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WHAT WE LIVE FOR: A HUMANIST'S AFFIRMATION

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A Social Psychologist by training he was acting Chairman and Chairman of the Department of Ethics of the three Ethical Culture Schools from 1951 to 1976; taught in the Encampment for Citizenship of the American Ethical Union and lectured in and co-Directed the Leaders Training Institute with Prof. Horace Friess and Dr. Howard Radest. He has been a Lecturer for the New York City Police Department on "Ethics and Violence" and addressed the Nursing Schools of Montefiore Hospital and New York Hospital.

Dr. Spetter studied at the Amsterdam City University in his native country, the Netherlands; was awarded a fellowship at the Leicester University, England, and received his Doctoral Degree from the Graduate Faculty of the New School for Social Research in New York. Founder of the Riverdale Mental Health Clinic in 1960, he serves both on its Board and its Professional Advisory Council.

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He was co-author of *Bio Ethics and Human Rights* (Eds. Bandman, Little Brown, NY) and of *A Lively Connection* (Ed. Neuhaus, Ethica Press NY).

During World War II Dr. Spetter served in sectors of the Dutch and French Resistance. Arrested in 1943, he was condemned to death because of his work on behalf of Allied Intelligence, subsequently he was a prisoner of the Nazis at the Buchenwald and Auschwitz Concentration camps. After his liberation he served in the Dutch Security Branch of the G2 - G3 section of the U.S. Army, Seine HQ and later functioned as a witness for the U.S. Prosecution at the International War Criminal Trials in Nuremberg, Germany. (Gen. Telford Taylor) He was awarded the Resistance Cross by the Government of the Netherlands.

A working member of the War Control Center since its inception he was a participant in the White House Conference on Disarmament. A Member of the Board of the International Humanist and Ethical Union Dr. Spetter has represented the AEU since 1957 and has delivered keynote addresses at the Congresses of the IHEU in Oslo, Amsterdam, and Hanover. He is an Alternate Delegate for the IHEU at the United National Non-Governmental Organizations and a Member of Amnesty International and the World Council on Peace and Religion.

Recent addresses were the Brown Lecture at Manhattan College on: *The Holocaust and the Sanctity of Life* and at the Free University in Amsterdam on: *To Rescue the Human Spirit*.

Among Dr. Spetter's many publications are: *The Courage to Stand Alone* (NY 1960); *Man, the Reluctant Brother* (NY 1967); *Bruder Wider Willen* (Barth Verlag, Munich, Germany 1969); *To Deny The Night* (NY 1970); *De Dag Ligt Nog Voor Ons* (Stockum, The Hague, Holland 1970); *Symbolism, Ritual and Man* (Rekenschap, Utrecht, Holland, 1971); *Sounds of the Heart* (Columbia Press, NY, 1980); *Coping With Our Darker Hours* (NYSEC, NY, 1994); *The Work is Peace in: Building a World Community* (Ed. Kurtz Prometheus, Buffalo, NY 1990). *Humanists Say "Yes" to Life*. Humetisk Forb. Norge, (Oslo, 1980); *Our Hidden Oneness* (NYSEC, NY, 1994).

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MEANING WE CREATE

All of us want to make sense out of the time in which we live. Both privately and socially we maintain a dialogue with what we are experiencing.

The problem is that we can hold many ideas and values at the same time even when they are not compatible.

Therefore, to try to make sense of our time leads us into many problems and conflicts not just of opinion but of emotion.

The British historian Sir Isaiah Berlin wrote about this in his essays entitled *The Sense of Reality*.¹

We would like things to somehow fall into some orderly sequence. But that is rarely possible. The contradictions in the experience of living are far too frequent.

So, we fall back upon the reality we perceive beneath the purposeful and concrete. We try to discern what our intuition tells us. Isaiah Berlin calls those “*the half-articulate habits, assumptions and ways of thought....so deeply embedded as not to be felt consciously at all.*”²

Can we too draw upon such deeper assumptions?

¹Farrar-Strauss. NY 1997.

²In Robert Darnton. Quoted in “*Free-Spirit*”. NY. June 26, 1997.

In the end, as we seek a pathway to understand what we live for, we have to return to our life as we share it with others.

To find ourselves as related and so to avoid being separate in trying to comprehend what has meaning in our existence.

If we do not, we are in danger—as Dostoiewsky wrote—to find our place in the world “*only as a theory,*” and become detached.

