

Living Inner Development

The Necessity of True Inner Development
in the Light of Anthroposophy

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INTRODUCTION

Although we may all have our personal preferences of understanding what constitutes a good life for ourselves, if we scratch the surface of all ways of living, there seems to be an unavoidable recognition that life is also about growth and development. We need only look at the reality of what has taken place in the world around us. If life is not about growth and development, why have we as a collective humanity invested so much in advancing the various levels of the human experience?

We can also see this principle of growth and development in the unfolding of each individual human being. The attributes that differentiate us from the animal kingdom can be perceived as an element of this: no other mammal takes twenty years to come to maturity. And after twenty years, this process of maturity and growth only ceases in an outer sense. Inwardly, the human being continues to seek to change, develop, and grow in mind or task or experience. What in us truly needs to grow? The human being evolves, and we participate in human evolution by participating in our own development.

We can do nothing more helpful for the world's further evolution than to evolve ourselves. This is something that, in fact, we must do. And we have no doubt whatsoever that we *must*, the moment we perceive the

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truth about our own nature and its relationship with the wider world.¹

Spiritual development allows us to recognize, and to participate in, the evolution “willed by the gods.” In the course of inner development, spiritual development, the human being crosses the threshold between physical reality and spiritual reality. In the experiences unfolded there, the human being takes on within itself the evolution willed by the higher guiding forces. Without this kind of inner development, humanity might only develop in ways willed by other active forces such as materialism and egotism.

By developing ourselves further, we actively contribute—though in small measure—to the evolution willed by the gods.²

There are three ways, other than through the death of the body, in which the human being may cross the threshold between the sense world and that realm which is imperceptible to sensory experience: We can cross into this world through an *inner training*, by means of which the human being develops a readiness to enter into new states of consciousness and to meet what is to be found in this other realm. We can also cross the threshold, although in an altered way, by means of *toxicity or trauma* to the bodily sheaths. And thirdly, at the present time we can be susceptible to crossing in the sense that humanity *as a whole* is beginning to undergo a premature crossing of

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the threshold, for in our age the threshold is being drawn closer to us.

Each way of crossing bears its own results for the development of the individual, and thus, for the development of the collective consciousness. In the small contribution that follows, we will explore various experiences of these three possibilities of crossing the threshold. By recognizing what we are experiencing in each of the various realms of the spiritual world that we encounter upon crossing, we will come to better understand these realms themselves.

Many esoteric schools have given teachings that serve the students of the spirit in their process of development. However comprehensive the teachings may be, in the end we are essentially alone in summoning the effort required of us in order to develop and to evolve ourselves individually and consciously. We must be our own guides to a large extent as we travel the inner work path; however, in order to understand not only our own experiences but also the experiences of others, we need to be able to evaluate where we are. How can we individualize and take up what comes through the wisdom of the inner schooling, and yet not ‘play’ with the wisdom and alter it in a way that removes its transformative power—or worse yet, in a way that makes of it a *diversion* from the truth?

When, many years ago, I asked my anthroposophical teacher, “Why this path, what makes it so special?”—as I had already been exposed to both Western and Eastern teachings—he replied, “Yes, you may have come across many of these things in other teachings, but to my knowledge (Erwin was a researcher of these things) no other

school has given such a comprehensive understanding of the spiritual worlds. It is through anthroposophy that we may understand and shed light on all other paths.” Increasingly, I have recognized the truth of what he shared.

This book is not only an attempt to reiterate, from another way of experience, the path of the spirit that has already been given by many. It is also an attempt to help us make sense, *from the perspective of the student of the inner work*, of the experiences we encounter in ourselves and the world as our inner lives develop on this path. Many who are striving to make headway on the path are experiencing encounters with other realms of consciousness. And many who strive do so out of a recognition of the necessity of spiritual development.

This work is meant as a support to the independence of our individual journey, and, at the same time, it is meant to enkindle reverence for the majesty and mystery of the inner training that has been gifted by the great initiates, through their ability to work with the guiding progressive beings who walk with us. As we are not great initiates, and as so much therefore lies concealed from each of us, we do require esoteric schooling in order that we can recognize the truth along the path we will walk.

Although we must travel our paths independently, it is an esoteric truth that *by ourselves* we cannot lift the veil that conceals the hidden worlds from us. Inwardly and/or outwardly, we will need the help of others at all stages of our training.

Knowing how we can influence others, it is important to understand not only each aspect of the human being

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that must undergo change on the path of inner development, but also how we can assist others on their journey towards development. “The future of spiritual-esoteric movements such as ours will depend more and more upon the realization that human spiritual development is necessary.”³

Supporting others requires that we ourselves have awoken to certain truths and capacities. Unfortunately, or fortunately, this is the living reality of inner development. As Rudolf Steiner said to the teachers—and this applies to us all on this path—(to paraphrase): *It is not what you know, but who you are that is important.*⁴

Of course, it is a big request to make of any human being that they walk the path of transformation so that they may be of true assistance to the other. *But it must become a matter of individual recognition to know that I can only truly help if my eyes have been awoken and my ears can hear.* The call to self-development is a call to world-development. Anthroposophy is this call, and for no other reason is its existence justified.

If anthroposophical spiritual science were ever to be given a mantle suitable for the atmosphere of coffee-parties or what corresponds to them nowadays, this would by no means be conducive to the fulfillment of its task—for this task is one of pressing urgency. The reason for the hostility that is asserting itself at the present time in such ugly forms is simply this: People realize that here it is not a matter of a sect, or of a happier ‘family circle’ such as many desire, but that something

is truly striving to activate the impulses needed by our times.⁵

Many people are expressing this feeling of urgency and of how it is essential that more of humanity awaken to a recognition of living with spiritual realities. Steiner frequently stated that in the 20th century, humanity as a whole would begin to cross the threshold. This process has begun; we can already see its negative results through the increase in psychiatric disorders—manifesting, for example, in the extreme prevalence of depression and anxiety. On the other hand, we can also recognize the positive consequences of crossing the threshold, in the speed with which the world is changing and the unprecedented rate at which new ideas, thoughts, and insights are able to flourish. This may not be what we expected to see as a result of the diminishing of the veil dividing the sense world and the spiritual world, but these are all marks of humanity's changing relationship to these worlds.

This book is the third in a sequence of books written to support inner development. In this book, the student of the work will need some background in anthroposophy or some inner experience of the path. It presupposes the knowledge of the meditative practice as described in the previous book, *The Inner Work Path: Foundations of Meditative Practice in the Light of Anthroposophy*. However, as with all inner work writings, it is accessible to those who can utilize it. Through entering into the content of this book's outline of the path of initiation, we can

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understand not only our own path and where we are on it, but also the path of others and the support others may need. We will be able to understand why certain things in the world are becoming more popular and how we can participate in working alongside the collective journey towards the good.