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*Life's Anxieties –*  
*Life's Opportunities*

*Anxiety and Its Importance to Inner Development*

*Two Essays*

*by*

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*Anxiety and Its Importance to Inner Development*

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## Foreword

Rudolf Steiner characterized what the results of the materialistic world view of the nineteenth century would be if, during the course of the twentieth century, this world view was not redeemed by a conscious, spiritual impulse. In a lecture series titled *Becoming Human, World Soul, and World Spirit*, he foretold that if a turning-toward the spiritual did not take place, there would be a “war of all against all” in the future. Steiner stated that during the time when materialistic intellectualism would bring imaginative life to its “highest level,” also raging within humankind’s subconscious would be that which “enslaved people in their instincts.”<sup>1</sup>

How can knowledge and insight of spiritual connections be gained? In a lecture given at Easter time on March 27, 1921, Steiner explained that this path can only be found through pain and suffering. With this foundation it is easy to understand that the present human situation is, in many ways, fear-provoking.

Only a spiritual world view in opposition to materialism can free us from the present condition. Only a world view that embraces the reality of the spiritual can counterbalance the destructive effects of a materialistic world view. There must be a turnaround that works on all of us since we are all permeated by materialistic beliefs.

The following article is a combination of two lectures were given by Felicitas Vogt and Pietro Archiati in the spring of 1996 at the delegate’s conference for the Anthroposophical Medical Society. The theme of these essays is the justification and the task of fear in our time.

—*Felicitas Vogt*



# ESSAY 1

## Living Fearlessly with Anxiety: The Therapeutic Mission of Fear in Human Development

by

Pietro Archiati

If we observe the behavior of a small child and ask the questions: Does the child have *angst* about one thing or another? Is he afraid that today, as an exception, he will not get any nourishment or will not be able to fall asleep? Is the child perhaps afraid of losing his parents or of becoming ill? From our own life experience we would, of course, know that all of these questions are superfluous. The small child has no anxiety because he can not yet have fear; he is not yet capable of angst. Something basic to being a child is that the capacity to have anxiety is not yet present. Our thoughts flow out of the conclusion that only adults are capable of angst.

Let us look back at development thousands of years ago around the fifth or sixth millennium before Christ. If we practice this possibility of soul metamorphosis and transplant ourselves into the spiritual situation of people living at that time, we find something similar to the small child. To our amazement, in the ancient Indian or Persian cultures if one spoke of angst, they would not know what was meant. They did not know anxiety.

Angst came about during human development just as it develops during the course of a human life. It is dependent upon development. Children experience natural fear but this is different from existential anxiety. Existential anxiety and fear have to do with consciousness and can therefore not be present in a small child because that which we call consciousness, the ability to be conscious of one's own self, is not yet present in a small child. That is why the entire phenomenon of angst and fear that so very much preoccupies humankind today, and will continue to do so, can be appropriately considered only from the perspective of development.

### **Taking Development Seriously**

Here, it should be pointed out that in the Spiritual Science of Rudolf Steiner, the methodically considered perspective of development is the most important. All phenomena can be understood only if we embed them within the course of development. We must ask what it means that anxiety is a

developmental, modern phenomena of our times, what it means to live in a time when fear and anxiety have become illnesses.

As little as one thousand years ago it would have been impossible to bring up angst as a theme. We would have searched fruitlessly for such a phenomenon. For instance, if we opened up a lexicon used during Goethe's time, we would find, surprisingly, that the word "angst" was hardly used at that time in the German language; there are only the words "*angst sein*" (to be fearful), but under "angst" there is nothing. The word "*Sorge*" is found in German which means "care, trouble, or sorrow. In *Faust*, it is the impulse of *Sorge* which makes him go blind; and Faust overcomes his trouble through the knowledge that he is blind in the physical world but he will see in the spiritual world. Goethe intuited something very profound: People must have angst because they have become blind to the extrasensory, the spiritual, and they no longer know by what powers and forces they are being supported. They have become boxed into the physical-material. Existential anxiety comes about by "seeing" only the material because one no longer knows anything about the essence of the spiritual world. One is no longer conscious of it and that it is full of positive forces and carries us daily.

If we very consciously consider anxiety by means of the perspective of development we find in the Spiritual Science of Rudolf Steiner an important statement that is also the central declaration about the meaning of development. Anxiety has arisen; it had to arise and it definitely belongs to development because anxiety goes hand in hand with the narrowing of consciousness. In order to become an individual each one of us must separate ourselves from the whole. A small child does not have existential anxiety because it "goes with the flow" and does not yet have the capability to become separate, to go into isolation and therefore into anxiety, to feel abandoned by everyone else. Anxiety has to do with the fact that none of us may be identified with the whole any longer. Because of the fall of man—in this case a fall into separateness; i.e. not a fall in the moral sense, but a primal necessity of development—everyone stands alone. This "being alone" is the source of existential anxiety.

### **Narrowness within the "I" Creates Anxiety**

Anxiety comes from constriction. It comes about when people have so constricted themselves that they stand completely alone and no longer intrinsically experience communion with the whole. They are fearful of being alone, of being abandoned. Today, it is not only the fact that people who share the burden are leaving. There is a double burden. Anxiety does not come only from being alone, not only from fear of being without another, but also from being against another.

This splitting, or atomizing, of humankind necessarily bears a certain amount of anxiety with it through the fact that I want to assert myself as an

independent person compared to all the others. I can not experience my independence without asserting myself against all the factors that want to “swallow” me. This need for self-assertion against all that which wants to take me in creates a state of conflict with others.

This conflict situation is the last radicalization of anxiety: It is not enough that I have lost companionship with all the other people, but, on top of that, I have the anxiety that I will not be able to assert myself against everyone else and will have them against me because they also are full of anxiety. That is why I am always trying to fight them or control them. I must experience others in this way since they are also trying to repel me and assert themselves.

That which we experience internally is outwardly expressed in business, in the area of competition, for example, an unmerciful conflict. If we were to generalize and deepen this phenomenon, we can see within it an absolute, basic feature of the developmental necessity of the individualization of every person. The fear is two-fold that each person will be left standing alone, hemmed-in, in their isolated being. By understanding anxiety as a polarity, and, we can once again survey the task of freedom: we are shown that in the course of development two one-sided aspects appeared in succession that are still apparent today.