The great danger for modern men and women has been called the abyss of “*alienation,*” an estrangement from one’s own sense of life. It is a state of being which the French author Albert Camus called “*an exile without remedy,*” an exile from oneself.

The killing a few days ago of a beloved school teacher in the Bronx, by one of his own students, provides once more a terrible example of such “*exile,*” a total lack of ethical standards, or even of plain human feeling.

The killer only wanted the teacher’s credit-card. So, he killed him for it.... When one’s life, is life “*in theory only*” everything seems to be permitted.

McVeigh’s bombing of the Federal Building in Oklahoma City is but another example. So are the arsonists who have burned hundreds of Black churches in the South. No conscience applied!

As Humanists, we are committed to finding out what we live for by drawing one another out of any form of such “*exile*”. To resist being pulled into a whirlpool of emotional self-abandonment, by building quality into our relationships whether in our intimate or social existence. That is one of our main tasks as Ethical Humanists and it is a very difficult one to undertake.

It confronts us from our childhood into our married life and in how we care for our parents in their later years. It is a process of questing, and gathering as-well-as of losing as we try to define for ourselves what we live for.

Personal meaning is not provided to us by others. We have to create it for ourselves if we want to avoid living by false, defective selves. That means extending ourselves into the world so that we build some harmonies with others by our commitments, our loves, our daily work. On all kinds of levels partnerships are possible, but it takes the experimenting of questing for stable values.

It is a process in which we try to find out what we live for by helping one another grow. At the least, to make that a serious attempt.

To me, Ethical Culture provides a religious way of life. Not all of you may agree with it in those terms. Our movement has room for both of us. But a religion worth its salt, like ethical religion, must at least help to guide us in these few ways:

1. It must help us to live generously in order to deal with suffering, disappointments and help us to distill, evoke, "*the courage to be*". There is a vision possible grown out of how we engage upon life. A solid life is its own salvation and revelation.
2. It must help us to clarify what we live for in terms of relationships.
3. It must call out our potential to grow by helping to provide opportunities for stretching our interests and commitments.
4. It must help us to hone our ability to love, so that we discover resources for healing, for dealing with our losses and setbacks.

If such a way-of-life can serve us that way, it will give us a solid grounding to make sense of what we live for, assisting us to build a measure of happiness and contentment personally and socially.

In asking the question: "*What do we live for?*" I am thinking of a couple I worked with many years ago.

During a routine check-up it was discovered that the husband had cancer of the liver. The diagnosis was confirmed by

a specialist asked for a second opinion. Suddenly the notion of time and reality had to change radically for both of them. They were told that at best there would be one year left to live. They had to decide how they would conduct their lives now—under a sentence of death or somehow manage to hold on to their very good life together? After much dialogue, and many silences, they made a decision. They would live their lives as closely and affectionately as they could, not making the illness the center of their days. While this was a formidable task, of course, they basically stuck to that decision. Death was not to set their reality.

I came greatly to admire this couple. They were teaching each other—and me as well—not to allow death or despair to overshadow every hour. They gathered all their strength without heroics and so honored each other's existence. That is what they were living for and it made it possible for the wife to sustain herself when the end came, alas, earlier even than expected. They had clarified what their love for each other really meant.

Our lives are not symbolic stories. These people proved that. Can we apply this as well to the times in which we live? This last week has been so full of events, each posing that same question of how to make sense out of it.

DEEPER ISSUES

There was the marvelous news from the Paris Conference that Russia would remove all the nuclear missiles still aimed at all western nations. Deplorably our media paid more attention to the sexual allegations about the President and the generals than to this immensely important decision for all of us who lived so long under the nuclear threat.

How could such an incredibly important event just slip by? How aware and frightened we were in the fifties, sixties seventies and eighties of the reckless arms race and that insane proposition both of the Russians and ourselves of "*mutually assured destruction.*" Why was there no jubilation in the streets?

As the week progressed we learned of the guilty verdict for the terrorist bombing in Oklahoma City. Is it not utterly simplistic to think that with Mr. McVeigh condemned to death the much larger issue of internal terrorism has been dealt with?

There is, to my thinking, an issue far deeper than the fate of Mr. McVeigh. Democratic civilizations can commit suicide if they pay no attention to the agitation and destructiveness at the fringes of society.

Again, meaning has to be created both in private lives and in society as a whole.

Whatever the accomplishment of our economy its very amassing of wealth at the top leaves many millions out. The inner “*exile*” I spoke of before can become for those who feel disadvantaged a climate of resentment and social despair which leads to extremism of all kinds.

