. So you are strengthening your will and becoming very cognitive of what is taking place. So every now and then practice arresting your desire through consciously applied willpower.

And this same scenario applies to 'laziness' – what is stopping us from getting up off the chair and being active – become a witness of those moments too whereby we are cognisant of the power of inertia within us as a tangible force to be overcome.

By strengthening the will in this way something very interesting begins to happen. So let's say to begin with, instead of meditating, there is a desire to keep working or stay in bed a little longer. Through doing these will exercises time and again, we overcome our tendency to procrastinate and eventually develop a regular practice. Now the more you practice meditation, the more you cultivate an inner need to practice – so the will is no longer overcoming anymore – it actually becomes a facilitator. Which is quite incredible!

So much of what we do is to feel good – to gratify ourselves and to alleviate our own suffering.

### **Suffering**

Some of you may have heard of a Hindu spiritual guru called Amma – she is also known as 'the hugging mother'. Based in India she travels the globe. She hugs people from all over the world – she has these massive gatherings whereby thousands of people queue-up to hug her. Over the years millions of people have stood in line for up to twelve hours for a 3-second hug. So this woman imbues, I imagine, a form of the true nature of love that emanates and effects those people who come into contact with her – albeit briefly. The thing that struck me as I watched documentary footage of her – was the people waiting in line to meet her; the deep, deep suffering on

some of their faces and the sincerest need to be held; if just for a second; to be wrapped in the arms of love – to feel seen in their suffering for just a few moments. To feel salvation.

It got me thinking about how we all need a hugging mother, in the deepest most profound sense – and that the hugging mother lives within us. Because let's face it flying to India, standing in line for 12 hours for a 3 second respite is just not feasible for most of us, or long lasting enough to keep us feeling held as we move back into the world.

To 'see' another in their suffering – to hold them in our consciousness and feel deeply for them – this is a noble deed. It is so easy to forget in all the consumerism of Christmas, say, that the most essential gift is to see another for who they are. The French Philosopher and political activist, Simone Weil said '*Attention is the rarest and purest form of generosity*'.

### **Being pushed off-centre**

If you were to ask what one of the most important capacities to develop today is – it is keeping our centre – through the most challenging of circumstances. And here I am going to give you a small, quite common example of how we can easily lose it.

So a while ago now I was pulling out of a very small carpark, which required me to back out onto a busy main street. And as I pulled out a woman who wanted to come into the carpark had come in far enough that she was blocking my way and there were no parks except the one I was vacating so I was like ... stuck. I looked back at her hunching my shoulders in a questioning gesture and thought '*you are going to have to move!*' and she looked at me and pointed to the pavement behind me, basically telling me to back onto the footpath – where there were pedestrians walking. I could feel straight away, though not face to face with this woman, that she was angry. I could feel her angry energy come right into me. And I could feel myself starting to feel pissed off – by her anger – I was just backing out of the carpark. I was in the right! She is blocking my way!

So as you can hear I am starting to feel justified in feeling that I am not going to be the one that moves ... but then I realise, neither is she. So obviously – I thought to myself – I am going to have to be the bigger person and so I cautiously backed out onto the footpath, not running over anyone, and slowly backed onto the road and as I did I thought '*she's not even going to wave out thank-you!*' – and so I paused my car, opened my window and I said '*you're welcome!*'

Now before I go on I just want to give you a picture of this

person because she made an impression on me – this was a classy looking lady – she was driving a beautiful Mercedes Benz, and had a very chic look, blonde coiffed hair, immaculate make-up, Chanel type sunglasses and she was probably about 50 or 60 years old – so she had a certain air of sophistication.

Anyway so I said *'you're welcome'* and I looked at her through her windscreen, and she goes like 'this' [both Emily's hands now do the double finger 'fuck you' sign] ... I was quite shocked and I pull away feeling kind of like *'what was that!'*. I could not get the vision of that intense gesture out of my head ... and as I drove further down the street, with my heart pounding and adrenalin pumping I started to realise – *'ok Emily what really just happened?'*. Well first and foremost – that brief encounter – pulled me off my centre just like 'that' [clicks fingers].