### **Expulsion from Anxiety-free Paradise**

The initial one-sided aspect was Paradise: a beautiful image that in reality symbolizes a stage of development. There was communion in Paradise, without self-consciousness, without individualization. Now, in a middle stage of development, we experience the second one-sided aspect: humankind atomized through the loss of the original oneness.

The great myths speak of this atomization of humans: the image of the fall of man in Genesis, the myths of Osiris or Dionysus whose bodies were split. Humankind, unified in the beginning, is symbolized with these images. We had to split apart in order for the individual “I” to come about. An individual’s dignity arises when one is able to experience oneself as an independent individuality. This individualizing and splitting through extensive loss of being one with another, communion, we clarify with the term “egoism.”

Steiner warned us many times against proscribing egoism because we must accept it as an impulse that is necessary to development just like angst. The task of the future, the task of free consciousness will be to reconcile these two one-sided aspects that we have successively experienced: communion without individuality and present individualization through the loss of communion.

Thus, the whole task of the future consists of weaving together the two primal dimensions of humanity: the state of being for one another, that is, intertwined with another, and independence of every individual. This is the concept of the organism: Human beings are, in actual fact, a single spiritual organism. This image has always been used in holy writings and scriptures to represent humanity’s task for the future. In a physical organism (let us

think specifically of the human body), these two primal dimensions have been perfectly reconciled to one another. An organism is ruled by perfect unity; otherwise it would be ill or dead. It is a unified whole in which all the members are simultaneously intertwined and individually independent. Thus, the heart has a different task than the lungs or liver; otherwise it would not be an organism. This is an image of the future task of all of humanity: individuals merging together again and building up the spiritual body of Christ.

It is our further task that this building-up of the unified spiritual body of Christ in which humanity will again become a unified entity occurs in such a way that the individuality, the uniqueness of each person, is not lost. Otherwise, we would again have oneness without diversity, i.e. monotony. Oneness within diversity, individuality within the contributions and the being of every member, is what creates the beauty of the organism. If this is the whole task of the future, that one person is perfected thanks to another person so that communion becomes perfect because every individual contributes something new to it and every individuality perfects itself through it, that they integrate themselves into the whole and obtain their identity from the whole, then communion and individuality will no longer be experienced as polar opposites but rather much more as a reciprocal deepening. Communion deepens the individuality of every person and, conversely, individuality enriches communion and makes it ever truer.

### **Anxiety about Having Something or Not Having Something**

If this is the two-fold task of humanity, then angst will become more strongly radicalized in the future because evil will also radicalize itself and will two-fold as well: On the one hand, fear that individualism will cause a loss of connection, and on the other hand fear of becoming totally merged into the community, i.e. being absorbed and losing one's own individuality, one's own uniqueness.

If we view angst as such a polarity between individuality and community, then individuality and communion are, on one side, the two most valuable and comprehensive assets of humanity and, on the other side, the loss which human beings must fear the most.

We can understand anxiety better if we stay away from moralization and place it in context with the largest accomplishments of development. Angst is fear of missing these accomplishments. In other words, we begin to understand anxiety from the side the two-fold possibility of missing the mark, so to speak. Thus, if we understand anxiety from this aspect, we stop moralizing because we see a two-fold task of development in a positive light; namely, to reach perfect individuality and complete communion. Anxiety does not consist of something evil that is real because there is no real evil; if it were real, that would be good.

In summary we can say: Either a person has anxiety about losing his or her individuality in some way or anxiety about missing out on community, being for and with each other.

Aspects of individuality such as angst and fear of missing something are just as endless as aspects of communion. However, precisely because these phenomena have proven to be so complex, it makes sense, as a foundation, to connect this entire complexity to the primordial polarity. That allows us a methodical thought orientation so that we can ask ourselves again and again: Of what am I afraid? Am I afraid of losing my own, original, individuality or of not being able to realize it? Or, am I perhaps afraid of being absorbed into the community which may prevent me from realizing my own self?

As I have in the example of an organism we really only lose both together and can only realize both together. Either both dimensions are present or both are lost.

### **Do not Be Afraid of Fear!**

The fundamental step toward overcoming fear and anxiety is accepting fear and anxiety as necessary to development. At the beginning of this article I stated that we would be as children if it were not for fear. Without angst there would be neither fear of failure, freedom without failure is no freedom, individually or in the community. Individuals must have anxiety, in the healthy, positive sense, in order to remain alert and vigilant; they know that individuality and communion do not find a balance without each the other.

People must learn this and practice it daily because they will not be able to do it at the drop of a hat once they accept it. Steiner outlined the ways in which a person should handle themselves in regard to this theme in the six basic training exercises known as the “auxiliary exercises.”

There is, for example, his lecture about equanimity. We could take equanimity as a counter to anxiety, anxiety as a deficiency of equanimity and equanimity as the overcoming of anxiety. However, Rudolf Steiner stressed that a person who exhibits calm and composure at the outset is an indifferent person but not a person of equanimity. Equanimity is always overcoming “non-equanimity.” In other words, it is all right if anxiety crops up again and again. Our task is to overcome it again and again so that equanimity can be achieved. Only achieved equanimity is true equanimity.

This is the first way in which we can accept anxiety as a therapeutic impulse for the development of humanity, anxiety as having a central and continuous function in working on ourselves. If a person never experiences anxiety, then he or she has nothing to work on in themselves. This would not be for the best but for the worst because he or she could imagine that he or she had to work only on others! Because circumstances in the world and life will always provide us with an ample supply of anxieties, each one of us

has enough to work on with ourselves. This task of working on oneself is most important.

### **Anxiety and Egoism are Necessary for Development**

We must consider egoism and anxiety in a similar way. It would be a grave mistake to think that it would be better not to have egoism, that it is too bad egoism has come about in the course of development. Egoism also gives us the opportunity to work on ourselves: Egoism exists to be transformed.

In order to overcome egoism it is necessary to bring it to the forefront. How can one overcome what one does not have? (This goes for anxiety as well.) The most important requirement for enjoying the experience of overcoming anxiety is to have anxiety again and again. It is completely all right if angst appears over and over again. Someone who becomes angry about his or her anxiety is basically a lazy person who does not want to have anything to do.