The now celebrated free-market order creates contentment for those greatly benefitting from its results. But to others it results in feeling excluded and lacking basic security. Out of such dislocation are born the often racist and separatist movements now rampant in the country. The same phenomenon is happening such countries as France, Germany, Russia. Each of them faced with new or reborn right-wing movements.

In addition, our government has allowed right-wing private armies to roam different parts of the country. South Florida has the largest concentration, but in California every county has a heavily armed militia.

These private armies sanction deeds such as those of McVeigh. They attract those who are dissociated from society and who find a spiritual home in groups that deny democratic institutions.

We are probably talking about millions of men and quite a few women whose need to renounce the restraints of our

civilization is fed by what the sociologist Albert Salomon called “*the fatal insecurity*”. The despair of the individuals in those groups makes them hunger for ruthless leadership which provides a goal and purpose.

Today, the *Internet* is full of the hate messages of these groups encouraged as well by the so called “*Revisionist Historians*,” whose main aim is the denial that Germany killed 12 million people in its concentration camps.

The French philosopher Jean Paul Sartre wrote an excellent essay on the hate ideology of such groups. The essay was called *Portrait of an Anti-Semite*. One can explain to such persons that Jews cannot be capitalists and communists at the same time or that there is no evidence of a worldwide “*Jewish conspiracy*”, etc, etc.

But, as Sartre wrote, “*The anti-Semite will only smile at you and say I do not need proof. I want to be an anti-Semite*” It is not simply a blindness to facts, it is an emotional conviction.

It is from that same poisonous ground that the McVeigh’s of this country are nourished. Whatever the saner arguments, they wish to hate while cultivating delusions of power and revolution. The rise of fascism is a spiritual question, not just a political one. It deals with faith. It requires a response in kind.

Then there was last week the commemoration of D-Day, two days ago. Remembering the immense sacrifices of WWII when tens of thousands of young men had to throw their poor bodies against the steel concrete and barbed-wire lines of Nazi Germany, so that Europe could be liberated. America lost 400,000 men in that war—also in the Pacific.

I was part of that struggle, it is forever carved into the consciousness of all of us who stood up to the tyranny of Nazism.

Then there was last Thursday the 50th Anniversary of the Marshall-Plan, America’s incredible attempt to help rebuild

Europe when country after country lay in ruin. Who can ever forget the 27 million people killed by the Germans in Russia; the starving children of France and Italy; the Dutch dying of hunger by the thousands in the streets of Amsterdam and so forth. Here was a monument to human foresight, human caring and maybe the most glorious American initiative ever, the initiative of General George Marshall, who later would be called a “*card carrying communist*” in the insanity of the McCarthy period.

His insight was simply stated when he said “*war is a calamity. We must find a better solution, by faith, understanding and the will to act. Good faith is as much man’s fate as destruction. The work is peace.*”

That in brief was “*the week that was*”—days too full to do them justice in this brief summary. Such are the days of our years.

It set the theme for my thoughts with you and the question in the title of my address “*What do we live for?*” Ultimately each of us must confront the question whether can we make our lives and our world more humane—and what can be our part in this world as Humanists.

In a very private way I think of my father. He took me with him to a mass demonstration in my native city, the Hague, in Holland, where people had come by the thousands to protest the execution in the twenties, in the United States of Sacco and Vanzetti. At the end of that meeting all rose to sing one of the old socialist songs of brotherhood and justice.

I was very young then and stood next to my father. And as he sang and joined those thousands of voices of protest against all violence and human degradation, I saw tears run down his cheeks. I had never seen my father cry, it was unforgettable and I knew as a child I had been present at something sacred, something holy.

The outcry of the human soul for liberation from the yoke of

cruelty and hate and oppression. A cry that forever calls for a response. In my father's tears I read the goodness of a man, his love for life and his commitment which I hold so dear even now many decades after he was executed by the Germans in WWII.

A MILITANT HUMANISM

The Humanist affirmation is not one of ease and cosiness. It is in fact a most difficult and strong, militant aim for freeing the human potential for a great good, for a perspective of what "good" means and how to put it to work.

We have to learn how to become skillful in communicating such militant framework of thought and action.

I connect it with the recent news item that about 150,000 Americans each year receive a bypass operation in which the heart is stopped and then repaired by the attachment of healthier vessels to carry the blood. What a truly incredible proposition to create a new option for living by the daring experimentation that has created the skills and commitment of the cardiac surgeons and the others involved.

