

An Anthroposophic Psychology

By David Tresemer, PhD

A new initiative in anthroposophic psychology is growing in the U.S. Its faculty includes authors published or distributed by SteinerBooks: David Tresemer (PhD, Psychology, editor, and contributor to *The Counselor . . . As if Soul and Spirit Matter* and *Slow Counseling*, as well as author of *Star Wisdom and Rudolf Steiner* and others); Roberta Nelson (PhD, Counselor Education, Licensed Practical Clinical Counselor, and Licensed Addiction Counselor, chapters in *The Counselor*); Edmund Knighton (PhD, Psychology, President of Rudolf Steiner College, chapters in *The Counselor*); James Dyson (MD, co-founder of the Park Attwood Clinic, England); William Bento (PhD, deceased in 2015, authored *Lifting the Veil of Mental Illness*, and founded this initiative in the U.S.; and Glen Williamson (MSW, and graduate of Spacial Dynamics) has recently written *Future Dawning*.

Some background: Rudolf Steiner is sometimes quoted as being against psychoanalysis and psychology. Quite the contrary—many of Steiner’s lectures acknowledge and progress psychology as it was being developed then. The critiques must be seen in that context. Foremost among Steiner’s views on psychology is a series of nine lectures in 1909 to 1911 in Berlin, published as *A Psychology of Body, Soul, and Spirit: Anthroposophy, Psychosophy, Pneumatosophy*. There are many other books and articles that are relevant. Steiner’s framework of anthroposophic psychology is a bit like Swiss cheese—excellent structure with many holes. One feels that, had World War I not intervened, Steiner would have filled in those holes. Now it’s up to us, through personal spiritual scientific research, to do so.

Great teachers have furthered Steiner’s insights: Karl König (20 books with SteinerBooks, especially *Nutrition from Earth and Cosmos*), Georg Kühlewind (10 books with SteinerBooks), Christopher Bamford (60 books or forewords with SteinerBooks), Robert Sardello (17 books or forewords with SteinerBooks), Lisa Romero (3 books), and others. Sardello’s comprehensive

introduction to *A Psychology of Body, Soul, and Spirit* demonstrates his brilliance at filling in the holes of Steiner's psychology.

In a 1924 series of lectures titled *Broken Vessels: The Spiritual Structure of Human Frailty* (earlier edition titled *Pastoral Medicine*), Steiner asserted that theologians and ministers should tend to human connections with spirit, medical doctors should attend to the needs of the physical body, and psychologists should attend to the needs of the soul. To that series of lectures, he invited theologians and medical doctors. The field of psychology was as yet inchoate, especially a psychology that recognized the importance of spirit. König, Kühlewind, and others continued to develop a spiritual psychology, in between body and spirit, and integrating the three.

Two decades ago Ad and Henriette Dekkers began teaching anthroposophic psychology and anthroposophic psychotherapy in several countries, commuting back and forth across the globe to set up centers for these trainings. The fruit of that effort is Ad Dekkers' *A Psychology of Human Dignity*, and also IFAPA (International Federation of Anthroposophic Psychotherapy Associations), a gathering of the national associations formed in response to the Dekkers' outreach.

The Association for Anthroposophic Psychology (AAP) in the USA has recently graduated two groups of twenty from three-year courses (3 seminars/year) in upstate New York and California, and is readying for two new three-year courses in Pennsylvania and Wisconsin (about which see the website www.AnthroposophicPsychology.org). People come to these trainings (and adjoining lectures) seeking an alternative to mechanical (genes-determine-chemicals-determine-behavior, and consciousness is a side effect) views of human beings, both in normal development and when people have gone off a path of healthy development. We seek to offer a bridge from mainstream psychology to an anthroposophic psychology.

The trainings are geared to three groups:

- licensed mental health professionals (seeking CEs and new perspectives);
- professionals in other fields such as educators, life coaches, hospice workers, pastoral counselors, ministers, etc.; and
- individuals seeking self-development, which is often sorely lacking in our lives as well as too often absent in training programs for the helping professions.

This diversity has enhanced the dynamism in the experiential learning that AAP provides.

SteinerBooks (and its various imprints) has offered an essential platform from which to launch a psychology of embodied soul and spirit in the U.S. The course relies on these conceptual frameworks and is grateful that they are there. They form a foundation for the many embodied experiences in the face-to-face trainings that form the core of the AAP courses.

For more information, see the books underlined as well as information at www.AnthroposophicPsychology.org.