The good in life does not come about through an absence of anxiety, but rather that I daily, joyfully, work on my anxiety and find the reasons for it and the strength to overcome it, and to find a connection to that which is in me that can overcome my anxieties anew. Forbidding anxiety is just as much an act of moralizing as forbidding egoism. In that case, one does not want to see the absolutely positive aspect—that this narrowness, the anxiety that comes from it, where each one is alone and separated from all others, occurred for a reason—to present humanity with the constant positive task of working on their anxieties from new perspectives, so that life's anxieties can be overcome.

### **Materialism as a Deeper Source of Anxiety**

I would like to go a step further and speak about another over-all source of anxiety from another perspective: materialism. Why is materialism an over-all cause of anxiety? As has already been mentioned, materialism consists in the fact that human beings live, in their thinking, feeling, and willing, as if the spiritual, the supernatural, did not exist. Perhaps someone knows theoretically that he has a guardian angel, for example, or perhaps he even denies it. Materialism can be a way of life as well as a scientific theory. Theoretical materialism reached its highpoint in the nineteenth century and practical materialism became a marked feature of the twentieth century in which people lived as though the spiritual did not exist. People no longer even try to find a theoretical justification for their assertions. What is the result of such a denial or disavowal of the spiritual? We would have nothing to fear. Let me put it this way: Since we are getting to know the material world better scientifically and are better able to master it technically, we

have nothing to fear from the assumption that the spiritual does not exist because we are managing the physical world better and better all the time.

It may become clear (do not take this as philosophical proof, it is more of a substantiation from practical life) that anxiety is rooted in the fact that we ignore an entire world that does exist, that we do not take this world into consideration. The narrowness within humanity, the atomization, is due to the fact that human beings have had to lose every direct connection with the spiritual. If we had not lost this direct connection we could not experience ourselves as single individualities separate from all others. That means individualization is only possible through materialism. The dry-spell of materialism is there to be overcome in the course of development. Ironically, this is exactly what we ignore through our materialism!

### **The True “I” Has no Fear**

We experience, for example, only the lower “I” and ignore our higher “I.” Since today everyone ignores their higher “I,” they ignore the fact that everything they encounter (which we call karma or destiny), whether good or bad fortune, an illness, or a happy meeting, is chosen, planned, and yearned-for. Everything that happens to me is longed-for by my higher “I” with a view to the positive that can grow from it, and only the positive! My higher “I,” from which I am separated in my normal consciousness, carries within it an indestructible, complete trust in karma because it knows that it is supported by karma. Even while immersed in the pain of an accident, the higher “I” knows why even this was desired with joy and gratitude, knowing full well that this accident could make possible certain strides in development which would have been impossible if things had been easier.

The higher “I” lives in a world of positive forces: karma. Karma is purely positive. The lower “I” experiences anxiety because it perceives this positive as a negative because it shrinks from the task of overcoming oneself. Because materialistic people of today are no longer consciously connected with their higher “I,” this trustworthy and supportive karma, they no longer consider how all people are interwoven together nor do they know of the way in which all people’s higher egos, in their pure substance, really only want to mutually assist one another.

Steiner said that the true “I” of every person is a part of the Christ Being, and this higher ego, the will of the higher ego, is pure goodness, pure love. The higher “I” can not will anything other than good and loving things for itself and for others. In the same measure that a person submits himself to his destiny in which karma is active, in that measure he will overcome the illusion of being alone and immerse himself into the forces that weave us together and support all of us.

## **Material Separates – Spirit Unifies**

The fundamental law of material is exclusion. The fundamental law of spirit is inclusion. Therefore we must have angst in the material world because things there are mutually exclusive: What I have you can not have at the same time, what I drink now you can not drink at the same time, where I am physically occupying space you can not occupy that space at the same time. The basic law of material is exclusion and that instills in us anxiety. Inclusion, as the primal law of spirit, awakens in us trust and allows us to experience togetherness with others. Another person can also learn and understand what I learn and understand, maybe even better than myself. A work of art that I enjoy can be enjoyed at the same time by another. When we gather knowledge together, my progress does not exclude the progress of another, but rather has the effect of mutual stimulation in the spiritual aspect.

Actually, we can understand the entire angst phenomena when we look at it as a mental mirroring of the spiritual state of materialism. Materialism is the primary spiritual phenomenon of our time, and anxiety is the primary soul phenomenon of our time. An example of the physical mirroring of materialism in our time is the AIDS phenomena in which the so-called material cause, whether in the form of microbes, viruses, or bacteria, is difficult to detect and also controversial. Basically, it is a complete breakdown of the physical, just as anxiety is a complete breakdown of soul forces. And materialism completely eclipses the human spirit. Materialism has to do with global, not limited, phenomena, as perceived mentally in the form of anxiety and physically in the form of AIDS, which are related to some physical organ or some partial occurrence. Positive can come about if one daily overcomes angst as well as materialism just as physical breakdown can be halted by rebuilding with the help of soul and spirit forces.

Overcoming anxiety the first time always requires a firm grasp of the meaning of the situation. Anxiety has its roots in a lack of meaning. For this reason I have described angst as a phenomenon of consciousness. A child with an undeveloped consciousness can have no anxiety. Anxiety always proves itself to be some aspect of a lack of meaning.

## **Two-Fold Initiation: Mysticism and Ecstasy**

Steiner depicted that, especially before Christ, there were two kinds of initiation. Within the Northern folk groups such as the Persians or the Germanic people, we find an initiation into the macro cosmos, and within the Southern folk groups such as the Indians or the Egyptians, we find an initiation into the micro cosmos. The Christ mystery, Christianity, held the task of bringing this two-fold initiation back into a synthesis. In Greece we also see both together; the Greek cultural epoch fell within the time of the Mystery at Golgotha. The Dionysius initiation had more to do with the microcosmic human and the Apollo initiation the macrocosmic. Initiation

into the micro cosmos was called mysticism and the other initiation was called ecstasy, the ecstatic going-out into the macro cosmos.

In light of the two-fold quality of initiation, we can perhaps understand the origins of anxiety in a deeper way. What do people find when they go deeply inside themselves? They find in their internal selves all the impulses of egoism. This place of egoism, the evil in humans that exists in everyone, was identified by Steiner as malice, betrayal, and murder.

