

Chapter One

MAN ON THE THRESHOLD

The basic premise of this book is a statement by Rudolf Steiner: "Humanity has crossed the threshold". Those safe boundaries that surrounded our consciousness during the past few centuries are no longer safe. Especially the inward boundary, towards the inner processes of body and soul, has become unreliable. Unfamiliar and compulsive forces gain entrance to our consciousness and push fears, compulsions, alienation, and depression to the surface.

The first sign of this came around the turn of the century, some 80 years ago, in psychoanalysis. At first reviled and ridiculed by those for whom the boundary was still rock-solid, psychoanalysis soon penetrated cultural life. Today, it is hard to imagine a novel or a motion picture without psychoanalytic overtones.

The sense of anxiety increases year by year. But this can't be! One is supposed to be healthy, and psychologically well adjusted, by which is meant having a 'sensible' consciousness, oriented to the tangible and visible material world.

In this century the use of tranquillizers and alcohol has increased year by year. Over the past 15 years, consumption has approximately quadrupled, and still goes up month by month. What is going on? This book's intention is to create a deeper understanding of these phenomena from the viewpoint of anthroposophy and its image of the human being. Anthroposophy provides insights in areas that are obscure to our ordinary understanding. Real insight forms the basis for overcoming anxiety and fear. Understanding banishes fear.

When in the evening dusk one goes for a walk through the fields, and suddenly in the mist one discerns the figure of a man standing on the path ahead, one is struck by fright and fear. Then comes the discovery it is only a bush. Relieved, one breathes easily again, one's heart stops pounding. As soon as one has recognized the phenomenon for what it is, as soon as fear of the unknown has been eliminated, one can assert one's ego and face the situation with composure.

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In the following chapters we will try to bring about this process of eliminating the fear of the unknown. We shall do this by making it intelligible that we are dealing here with developmental processes that are entirely justified and necessary for western mankind - processes that are just as natural as the change of teeth and puberty, and as natural, too, as the changes humanity underwent in the transition from the Middle Ages to the Renaissance, and to the New Age that brought the urge for new discoveries.

What happened then was the emergence of an irresistible urge to shift attention from philosophical speculation to the world itself, seen as an unknown planet yet to be explored, and to nature, now seen as a source of abundant wealth to be exploited. And now attention is directed to our own inner world by a force that is equally irresistible. Instead of voyages of discovery to unknown continents, exploration of unknown territories in one's own human psyche is taking place. Terrifying frontiers are being crossed. Once it was a westward voyage that was taboo; you were supposed to come to the edge of the world there, and ships would get caught in an immense waterfall and plunge into the unfathomable depths of nothingness. Now, it is taboo to cross the boundaries of the familiar day-time consciousness because on the other side one would be dragged down into the insanity of nothingness.

However, just as the ships that sailed westward did actually discover a new continent with new wonders and new treasures, so can they who complete the inward voyage in full consciousness discover that there, too, new wonders and new treasures are *to* be found.

Where scientific thinking goes astray is where it imagines that in essence humanity has always related to the world in the same way as it has for the past 150 years - that we have merely become more clever than our dim-witted, superstitious ancestors. Now, finally, we have become sensible and scientific, and that is how it will be forevermore. But it is not working out that way! Just as once scholasticism was abandoned as the highest form of knowledge, to be replaced by science, so do we now experience an age in which, as an alternative to natural-scientific, naturalistic thought, there is a way of thinking that attempts *to* investigate both matter *and* spirit to an equal degree. To put it differently: All ancient cultures were based on a spiritualistic world view in which the divine world was seen as the creator.

The only reality was a spiritual one. Matter was the big Maya, an illusionary world. The ancient Greeks, in a way, still lived with this divine world, but developed the then still new world view of idealism, in which behind each external phenomenon the *it*"*deawas* experienced

as cause and creator. Our New Age has relegated both the divine world and the ideal world to the realm of childish wishfulness, and knows only about matter. In materialism, natural laws and chance are cause and creator of everything, and spirit is the big Maya, the illusionary world.

But in this Century, classic materialism has passed its zenith. We are about to take the next step: to 'spiritual realism', in which matter and spirit both are realities and in continuous interaction. "No spirit without matter, no matter without spirit". Thus a statement by Rudolf Steiner, which shows him to be a true *realist*.¹

This book has been written with this realistic world view in mind, as it is developed in anthroposophy

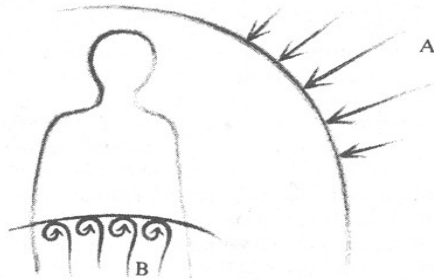
Modern man lives between two boundaries. One is an observational boundary. We view the outside of the phenomenal world. Everywhere we see only outer surfaces. If we want to know what lies behind the surface, and cut the object we are observing in two, two new surfaces are created. Even with the greatest imaginable magnification of the electron microscope we only see the surfaces of the smallest particles, until the particles dissolve into non-material, hypothetical forces, which we can infer only through their activity.