## **What a truly magnificent goal to have for our foes, our most hostile adversaries – to want them to rise up and be the best of themselves.**

We all know these moments, they have no warning, they come in our text messages, via email, face to face with best friends and strangers alike.

Now of course, most of us know in theory at least, the ideal response would have been a 'zen' approach – keep my calm, emanating positivity and love, but sometimes it is just not as easy as that. Now the thing that concerned me as I drove away was not her being 'like this' [Emily does the finger gesture again] – quite quickly after I left, I felt a respect that there was something going on for her and that this insult has nothing to do with me and my true value. What concerned me and made me ponder in more depth – was what was going on for me? Why did I not keep my centre at that moment?

Because no matter what happens to us, no matter how we feel on any given day – we need to know how we can keep our centre.

### **Namaste**

On a side note – many of you will be familiar with the word Namaste – which derives from the Sanskrit – *namas* (bowing), *te* (to you) – it also means 'I honour the divine being in you'. Whenever we come across situations like I

have mentioned – whether it be a stranger who is angry – or even harder a loved one who has let us down – or even harder still a person accused of a heinous crime – then our aim, our aspiration in a sense, is to meet them with the 'Namaste' gesture. Not just as a greeting, or a thanking – but much deeper. So we can react and choose to see their lower self – that part of them that is 'lame' in that moment in time – or we can choose to see and honour their essential self – their higher self. Whether it is always visible to us or not – each person has a divine aspect to their being which they too are trying to develop and incarnate more fully – this is the part we need to be in mindful relation with.

The incredible Aung San Suu Kyi said – in respect to her decades long plight with the Military Junta in Burma – *'I don't want to see the military falling. I want to see the military rising to dignified heights of professionalism and true patriotism.'* What insight! What a truly magnificent goal to have for our foes, our most hostile adversaries – to want them to rise up and be the best of themselves.

By the way this is one of the foundations of all therapy – and when I have spoken to my colleague Mark about his arts therapy work with the inmates in the prison – what I hear often is the miraculous surprise, sometimes shock, that the inmates feel when they have an experience that comes from this higher aspect of themselves. So in one case an inmate had done a chalk drawing – and he could not quite believe that something so beautiful could have come from him, that he had created it! He had not realised that this beauty, this higher aspect of himself resided within his very own self. So you can see how important the work of the therapist is to help facilitate that relationship. And it is something we can practice too in our day to day lives. We are all therapists.

### **The objective observer**

So coming back to how we keep our centre: becoming an *objective observer* is key.

Now every person in this room has had a moment of the kind I just talked about, in one way or other. And it is important to note that just because we maintain an outer calm in a situation it doesn't mean the reaction is not taking place internally – so we have to be careful not to convince ourselves that because we didn't outwardly react or have an outburst that we have mastered ourselves, if inwardly the same reaction is taking place.

So there are countless ways of rationalising such experiences, but the key mistake we can make is to not give the experience the time and energy it deserves to reflect on what has taken place – as an objective observer – with the intention to understand it holistically. It is a

good aim to have and it doesn't need to take hours – Just five minutes can be of immense worth.

If you want to get a picture of the ultimate self-mastery in centredness then the book I mentioned earlier, by Viktor Frankl, gives quite an incredible example through his ability to stay centred in a concentration camp. He said, *'Everything can be taken from a man but one thing: the last of the human freedoms – to choose one's attitude in any given set of circumstances, to choose one's own way'*.

And so for most of us it is not about not having those moments of loss of centre; for many of us this will happen until the day we die – the question is, are we awake enough to witness ourselves and understand the phenomena of what took place. Becoming a witness of ourselves is what underpins all true mindfulness practice. It actually takes us a step beyond 'just' being in the present moment. Because by becoming the objective observer we give things true conscious attention – and from attention comes interest (in what we are looking at) and from interest arises love. So you move into a relationship with your higher self.