Humans are denied access to their internal selves initially because they would perish from shame and horror if they were actually confronted with what forces must come about internally in order to separate themselves from all other beings, in order to stand before the entire world as an independent individual. Every person, no matter whether he realizes it or not, unconditionally carries within himself the impulse for malice, that is, the negative aspect of thinking; being against another in thinking. In his feeling nature, his heart, he carries the forces of betrayal, that is, hate. And the impulse for murder, which is opposing another in the will, must be carried by every person because the only way we can contain ourselves within ourselves, is to have “murdered” every other being within us.

### **Fear of Oneself (Micro Cosmos)**

This is a reality, a necessity for development. Let us assume that the ego (“I”) is a point at the beginning of development. All the beings in the world have held sway over this ego; this was the original paradise. In order to become ego-like, human beings (all of us carry these will impulses in our being) had to choose and take part in the denying of all other beings within themselves. Acknowledgement of this is a task of consciousness. Every person carries within themselves the tendency to kill another which is initially, justified. It becomes excessive when one physically kills another. Not only may you not work in me without my permission, but also I want to cut you down!

The mystery of the Apostle *Peter* presents us with the image of primal malice; denial of association with other people. We have the *Judas* mystery as a primal image of betrayal. He sought to turn over others through traitorous action. And, as a primal image of murder, we have the mystery of *Cain* who not only murdered the other in his own being but also in physical reality. Steiner stressed how astute Shakespeare was in his assertion that a person who can not appreciate and enjoy music is a person who is capable of malice, betrayal, and murder. The impulse for malice is overcome through the melody, the telling of the truth. The impulse for betrayal is overcome through the harmony, the togetherness of the tones. The impulse for murder is overcome through rhythm. This parallel also helps to illustrate Steiner’s considerations in regard to the task of art.

If we are courageous enough to admit that we not only carry all this within us, but that we must do so as a result of our development up to this day, then we can begin to not only better understand anxiety, but also overcome it.

### **Fear of “The Greater World” (Macro Cosmos)**

What happened to the Northern people who were initiated into the macro cosmos? There were twelve initiators who helped the initiates because through this form of initiation another primal form of anxiety came about. As the individual began to penetrate into the endlessly complex macro cosmos, he would lose himself, feel faint, fear that he would melt into nothingness. Just as the Southern people’s task was to overcome egoism through sympathy and love, overcoming the fear of losing oneself in the vast expanses of the cosmos consisted of exercises in versatility and all-roundedness. The human being wants to imitate the Sun which has not just one position, but rather goes through all twelve signs of the zodiac. It is the primal image of the “I” part of human beings: Creative freedom is experienced because the “I” is able to experience twelve viewpoints of one phenomenon.

Each phenomenon can be viewed from at least twelve characteristic positions. Add to that a seven-fold aspect of soul experiences. Steiner explained this mystery of the twelve-fold, seven-fold, and three-fold, or single-fold, as the case may be, in a booklet titled *Human and Cosmic Thought*. In ancient times initiators had to be present to prevent a person from losing himself. The initiator had to look at things one time from the viewpoint of Aries, one time from the viewpoint of Sagittarius, and so forth. In today’s humanity, the task of practicing all-rounded versatility out of our own forces has grown so that we can overcome anxiety in light of the complexity of reality.

The original form of anxiety is the fear of egoism, of mine and of others, the fact that I carry the impulse within myself to kill another and vice versa. The second form of anxiety is the fear of the complexity of reality, the fear of the macro cosmos. One can master this fear only by daily practicing all-rounded versatility. To pursue this mastery, humanity was given spiritual science.

Anxiety will ever lesson just because one knows that matters can always be looked at from totally new viewpoints. But one also knows that one has the power; therein exists the ego-force, the Sun-force that visits all twelve signs of the zodiac, i.e. the force to look at things from ever new aspects. Through this one overcomes angst: I can understand it like this. Or, if it is presented another way, I can understand it in another way. I am not really at all inflexible and one-sided. Why should a person be immovable when he has an “I” (ego) and is capable of thinking? One must only practice and within the practice of thinking lies the overcoming of angst. Anxiety comes about when thinking is not exercised. In that case, one will be fearful of not

understanding things. People of today are not aware enough of how much anxiety comes about because things are not penetrated enough by thought. What I do not understand must make me afraid and what I do understand relieves anxiety in me because I know how to proceed.

### **The Events of the Temptation and on Mount Olive**

We find this two-fold aspect of anxiety, losing oneself in the cosmos and being confronted with the threat of egoism, the murderous aspect in one's own being, in the Gospels, in the primal phenomenon of humanity, the Christ event. In his second lecture of a series titled *From Jesus to Christ*, Steiner elaborated on this two-fold aspect, the two pillars of the three-year sojourn of Christ on Earth: the temptation at the beginning by delving into the inner nature of humankind and the scene in the Garden of Gethsemane on Mount Olive before rising again into the macro cosmos. The temptation in the desert right after the baptism in the Jordan represents the entire experience of becoming connected with the physical, the entire experience of becoming closed into the micro cosmos. By penetrating into the three-fold bodily nature Christ is initiated into the micro cosmos. Without this he would never have been able to experience what it means to be closed into this refuge of egoism, or "the hearth of evil" as Steiner called it, to experience it as "separateness." This is the whole experience of Christ, of his becoming human, through the temptation, initiated into the human micro cosmos. The end of the three years on earth had to do with leaving the body through death, going out again into the macro cosmos, not only as the Christ but also as a man. His becoming a human being had to do with the fact that he wanted to experience death in the same way as humans. How does one experience death? Death is a flowing out into the macro cosmos. Human beings experience death in conjunction with fear, the fear of losing one's self. And this mystery of angst, losing one's self through flowing out into the macro cosmos, is represented by the scenes in the Garden of Gethsemane and on Mount Olive.

In the ancient initiation mysteries there were two formulations for this double aspect of a primal experience. One said either: "The world is losing me" (the impulse of egoism), or one said: "I am losing myself in the world." Either humankind is losing me, I will encapsulate myself in my egoism and do nothing for anyone else, or I will become aggressive, I want to flow out, impose my being upon others, and break myself down in the process, and lose myself in the world.