To create in fact a response to the question of what we live for, to provide another opportunity for the fullness of life whatever our precariousness. Can this not serve for a model for humanist inspiration?

How deeply we need to comprehend our connection with others so that in unison, with new skills acquired, we accept the chance to build a more humane world, just as is happening in numerous operating rooms across the land.

Having gone through this procedure myself I am but too aware of the trust required; the hope required; the determination required. So, also what is required of each of us to create the opportunity, a fighting opportunity, to make our modest contribution which is so crucial for ourselves as-well-as for those we share our lives with.

I think of Vaclav Havel, the President of Czechoslovakia, who after his liberation from communist jails said “*The communist dictatorships were defeated by the human spirit, by human conscience, because people could no longer live by its deceit...it was defeated by human integrity and human self-affirmation. Believe in your humanness. The world must be liberated from despair.*”

To me that is the lasting message.

How can we make our Humanist attitude make to function in every day life? There are many situations in which nothing and no one reaches out to us. Nor are we ourselves always open to include others. As some people, with whom we work or live, can turn away from us so can we do the same thing. It happens in society at-large and it happens even in families or marriages, as all of us know.

But on the other hand we are free to change that picture. I cannot care for humankind in general. But I can care for the people that matter in my life; my parents, my husband, wife, my beloved person, my children—my colleagues of my daily work or encounter.

When I direct my emotional energy to include them I will start to get a better understanding of myself. By reaching out myself I will encounter people who will care for me, for what I am and can contribute.

Yes, it is possible to get struck in that sour notion of “*who cares*”, and so to be eternally disappointed and negative. But when, because of what I put out, I discover that there are people who care for me as well, then I start to perceive that I can grow in maturity toward others, that I can greatly better my own ethical attitude in life—and doing so, activate something in myself of gratitude, of respect and self-respect, of a notion of what is good in me and for me. Then my hope to be understood for the good in me, to be appreciated for the good in me can become a dynamic

that connects me with some real confidence to the better self in others and thereby it becomes clarified for myself.

It is that connection that can set hope before my eyes of that which I may yet grow toward and become as a caring man or woman. It is what the word “*culture*” in Ethical Culture points to: the cultivation, the development of my courage to make my own choices and so to discover my own joys. I have then distilled something precious out of my struggle for self-empowerment and I become emotionally more free and able to break through my disappointments and my days of regret and the doubts about my resources to live well.

NEW AWARENESS

But how incredibly hard it can be to maintain one’s sense of dignity in this era was illustrated again in a recent Czech movie *Kolyia*. Many of you may have seen it.

In brief: a musician, greatly in need of money agrees to a fake marriage so that a woman who fled to Czechoslovakia from the Soviet Union—it is in the eighties—can get Czech citizenship by marriage. Then with a Czech passport she can flee even further west, to Germany, where a man is waiting for her. The complication is that she has a five-year-old boy. The child is left with an aunt, but when the aunt dies he is brought to the musician, who never aspired to a real marriage, let alone to fatherhood. But since he is a decent man, he cannot simply abandon the child.

The boy—Koligia only speaks Russian and the musician only Czech, but somehow they communicate and slowly a bond develops. The musician, a cellist, has led pretty much a self-centered life. Now suddenly a protective instinct grows, even love. He finds how deeply he cares for the boy when the child is seriously ill.

The cellist mostly makes his money by playing at funerals—he has no other choice but to take the boy with him when he

performs. As a result, when the child makes drawings, there is always a coffin in his pictures.

But when love develops out of what was only dependency and the boy calls the man “*Dad*,” the child starts to make drawings that have more lively themes, filled with people and animals.

Something has happened to both of them. For the man there is an entirely new awareness of a relatedness he never knew before. That discovery of the preciousness of the human bond evokes in him a sense of his own worth as a caring human being.

When after the collapse of the communist regime, the mother comes back to claim her child, there is both for the man and the boy the pain of separation, but yet, for both as well, the triumph of their shared humanity.

I was deeply moved by this film. Having lost one of my own children during the Nazi regime in Europe—I am but too much alert to the many farewells of parents and children in this generation.

We have seen it in Vietnam, in Cambodia, in Nicaragua and now in Rwanda and Bosnia. The tearing apart of the primary bonds of parents and children is no doubt one of the darkest benchmarks of our time.

What this motion picture illuminates as well is that the fragile edge of life’s perspectives is always threatened, but that loyalty to one another makes possible the will to restore life again and again.

That is the ultimate ground as well of the ethical ideal which helps us to confront loss and eventually death.