Now interestingly only a week after the 'double-finger' scenario – an almost identical scene unfolded for me – in my car again, entering another busy carpark again, encountering another angry woman again – so interesting eh! We always get to 're-sit' our tests – we can get to know those scenarios so well! Kind of like *'hiya, special delivery – just in case you didn't do it right the first time – here's another opportunity delivered especially to you from the universe, good luck!'*

So as this new scenario unfolded I remember that reactionary part in me opening a fraction and immediately, like in a millisecond, I was like *'I see you!'* – I looked at the woman and I felt deeply for her and I thought – *'I see you'* and I sat there calmly, quietly and patiently. And to be honest I rejoiced in the immediacy of seeing what that moment really required of me. And you know what ... I applauded myself, I patted myself on the back, I thought *'Nice work Fletcher'*, I said *'Hallelujah!'* Because these are the moments we need to celebrate, they may seem infinitesimal but, this is what it means to be human, and that is something to rejoice about – it's real. In that moment that constructed, persona aspect of myself, became the individual aspect of myself.

So are we just reactionary beings or do we become a witness of ourselves? When we begin this activity of becoming a witness we can really start a process of transformation. And by practicing, it can become a very fluid activity that we can move in and out of continuously throughout the day – to move into that higher perspective place – becoming the surveyor, the onlooker, the learner.

And through practice it is here that our feeling, thinking and willing life become calm, quiet and objective and this equilibrium can create our centredness.

And it is also in that space – that divine wisdom can come in – that we can 'hear' it in the quiet.

### **What do we mean by centre?**

While the inner ear is the physical centre of balance in the human being, the heart is the soul, spiritual centre of the human being. Our Heart – our beautiful, tender, strong, rhythmic, life affirming heart – is where our feeling life dwells and where we can warm our thoughts and enliven our will.

## **So often we relate the term courage to doing some great outer feat, but what could be more courageous than facing ourselves, living into our own heart space ...**

And it is this heart space that is becoming severely undernourished today. At this moment in time so much of humanity is up in its head, a lot of thinking is going on, a lot of likes, dislikes, concepts, ideas, facts, data – to the detriment of the feeling life. And a lot of doing is happening – a lot of outer activity, busy, busy, work, work, productivity – but uninformed by true cognitive feeling.

Now it is interesting that the word courage comes from the Latin word 'cor' which means heart. So often we relate the term courage to doing some great outer feat, but what could be more courageous than facing ourselves, living into our own heart space and cultivating it to become an organ of perception – perception warmed by love.

Now there are many ways we can cultivate warmth in our thinking and feeling – through meditation, artistic and creative endeavor, cultivating a love of beauty and by working with verses and poems.

I have carried a newspaper cutting around for years – with a short article speaking of a school in England who made the pupils who got detention listen to classical music and write down William Blake's lauded poem Jerusalem – thus learning it by heart. The result was less truancy and fewer misdemeanors by the repeat

offenders. I carried this small piece of newsprint around with me for many, many years because it held one of the alchemical secrets of healing and yet for many it would have been lost in the hubbub of inconsequential news. Many of us know that the learning of a particular verse or prose can help to engender a sense of self and offer a source of resolve and transformation – it can become a mantra of sorts. As Buddha said 'with our thoughts we make our world' – both our inner and outer one.

Living into imaginations such as those provided by Blake can re-enforce and instil visions of courage and spirit that lie within us: *Bring me my Bow of burning gold; Bring me my Arrows of desire: Bring me my Spear: O clouds unfold! Bring me my Chariot of fire!* Imagine if we were to wage all our personal battles with such vital imaginations – such beauty!

The renowned depictions of Michael and the Dragon can speak of our own personal power to transform our personal demons. We all have 'shadow' aspects of ourselves that need the sword of courage and discernment to redeem them. Those familiar with the School of Spiritual Science mantra will have meditated on the 'beasts' that meet us at the threshold. For those of you whom are not familiar with those terms I refer to those qualities that we all have – in our darkest moments the shadow aspects of ourselves can 'act' out like beasts manifesting as mocking, laziness, fear and so on. In Buddhism they are called the five hindrances. The more we develop ourselves the more we can become a witness to our own personal beasts and the very particular ways they manifest – this is key to so much that relates to self-mastery and self-confidence. When we have seen our personal beasts, and when we have begun to transform them – we are no longer fettered by them – we can then begin to know true freedom.