### **Fear of the Depressive "Thief" and the Aggressive "Robber"**

These two terms were summarized by Christ in a sentence found in the Gospel of John: "All who ever came before me are thieves and robbers. . . ." (John 10:8). This is a sentence that through ordinary theology we can understand only with difficulty. Christ is saying: Before the "I" force of the middle way, the mediation between extremes, has come about, everywhere

where the force of the ego is missing. A human being is either a thief (the world is losing me) or a robber (I am losing myself in the world). The thief steals away, the world loses him, while the robber hammers through and will reach his goal by force, but thereby breaks down his own self and in this way is smashed by interacting with the cosmos. Where the power of the “I,” the power of balance, is missing, a human being is either a luciferic thief or an ahrimanic robber.

Finally, one can think about the two basic disguises of angst. Anxiety disguises itself on the one hand with depression and on the other hand with aggression. Or one can describe the two basic phenomena of depression and aggression as disguised anxiety even though there are, of course, endless aspects and paths of consideration; at least twelve, as I have indicated above.

What is depression? Fear of abandonment. What is aggression? Fear of being swallowed-up. One determines the other. Individuals who have completely encapsulated themselves experience depression and those who wish to impress their being upon others experience aggression. Aggression and depression stand in polar opposition, and they evoke each other. A depressed person is potentially aggressive and an aggressive person is potentially depressed. Still, no one wishes to remain in one-sidedness. They swing again and again from one side to the other. In depression I experience the egoism of others. In aggression the others experience my egoism. This is the see-saw of life, and the art of life is finding the balance, to overcome anxiety, depression and aggression through free flexibility. No human being can exist free of depression and aggression. There is no such thing. What does exist (and this is the task) is finding the balance again. As the pendulum swings, so both sides will become ever less extreme.

### **The Times Are Becoming Apocalyptically Close and People Fearful**

Chapter 1, verse 3 in the Revelation of John begins: “The time is close,” . The German words “Enge” (closeness) and “angst” share the same root in the Greek word “          .” So the Revelation of John is saying that things are getting serious and that we may have angst because the time is “close.” The common translation of this verse is: “The time is near,” which does not make much sense. What does this mean, the time is close? Time is never close for a child. Time is experienced by a child as a progressive continuum in which the child is embedded. Time becomes close only for a being who has consciousness of the one-time opportunity for development; a being who knows when these possibilities for development have elapsed which exist only at a certain hour of one day, or in a certain year because then the world constellation is different and he might have missed this moment of possibility. The closeness of time is part of the mystery of freedom in which human beings, in accordance with their consciousness, comprehend that freedom is only possible where there is always the possibility

of missing something. And that is anxiety as the mystery of the time: Human beings must know that if the constellation of events, the constellation of world factors always returned, nothing could ever be missed because everything would be retrievable. That would mean, however, that we had no freedom.

For this reason Nietzsche held the view of eternal repetition of the same things for only a few months and then no more. He said to himself: if the same things reappear over and over, then there can be no progression to “Übermensch” (superman). Therefore, he did not speak further of the eternal reappearance of the same things. Rather, every moment is unique: “

.” The world constellation, the developmental factors, are, in this moment, able to offer me these specific possibilities for development. If I do not grab hold of them, it is too late because the developmental factors will never be like this again, allowing me to achieve exactly this.

### **Indefinable Angst and Incomprehensible Happiness**

The closeness of time belongs to the mystery of freedom where people must grasp their momentary opportunities for development with spiritual presence and alertness or lose those opportunities forever. With endless complexity, but in each case one-time constellation of world factors, the hierarchies offer us this anxiety about the possibility of missing something as a healthy opportunity for development. The only way to overcome anxiety is for people to develop so much wakeful vigilance that they grasp their particular task and fulfill it. In this way they also overcome anxiety. However, this does not happen automatically. The healthy aspect of anxiety is that it makes us mentally aware of the unique tasks of the spirit.

The opposite of alertness in the spiritual-present of the moment is anxiety that is totally undefined, a widespread phenomenon today. It is the exact opposite of being focussed in the moment.

Within the domain of undefined angst, many people feel anxiety without being able to clearly say of what they are afraid. It is the emotional mirroring of what Steiner explained in the thirteenth chapter of his book *The Philosophy of Freedom* as modern human being’s hunt for indefinable “happiness.” People want to be happy. However, someone who wants to be happy, in reality, wants nothing specific. And because, in his spirit, he does not want anything specific, within his soul there grows an undefined anxiety which seems to come from nothing.

Someone can overcome this life addiction, the search for happiness, if he understands that real happiness is a by-product which will be imparted to him when he stops wanting to be happy. Otherwise, he will never be happy. If I take joy in the task that is now concretely before me, my opportunity for self-realization, and if I can achieve so much love for the deed that it becomes

satisfying in and of itself, then the indefinable anxiety will cease of its own accord.

Love for the situation-appropriate action that is present at the very moment causes the hunt for happiness, which can make people unhappy, to disappear and allows them to overcome free-floating anxiety which is such a plague on human beings today.

### **Without Concern for Daily Cares**

I would like to conclude with a phrase by Goethe which he spoke to Eckermann on August 16, 1824, about how he saw trust, giving-in to destiny, as overcoming angst. “In the morning we are the cleverest, but also the most concerned, because anxiety is also a kind of cleverness, albeit only passive. Foolishness does not know anxiety.” In other words, anxiety is cleverness from the passive side. If we are passive-clever we have cares, we have anxiety. However, when cleverness becomes active, we overcome our concerns, we overcome anxiety. Our concern makes us notice the present task.

## Essay 2

# Transforming Consciousness through Anxiety Anxiety Phenomena in Daily Life and Its Opportunities

by

Felicitas Vogt

The purpose of this essay is to describe the typical angst phenomena of our time with their destructive effect and also, especially, in their awakening effect, so that anxiety can be understood not only as a threat but also as an opportunity. Since this essay contains a number of statements and research from Rudolf Steiner, a knowledge of his life-work, anthroposophy, will be helpful.