The Nihilists of this century, who have wanted to reduce every ideal to a cynical absurdity, are wrong. There is more to human existence than what Bertrand Russell once called

“*unyielding despair.*” There is also in us the possibility to affirm the honor of living out of an intuitive insight as much as the determination to bear the heavy burden of our human existence with as much supportive generosity as we can muster. A bonding that encourages a fierce will to restore life. To reach for that will lies at the heart of the ethical ideal. It is not vague or soft, just making “*nice.*” On the contrary it’s tough and strong, requiring the cutting edge of commitment.

This is what poets and men and women of quality throughout the ages have tried to teach and to live, namely that by seeking a truly caring and related life—attitude we can break out of our isolation and learn how to love life’s possibilities as our own.

When we confirm the people we share our lives with in their possibilities, their better vision for themselves, we have encouraged that same dynamic in ourselves. We can then generate living for some purpose, thinking for some purpose, working for some purpose and thus become richer in the dimensions of our selves. It is this reciprocity that helps us to embrace life’s hope without illusions, because it was generated by how we went out to share of ourselves. Our love then is not one of mere receiving or accepting, but becomes an ever more animating going out into the world regardless of the fact that pain and loss are eventually inescapable for each one of us as well.

CARING CONTEXT

In her brilliant book *Caring*, the author, Nel Noddings of the University of California, discusses this process in great depth.³

She suggests that the discovery of not just wanting to be a person who cares, but also a person who knows how to receive being cared for by others—that this discovery has an immense influence on how we see our lives. It starts with the essential reality of an innate “*goodness*” all of us strive to express as we

³*Caring*, Nel Noddings. University of California Press. L.A. 1986.

aim for an inclusion of others and for being included ourselves. It is to her, what she called “*the intuitive mode*”, which can make us receptive to such self-realization while connected with others.

And to illustrate this she quotes from the poet Robert Frost as he described the creation of a poem as an expression of such an intuitive event. He wrote “*it begins in delight and ends in wisdom....(making a poem)....has an outcome that though unforeseen was predestined from the first image of the original mood....it finds its own name as it goes....*”⁴

Allow me to make that concrete.

Many of you have read no doubt about a young very popular actor, Christopher Reeves who was thrown from his horse, was paralyzed and now is totally dependent on other people and machines. The irony was that he had been the vigorous actor who played Superman in the movies.

His physician told in the journal of the *Jewish Home and Hospital* how Reeves is torn between accepting his totally dependent condition and trying to change it. Dealing with that inner struggle he is now the main fund-raiser for a movement to promote research for the many people who, after an accident, are equally paralyzed by spinal-cord damage. He has decided not to give up hope. But he pleads with the many who love and admire him to stop suggesting that as he once played Superman, he now is Superman in dealing with his impairment. He has to go through hell every day. As all seriously hurt patients he goes through the stages of anger and depression in order to keep wanting to cope. “*If you take away hope, you take away life,*” said his doctor. Reeves himself is an encouragement for all those close to him. He says “*being paralyzed doesn’t change who you are. Your mind and spirit are still intact.*”

It is this attitude which helps him to accept the incredible labor of rehabilitation with a contagious profound will to be a

⁴Noddings, op. cit. pgs. 166-167.

spokesman for all the others who suffer similar pain. It is the hard work of remaining connected, of caring, of overcoming being passive.

He is practicing, without self-aggrandizement, what ethical courage is about. The love for his own family, the sense of gratitude for all the assistance of so many for him, without allowing himself to feel like a victim. The outcome of all his effort is not guaranteed at all. No one is making false promises. But the labor to try to regain at least some of his health is what directs him to what Robert Frost said in that quote I just read “*it finds its own (truth) name as it goes*”.... “*the outcome is unforeseen, but it finds its own reality as it goes....*”

As for so many of us, in all kinds of life situations, that is the realistic ground of hope: to work at where we find ourselves—to include others in one’s life—to nurture a love for life.

THE PERSISTENT

It is what can help us rise even amidst great suffering and incompleteness, whether physical or emotional. It is what we can grant ourselves and extend to others. Namely: to work and to hope.

Remember the words of Reeve’s doctor, Craig Rosenberg, “*If you take away hope, you take away life.*”

Can we believe in that? Can we activate such hope? Can we learn how really to love what we say we believe in and be strong about it?