Man's view outward impinges on surfaces, made visible by illumination. Man's view inward, into his own soul (psyche), hits a dark wall, on which only memories are depicted. What goes on behind this mirror of memories in the way of organic processes and unconscious soul processes escapes our direct observation to the same extent as the forces working in nature escape our observation. On the way outward we call instruments to our aid that magnify or reduce in order to penetrate into the essence of things. On the way inward we attempt to get to know the essence of the world behind the mirror of memory by means of techniques such as dream analysis, hypnosis, and investigation of psychological phenomena.

But here, too, one gets no further than describing processes of an unconscious world in terms of the conscious. Thus, the human being lives between two boundaries he can not cross with his day consciousness. Rudolf Steiner described these two boundaries in a lecture in 1918. He made a drawing, which is reproduced overleaf in somewhat simplified form.²

There are forces working out of the universe that only just touch the boundaries of our sense-perceptible world, without manifesting themselves.

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Active forces bubbling up out of the metabolic system of man strain against the memory boundary.

Cosmos outside and metabolism inside are the two unknown worlds. Science has established firmly that it is powerless to penetrate into the essence of reality. The dogma, 'ontological questions may not be asked' means: no questions about the *being* of things. We are permitted only to ask *how* the forces of the universe work, not *what they are*. Thus we know well enough how a positive or a negative charge works, but not what a charge *is*. And when we call this 'energy', this is no more than an explanatory word. This is how materialism shows its fundamentally agnostic character, but, at any rate, it is honest about it (at least in the case of true scholars - not in the case of those who popularize science and make it appear as if naming something is the same as explaining it).

Materialism has two boundaries. The step to realism requires that the spirit, too, be investigated, in its interaction with matter. That means the outward and inward boundaries have to be breached, and spiritual 'being' has to be subjected to exact investigation in the same way we have learned to do in science. Realism in this sense does not mean a step backwards to old spiritualistic world views, but a step forward, which in fact has only been made possible by materialism, with its exact observation and strict procedural methods, preceding it. By way of introduction, a summary is given below, which is meant to give the reader an impression of what he or she can or cannot expect in this book.

'Humanity has crossed the threshold': Unknown forces gain entry to consciousness from the 'unconscious' realm; they create confusion, which manifests itself in fears, depression, and the like. The world of

the psyche, which in this book we shall refer to as the 'soul world', must be consciously put in order and strengthened so as to keep its balance. This can be brought about only through the ego of the human being, by his individuality, which finds itself somewhere along the way on a long path of development. On this path it has a past, a self imposed task for the present, and a future in which the fruits of the present life form in turn the basis for a subsequent task.

With each incarnation, with each step in this process of development, a soul structure is built up in conjunction with the bodily nature given by heredity. In the bodily nature a number of qualities are given: firstly a physical body, made up of matter; secondly a system of life forces penetrating the physical body, continuously building it up and breaking it down, called the vegetative or ether body; and, thirdly, a system of animalistic psychical phenomena and mechanisms, called the astral body according to an old terminology, or, according to Aristotle, the animal soul.

Man is born with a physical body, vegetative forces, and animalistic soul forces. The ego must then still penetrate these 'instruments' and humanize them.

This humanizing process is the task for the first half of life; subsequently the humanized forces can be used for further development.

This development always takes place in interaction with other human beings. In receiving and giving we follow our individual life's path, and augment the 'talents' with which we started this life. This we are taught by the parable of the talents.³

Man has the animalistic soul functions in common with the animal.

Out of the life sphere, drives rise up dedicated to perpetuating life: eating, procreating, building a nest, and defending a territory - all drives that man has in common with the animal.

The stimulus-response mechanism forms the basis for the psychology of behaviourism. A materialistic psychology sees these mechanisms as the 'only real' soul life, and views all 'so-called higher' drives and desires as a flight from reality. Man, it is said, should certainly not imagine himself to be more than an intelligent animal. And the cause for all psychological disturbances would be, in fact, that man, under the influence of cultural taboos, suppresses these animalistic mechanisms.

The cure, therefore, can only be the removal of these cultural obstacles, and the creation of situations in which the animalistic mechanisms can be given free reign. Most modern group therapy is based on this. It is all derived, more or less, from psychoanalysis, and acknowledges only a conscious and an unconscious psychical world.

Only the logotherapy of Frankl and the psychosynthesis of Assagioli

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recognize a psychical world related to a higher consciousness. In the higher consciousness, man comes in contact with his 'higher ego' and with that which he has gained in cultural attributes due to this higher consciousness.

An anthroposophical therapy consists of enhancing the ego functions, which raise the animalistic soul life to the human level in a quieted-down middle sphere of the soul. This means that immediate reactions have to be held back and internalized in the central area of the human soul, where they are confronted with moral, aesthetic and intellectual qualities.