Let me begin by describing a few characteristics of our time that typify symptomatically the conclusion of the twentieth century. One of the most distinguished psychotherapists of our time, Viktor Frankl, characterized the twentieth century as the century of anxiety. Statistically, every ninth German suffers from some phobia, an anxiety disorder that makes it difficult for that person to complete his or her biography out of his own strength. Last year the World Health Organization (WHO) published a census showing that approximately six percent of all people suffer from anxiety disorders. The tendency is increasing.

However, anxiety appears in disguise, hidden behind phenomena that Frankl characterizes as signs of our time: depression, aggression, and addiction. Interestingly, anxiety is most prevalent, in all its apparitions, in those countries that have marked outward security and comfort.

The recent emergence of the term “angst” or “anxiety” in literature shows just how much the concept of anxiety belongs to the twentyfirst century. Søren Kierkegaard in 1844, the middle of the nineteenth century, was the first to describe the phenomenon of anxiety in an essay he published titled *The Term Anxiety*. We know from his biography that Kierkegaard, an anxious neurotic, wrote from a deep personal relationship with anxiety.

As the anxiety-ridden state of soul in the waning nineteenth century gradually became a heeded subject, literature about the phenomenon of

anxiety grew undeniably in the twentieth century. No more is it only single individuals who are threatened by anxiety but rather modern biographies seem to be fundamentally characterized as being accompanied by anxiety.

Jacques Lusseyran sees in anxiety not only a gesture of soul that should be overcome as quickly as possible, but he attributes to it an important task and he calls upon anxiety for help in his booklet titled *Against the Defilement of the "I."* He turns directly to his readers: "And now I call upon you – all who would never recommend anxiety – let us have anxiety!" Lusseyran adjures us to accept anxiety as something that jolts us awake and to finally open our eyes to the dangerous position in which our own, non-self-seeking ego finds itself. Still very young, undeveloped, and inexperienced, it finds itself in constant danger of being buried, suffocated, and killed when it is left without protection to the outer world and its attacks.

Drug addicts who are in therapy after a long career of taking drugs and are asked about their motives for their drug consumption often say anxiety was their main motivation. Not fear of death which a drug-addict usually does not have, but rather fear of a life that is dead.

A second motive that is given over and over again is hopelessness of ever identifying with something, not with one's own self or with any kind of goal that could give meaning to existence and a perspective on the future.

A further characteristic of our time is the "burn-out syndrome." In the last few years thousands of manuals and self-help books have been published on the subject of burn-out syndrome which attests to how bad the suffering of these symptoms of exhaustion and burn-out really are and how necessary it is to find help. In many cases these symptoms are caused by a deep, existential anxiety that the sufferer does not admit to having. An important result of research by Steiner helps us understand the sudden appearance of the burn-out syndrome around the middle of the twentieth century.<sup>1</sup>

Next to the pathological anxiety disorders, there are an abundance of anxieties that pervade our daily lives without provocations by any particular situation. These anxieties can be categorized into three groups. While one category is related more to individuals, the second category is related to the social environment, and the third to the general situation of the times. I would like to cite a few typical examples of all three categories.

An often-expressed anxiety that belongs in the first group is not living up to a certain standard, a certain idea of perfection. As an example, let us look at the qualities of a person representing the picture of perfection as suggested in advertising. The man must be good-looking, tan, and muscular with brilliant, white teeth, appropriate, stylish, hip clothing, surrounded by attractive female admirers, used to success, and rich. Together they enjoy their freedom which in advertising language means free time and is characterized by a white yacht, blue sky, and blazing sun. Almost as an afterthought the product being advertised appears.

This is a typical example of the advertising images we see on a daily basis and as our children and adolescents also experience them. It is one idealistic image of the human being; completely spellbound and captivated by the physical. Trying to live up to these suggested idealistic images causes anxiety for many people.

I see in this also one of the many causes of anorexia and bulimia. Renunciation of the flatness and emptiness of the world of advertising all around us seems to me to be a major motive for this particular disturbance of the soul. This typical statement from one adolescent is very telling: "I really don't want to grow up into the world of you adults!" Henning Köhler expressed this same sentiment in his book titled *The Quiet Yearning to Go Home* (not yet translated into English). The adolescents in this book do not want to fully, responsibly incarnate in the world that they find before them. Rather, they withdraw back from whence they came.

Fear of growing old is another common cause of anxiety. An entire industry has been built around methods for defying the aging process. A short time ago an anti-aging pill came onto the market in the United States. It was heralded as a great achievement and is touted to make one ten to fifteen years younger, including the reproductive forces. Years-long research has been invested in this and billions spent. This pill is already selling rapidly even in South America, a clear symptom of anxiety about aging. The value and importance of qualities of age, the wisdom-filled, blessing old person seem to me to be increasingly disappearing from our consciousness.

Another form of anxiety that plagues us daily is the fear of illness. I would like to speak briefly here about AIDS an illness which has brought the entire world together in horror at its terrifying specter.

A long-term study conducted in the United States about this disease examined the mental/emotional states of HIV-positive persons during the course of their illness. Two groups of patients were treated intensively both medically and psychologically starting at a particular stage of the disease. One group consisted of patients who were filled with high anxiety from the first outbreak of their illness and followed every symptom with spellbound interest. In the other group were patients who were little affected by anxiety and therefore had a rather relaxed attitude about the symptoms of their illness as they appeared. The results of the study showed that the patients who were fearful and anxious proceeded to the subsequent stages of the disease rapidly. In contrast, in those patients who had less anxiety a remission of the illness was observed, often even a reversal, a healing process, so that the disease never developed into AIDS.

A Swiss physician summarized these results by using the acronym AIDS which stands for Acquired Immune Deficit Syndrome, and put it like this: *Angst Ist Das Schlimmste* (anxiety is the worst).

It is really moving when one thinks of the saying: Fear goes straight to the marrow. Literally with AIDS as the immune cells are formed in the bone marrow, here we can vividly see the deep relationship between the soul aspect of a person and his physical aspect.

Besides the anxieties on an individual level, we also suffer daily from feelings of anxiety that are related to the social environment. Who among us does not know the fear of non-recognition, contempt, criticism, or loss of prestige? The list goes on and on. Many forms of angst that are often also disguised in the social realm. I would like to refer to two trends that seem especially characteristic of the times. On one side there is enormous anxiety about being insignificant; experiencing loss of influence and prestige which often shows up in the social sphere as behaviors involving the exercise of power. Today we have very much to do with this form even though it is often hidden and subtle. There is certainly a tendency to this living in each one of us which must be constantly examined in order to consciously overcome it.