At the end of a marvelous book of self-reflection the author Wendell Berry wrote about the lives of his relatives who died: “*...light can only come into this world as love...I used to think that I wanted most of all to be happy, but now I have learned that my true home is not just this place but is also in the company of immortals with whom I have lived day-by-day, I live in their love,*

and I know something about its cost....”⁵

The love Berry speaks about was found by him among the simple hard working farmers of his family. Their sense of future, gave vision to their acts and so confidence in what they could become.

It was such love and hope that affirmed their existence and connected them not just with the future in terms of time, but in terms of what they could do to bring closer the richer, better life for their children and for themselves.

With such firm love of direction and purpose we too can be creators of such reaching upward day-by-day. It helps us to overcome all that drags us down by bitterness, discontent or self-pity.

It is the same persistence we know about Beethoven writing his immortal ninth symphony while entirely deaf himself.

It is the same intuitive emergence of the world which Helen Keller discovered when for the first time she could connect the feeling of water playing over her hand, with the concept of water.

It is the same intuitive ground that makes it possible for a survivor of the horrors of war to restructure his or her life again.

It is an intuitive directedness towards that “*goodness within*” that Noddings, whom I just quoted, remarked upon.

It is the essential affirmation of life in all its ordinary and yet incredibly precious possibilities. In it lies the ability to lead one’s life with gratitude, some joy, some realization of the quest for harmony and intellectual expansion. Nothing artificial or contrived just the loyalty to the days granted to us in search of some good, some ethical ideals, some ethical guidance and

⁵Wendell Berry. *A World Lost*. Counterpoint. Washington, DC. 1997..

hopefully some realization.

It is such consciousness that keeps us alive; that allows us to remain stirred by our capacity for participation and for interdependence with those few people with whom we share our hopes, our tears and who are dependent as well upon our smiles, just as we are upon theirs.

When we ask ourselves “*what do we live for?*” we can only respond by seeing that life’s shadows and life’s fullness are intertwined. When we find ourselves confronted with the heart’s despair, we need to know that recovery is possible. But that it does not move in a straight line upwards. Life moves like a spiral and sorrow, grief and doubt are part of that spiral. Only by often draining inner labor can we develop a new hold on life. It is not dependent upon something “*out there*” but upon what we will for ourselves in rebuilding connections. It is we who must recreate the worthwhileness of our lives even when we often feel besieged by what is required of us, by what we have to face.

Anyone of us who has gone through surgery, through cancer treatment—radiation, chemotherapy, knows how deep the sense of helplessness can eat into us. It is extremely hard, but for whatever span of time remains for us we can yet find consolation by re-entering the world we can still share. Not just going through the motions, but by refusing to see only what walls us in. It is a slow process. But as-long-as we have consciousness of the world around us we can try to internalize the fact that we are still a member of those dear to us. Even as we have entered a different phase we are still part of the world and of the hearts that surround us. That is our universal ground.

A wise Japanese story illustrates this point.

The Zen master Ikkyo was asked by a pupil for guidance in dealing with a serious illness. The master nodded and wrote on a piece of paper: “*I do not know, but just attend.*”

The pupil did not think that could be the entire reply, so he

asked again. Again the master wrote: “attend”, “attend.” Asked once more to expand on this advice, the master wrote: “attend, attend, attend.” The Latin root of the word “attend” is *attendere*. It means: “to look after.” “To be present” or “to stretch or reach out”. After a while the pupil understood. There might be no answer to his inquiry other than what he himself would cultivate as a response to his life’s crisis. He had to engage upon life’s fulness, to the urges of the goodness within himself, and so acting he would find pathways towards caring and some hope. He had to find the creative, intuitive mode and trust in that as a compass.

It is in this spirit that we call to mind, as is our tradition at this time, the sacred memory of those who have gone before us into the silence of death. We think of them with love and gratitude and do not alone dwell upon our loss. Those whom we truly love are not given to us for our enjoyment only. They transmit to us the divine spark in human life. We remember them at the rising of the sun and at its going down—we remember them. Husbands and wives, fathers and mothers, brothers and sisters and for some of us one of our children. May they stir in us the courage for better living, may we become more equal to the best that lived in them.

And though their voices are silent now, may they yet help us reach more honestly for a better way of life. Their memory can help us live with greater loyalty. And in so doing they will remain as real presences in our households—always.

I will conclude now with a few lines from a poem by Edna Saint V. Millay which I find most encouraging and meaningful:

*Now by the path I climbed, I journey back.
The oaks have grown; I have been long away.
Taking with me your memory and your lack
I now descend into a milder day.
Stripped of your love, unburdened of my hope,*