This will be elaborated in the chapters about the development of what is called the 'sentient soul', the 'intellectual and mind soul' and the 'consciousness

soul'. The central point in this is that man only becomes man in the middle region, between the polar forces of sympathy and antipathy, and so on. In this middle region, man can momentarily be free, and experience the spirit. The animal is tossed between comfort and discomfort, challenge and withdrawal, and hunger and satiation, etc. Man can internalize such stimuli and reactions between two poles and live in an intimate encounter with the world. Then a new quality arises, which, besides impressions, also calls forth meaning, beauty and moral judgement.

Man is a being of the middle, and all human culture derives from the middle.

The child grows into this human culture by imitation and reverence; in a later phase, this tentative humanity is still to be tested with reference to the individual ego. This takes place in the middle phase of life. This means that after the early forties the individual character has been shaped, and then forms the basis for the ability to take one's place in cultural life- creatively, and giving of oneself.

The young person seeks to effect renewal by means of protest, and cannot do otherwise. In the third major life phase, after forty, the individual seeks renewal in drawing the consequences out of what Neumann has called the 'inner voice'.⁴

The mature, creative human being is the 'heretic' of the inner voice in relation to his environment. This inner voice had already announced itself (earlier in life) in the protest against that which came not from the self, but had been contributed by the cultural environment. Only much later can this inner voice- the voice of the higher ego- manifest itself creatively, with quiet assurance.

The common thread running through this book is the process of ego development out of the middle.

Out of a strengthened middle sphere, which has become conscious, modern man can proceed across the outward threshold, and learn to experience more and more clearly the qualities that lie within the

sense perceptions, until ultimately he encounters spiritual reality - spiritual beings that in days of old were self-evident. Once they manifested themselves to a dreamy consciousness. Now, they must be sought in a clear day-consciousness that has passed through a training of the thinking, the feeling, and the will.

Out of a strengthened, conscious middle sphere, man can cross the inward boundary, and meet those forces that at the present break through the mirror of memory more and more to disrupt the dayconsciousness. This conscious path inward is the only true therapy against the increasing threat of invasion out of the unconscious soul life, just as the conscious path outward is the therapy against the urge to escape in excarnation by means of addiction to drugs, alcohol, and other intoxicants.

In order to make the experiences that can possibly occur on these two paths understandable for the present time, the approach chosen in this book is first to describe how these paths were experienced in antiquity, in what is called the 'mysteries'. In these mysteries of ancient cultures, these paths can, indeed, also be recognized. The northern, Germanic mysteries knew the outward path of initiation, into the elemental world. The southern mysteries, particularly the Egyptian ones, went the inward path, into the unconscious soul life.

The ancient Greeks placed their gods on Olympus, in the wide, etheric world of elementals. Zeus-Jupiter controlled thunder and lightening. In art and philosophy, Apollo led man into the sunilluminated world of higher consciousness via the arts of the Musae.

The Greeks were terrified of the 'underworld', where Dionysus let passion run wild as a result of intoxication, to overpower man. Only once a year, the bacchants and satyrs were set free and allowed to gain the upper hand for a short time in an orgy controlled by the mysteries.

The hangover from these Dionysian festivities reinforced the loathing of the underworld for a considerable while afterwards; this was an important step in the development of the function of conscience. Modern man faces the necessity of being able to cope with *both* worlds. The anthroposophical path of development is therefore always a matter of balance between a step outwards and a step inwards. Only then can man hold on to the middle.

The first part of this book, after a description of the old mysteries, deals with *capita selecta* from anthroposophy as a foundation for insight in psychical events for the benefit of all interested readers. Also, this

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lays a foundation for Part II, in which modern syndromes and psychotherapy

are discussed on a more professionally oriented level.

This Part II is no textbook on neuroses, but rather an exemplifying treatise of a few syndromes, in order to enable those who wish to gain further expertise in this area to see how spiritual insight can lead to rational action. Anthroposophical psychotherapy does not have fixed techniques that can be learned, but is based on an encounter of two human beings, with one seeking help and the other offering to search with him for his further path of development.

For besides general syndromes, mostly arising as a sign of the times, there exists only the highly individual path of development for every person. Only out of the greatest degree of respect for that path, however difficult, can the other be helped to find and develop his own middle. The helper allows himself no judgements, but only wonder and a sense of personal responsibility for awakening an individual moral sense in the other.

The reinforcement of the middle sphere is not only the first step in psychotherapy, but also on each individual path of development.

This path begins with the creation of a rich inner life, with the experience of nature, of culture, and of the arts. It continues with the development of inner peace and finding moments of quiet contemplation, a preliminary to meditation, in which a content selected by ourselves fills us for a short time (which, therefore, is something different from repeating words while eliminating all thoughts).

Thus, a warm, sunny middle sphere will be gradually created, with positivity and openness for the world, and rich in content deriving from human culture.

Only a middle that offers warmth and light can be the starting point for a conscious crossing of the boundaries; otherwise the crossing is forced on us as a necessity of this age while we are unprepared.

A conscious path of inner development chosen by ourselves for ourselves, and a cultural therapy and psycho-therapy are in line with each other.

The following chapters are attempts to describe how we can consciously undergo the experiences on these paths of development without falling prey to neuroses, escapism, or addiction.