However, the power only functions if it comes together with corresponding social behavior. A behavior that is likewise determined by anxiety but has a completely different cause is self-condemnation. Both these anxieties can lead toward a very dysfunctional symbiosis in the social sphere. Those who exercise power need those who have fear of self-condemnation. A melding can take place between the two groups that is often experienced by those in the social environment as something akin to a fortress into which only those found to be sympathizers are accepted.

Steiner expressed great concern about these old social structures as they related to the college of teachers in Waldorf schools. He characterized three formerly undeveloped social structures as follows:

The first form, which is well-known to all of us, is the hardened, fixed social structure. Within this structure there is one personality, or one small group, who has mastered some special knowledge and brings it to every situation. A lively discussion process, a real debate about something, is stifled. Seriously weighty statements, abruptly spoken, leads to silence. In this way wisdom can be perverted into a weapon of persuasion. Steiner very succinctly named this form of social structure the dogmatic form. A practical example may clarify the effect of such a social structure:

A college of teachers puts forward this question: How should Halloween be celebrated in the upper grades, with or without electronic music? The colleagues struggled to decide if they should allow recorded music, and if they should allow electrically amplified music. A pertinent statement by Steiner is thrown into the debate: "We must be successful in removing every form of technology out of the education of children up to age nineteen." That was the end of the struggle; the end of lively debate. The imposition of Steiner's statement (there are many others by him on the subject of technology) in order to push through one's own opinion divided the college

of teachers into two camps: those for and those against. Instead of moving forward to a new level of community through debate of the question, what transpired was division and paralyzing hardening of positions within the college of teachers, a sad earmark of an outmoded social structure.

The second kind of social structure likewise prevents any lively process. However, in this case, it is not an individual who imposes but rather each person hides behind the opinion of the others. In this way the following, for example, can happen: The weekly teacher's conference takes place before the meeting of the College of Teachers. When certain telephone lines are busy for hours on Thursday afternoon and this is repeated week after week, even an unsuspecting young teacher will slowly realize that during this time the actual consensus of opinion of certain groups about themes of the afternoon or evening conference is taking place, and in the conference only fixed, group views are represented: "But we think . . . My colleague also thinks . . . I have spoken with the other colleagues," and so forth. Since the individuals lack the courage to come to their own conclusions, a lively process of debate within the college of teachers is not allowed. This can only lead to partisanship and mutual conflict. Steiner called this energy of dissolution within the community sectarian.

He certainly did not mean that exchanging ideas or having discussions before or after the conference should not be allowed. It is only critical how individuals who have had previous discussions react to such a process during the conference. Does someone take an active part in the discussion, alert and speaking up at the right moment in order to carry the process forward without intent, and beholden only to his or her own, just-forming ideas, or does the someone take support only from something that has already been determined thereby just passively accepting a development, a process? This is the decisive question.

Steiner suffered endlessly under the third form of social structure. While the dogmatic community flourishes under the influence of Ahriman and the sectarian form is under the influence of Lucifer, the third form of social structure is affected by both the Ahrimanic and the Luciferic forces together.<sup>2</sup> The result of this cooperation is a tendency to confuse compromise.

The group in this third form is lacking the energy to advance into the conviction of their own ideas and to persevere until they are accomplished. Community processes are met with a lukewarm attitude and not carried to their conclusion. There is a lack of enthusiasm and no commitment to the actual goal. One feels bound to the common ideal only insofar as nothing disagreeable can grow out of it. Relativism and pragmatism are frequently cultivated without realizing that irreproachable truths do exist.

*The Study of Man* by Rudolf Steiner is, for example, such an irreproachable truth that may not be corrupted through compromise. When certain actions become necessary in light of an anthroposophical knowledge

of man, then these actions should be completed whether it is socially pleasant or not. The aspect of personal agreeableness may not play a role when a really clear conviction of knowledge is present. I will not elaborate here on how such a conviction of knowledge can be attained. But there are clear steps that lead to it as Steiner described in the course on curative education.

Consider all the anxiety phenomena together. Whether they are related primarily to an individual, the social environment, or the situation of the times such as fear of wars, environmental catastrophes, natural disasters, and so forth, we see them characterized by a common criterion: the fear of separation, separation in which connection is sought and a yearning to be connected is present. It could be separation from the home environment, from loved ones, from a certain life situation, or, the furthest level, separation from one's own self by the loss of identity.

People today experience themselves primarily as homeless, without protection or identity. How was it in earlier times?

Let us turn for a moment to the past in order to compare the feeling for life that earlier generations had with the feelings of people today. A modern-day, homeless, lonely person stands vis-à-vis a person from an earlier time who is supported by the community and wrapped in social protection. The further we go back in the past the larger and more stable were the groups of people who supported individuals, offered them security, and protected them. An individual could identify with that group.

In earliest times the soul incarnated into the whole human stream which gave it an identity. Later, the soul incarnated into a certain geographic area where a certain language was spoken. There, where one's own language was spoken, one felt spiritually at home. Identification with one's own people followed, subsequently with the tribe, then with the clan, and finally, the identity group was the family. Initially, the extended family but in the end the latest remaining identity group is the nuclear family, and today even this identification is rarely carried past childhood.

In this development it has also become clear that since the middle of the twentieth century the traditional source of strength has been quelled. In prior times, an individual was representative of a group and the individual carried the features of the group as if wearing a protective mantle. Today the individual stands alone. Since they are completely dependent upon themselves, individuals can now identify only with themselves. This is a dramatic moment in human history. For the first time in human development the ego is set apart from every group. For the first time human beings are representative of themselves.

Understandably strong egocentric forces are necessary for this self-assertion. For the time being egoism is a necessary prerequisite. Around and around it goes: The more a person is separated from others and supported by egoism, the more isolated is that person's "I." This developmental step

becomes especially dramatic during encounters when the respective egos collide “naked and unprotected,” as Steiner characterized it.