By the way, keeping a sense of self compassion and love for our own imperfect journey is essential. I sometimes laugh at how shit I can be. Laughter is a spiritual quality – bringing in that light can be a good way to meet our beasts when they have really messed things up for us. We have to meet these challenges, as Steiner said, with '*warmth of soul and strength of spirit.*'

### **So Why meditate?**

Well we have arrived at an age, whereby everybody has the opportunity to find the spirit, whereby the seed forms of spiritual insight and clairvoyant perception that live within each and every one of us can be nurtured into the fullness of being.

Psychologist and philosopher Erich Fromm said, '*The whole life of the individual is nothing but the process of*

*giving birth to oneself; indeed, we should be fully born, when we die – although it is the tragic fate of most individuals to die before they are born.*'

The sum total of universal wisdom is implanted in the very Self of every human being. It lives in us, and it is through the activity of the Self that we can uncover this wisdom-knowledge – these great mysteries of the universe of which we are immutably a part of. This is the task of meditation. Through self-knowledge and penetration into the depths of our being – we begin to make ourselves transparent to cosmic knowledge. So if you know yourself, you know the world.

Because in meditation, one is constantly practicing to lift oneself out of the mundane – out of our persona and into a super-conscious state. Every act of meditation is an act of transformation. Even if you feel you get nowhere, the mere fact you try is an act of transformation because just to sit down and try takes conscious will.

And every step we take on this path through our directed will, is a step closer to our true humanity, to becoming more loving. And that is why meditation, and the body of work that is connected to self-mastery, can be one of the most selfless acts – because we are creating a new consciousness which can feed into all worldly endeavour. Love is the ultimate wellspring of all wellbeing and healing. *So wisdom is not enough it needs to metamorphose into love.*

Mediation can become a source of great inner strength, a source of wellbeing, but it is not about cultivating a sense of escapism from the hardships of today – to a point where we lose ourselves – it is about becoming awake and grounded, being a conscious researcher in the realms of spirit. Being a spiritual scientist.

We can be doing well and we can be doing good things in the world but there is the need to be understanding the phenomena we are working with too. Psychological as well as physical phenomena. And the Anthroposophical path to mediation provides one with the means to achieve that because it is particularly focussed on the manifestation of physical forms and their spiritual origin – the development of our perceptual capacities to see the unseen.

The extraordinary resources in the Anthroposophical movement – namely the Foundation Stone Meditation and the Class Mantra – are incredible resources for people who want to connect to this mediative work. The Foundation Stone Meditation gives us a picture of the archetypal human being which is so sadly missing in this technologically imbued world. In fact this meditation is the Stone of Love – it is an alchemical blueprint to

cultivate love. The Class lessons are the spiritual yeast for imagination, inspiration, intuition. In these Incredible times we have access to such rich spiritual resources!

So finding the will to transform is not easy with all the outer distractions and our inner weaknesses.

We are so often passive in our will and can be so immersed in an ocean of forces that move through us – influencing us to do their bidding. Advertising and marketing messages are a prime example of this. Consumerism relies entirely on making us want things that we might not necessarily need, things we never even thought about previously. The pressure of social conformity to think and act ‘on-trend’, the politics of fear that can undermine sound judgment and make us more malleable, and so on – these are all will forces, whereby we become the receptacles and functionaries of other agencies. What we have to do is develop more strength in us for the will to be our will, because *my will is my will*. So my ‘I’ – my Self – takes hold of it’s own will.

And I would like to offer you this verse to work with. It is very powerful. The will that is referenced in this verse is not a dominating, coercive will. It is a will that arises from a place of love – it is light-filled and cognitive – resolute – it is inspired by a vision of what we can become in the highest sense, and that this ‘becoming’ serves not only ourselves but also the needs of the world.

*I am I*

*My will is my will*

*May it serve the unfolding of my spirit self*

*May my words sound from my true I*

*May my deeds be the will of my true I*

*May my feelings be the fire of mine I*

*I will*

*I am I*

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