Here is a typical example of this drama: Imagine this situation in an elevator. Someone in the elevator wants to ride up to the tenth floor. Modern man that he is, he stands as a “significant representative” of himself in this little room. As soon as another “significant individuality” steps into the elevator, the space narrows regardless of how large the room is in reality. At each floor other “significant personalities” enter the elevator. Now, standing close together becomes so painful that certain gestures of avoidance come about with which we are all familiar: Someone looks nervously at his watch, at the floor indicator, the points of her shoes become interesting, or the lint on a sleeve. An encounter with the others is avoided by being centered on one’s own self. Finally, the elevator door opens onto the eighth floor and a dog enters. The tension releases and one can turn one’s attention to the dog; one is finally free from fixation on self.

It is always fascinating to observe, (also with one’s own self), how often this kind of non-encounter is repeated. Those who are representating only themselves must necessarily feel lonely, isolated, and trapped in their innermost being.

The Latin word *angustia*, which is the root word for the German words *Enge* and *Angst* (closeness and anxiety), shows just how direct a relationship there is between both. Having reached this painful point of development, it is easy to understand why all the offerings from the outside world that promise release from meaninglessness, loneliness, and narrow closeness, have been so intensely received.

To this category belong:

- Drug and media consumption, drastically on the rise.
- Yearning for groups that promise harmony and a better world. A guru is followed under the condition of giving-up individual responsibility.
- A need for violence and destruction in order to make room for one’s self.

These are dramatic gestures of avoidance prefacing the agonizing experience of inner distress. Jørgen Smit spoke of this situation in a lecture as the “drama of the consciousness soul at the end of the twentieth century.”

Characterizing the passive side of our ego, as so very cuddled and spoiled by each one of us today, Lusseyran was describing one cause for this drama. It is the ego which loves to be served. It is the ego which misleads us into

naïvely believing everything we hear through the media and statistics. (Analyses of news media have shown the nightly news shows, which claim to be instruments of objective truth-telling, are, in reality, some of the most dishonest programs on television. See Heinz Buddemeier's *Living in Artificial Worlds*, Stuttgart, 1993.) This passive side of our ego entices us into selfishly paying attention only to our own interests without observing the context in which we live.

Steiner presented how strongly this egoistic attitude, which is in accord with a certain degree of human development, can lead to an opening vis-à-vis evil in his lecture: *How Can I Find the Christ?* For approximately two-thirds of the lecture he described the increasing emanation of evil and its justification in our time. At the conclusion he described extensively the blackout experience; unconsciousness, powerlessness. The German word he used was *Ohnmacht*, nine times in two pages. He said today's human beings must go through this experience if they are genuinely striving to know themselves. A person can only be helped in this situation when he or she learns to allow this blackout experience of powerlessness without fighting it. In that moment one undergoes a zero-point experience. If one achieves this prerequisite in which all past moments are brought to silence, then forces of the future can stream into the created void. Only in this way can the Christ Being reveal himself to humankind at the etheric level. Steiner spoke further about this in the lecture cycle titled *Symptoms behind History*. He explained that the mystery of evil must first be traversed before the forces of the etheric Christ could be available to anyone.

How is the "I," the ego, to be preserved so that it does not succumb to the various Lucifer-influenced and Ahriman-influenced groupings and group-held views? As contemporaries, we are all endangered. Our anxieties mislead us again and again into error because occupation with anxiety prevents building any conviction of views. Someone who is tied up with their anxieties is helpless against the assaults in our time upon their thinking, feeling and willing. Just how much we are all endangered becomes clear in these subtle ways:

- Dulled thinking with a tendency to use catch phrases and clichés
- Numbed feeling-life that allows only conventional encounters
- Paralyzed will that is capable of only routine action

The most extreme form of this hardening tendency was described by Steiner in a lecture cycle titled *The Inner Aspect of the Social Question*. If there are no new, inner impacts, hardening will progress to such an extent that:

- thinking becomes paralyzed within a mechanization of the spirit. (Self-perpetuating computer technology, genetic manipulation; are these not already such expressions of the above?)
- the feeling life succumbs to vegetation of the soul. (Group behavior without individual responsibility, image presentation according to the current trend, do not these things already show a tendency to a plant-like, dulled existence that has lost all momentum towards the spiritual?)
- the will leads to animalization of the body in which the soul forces are pressed into the body and chained there. (Unrepressed libido and aggression already appear to be signs of this development.)

This developmental hardening heralds the arrival of the social bottleneck that Steiner clearly described as a challenge for the end of the twentieth century. It is understandable that this development is accompanied by anxieties, anxieties that can have a paralyzing effect on the one hand, but on the other hand can call us to a state of heightened alertness.

Steiner described the double effect of angst in this way: Either it completely throws the ego off track at the moment of its inception or it leads to an enhanced “I” experience. If we overcome the aspect of anxiety that releases panic and paralyzes, then anxiety becomes an opportunity, a glimpse into a new level of knowledge, even though it may be agonizing. Consciousness development is always connected with anxiety. The higher the consciousness, the greater the potential for anxiety.

In a lecture on December 12, 1918, Steiner stated: “In this age of the consciousness soul the task of humanity will be to grasp the entirety of the human being and to make human beings dependent upon themselves.” This is a process that will always be accompanied by anxiety. In this sense Jacques Lusseyran said: “Let us have anxiety!”

So much for the diagnosis of the situation in our time. How can we proceed with courage? How can we develop strength to overcome our anxieties? After we have acknowledged once-and-for-all the validity of anxiety we will muster the strength to confront it. A typical characteristic of anxiety is that it sneaks up from behind and takes us unawares. Therefore, our first act must be to get it from behind us, set it before us, and enter into a dialogue with it face to face. This means that we must approach it through our consciousness.

In the lecture cycle entitled *Social Understanding through Knowledge of Spiritual Science* Steiner associated anxiety to Ahriman and said that it must yield wherever the light of knowledge shines. We find in these statements the esoteric explanation of why today's people must see it as an essential task to gain a correct relationship to Ahrimanic forces of anxiety. The observation that anxiety associated with the social sphere can be extraordinarily helpful must be brought into this right relationship. Surely I would become more attuned to my fellow human beings and more empathetic if I had myself suffered through anxiety processes. Obviously, anxiety can make us more sympathetic.

During my time as a class teacher I experienced examples of this many times. For instance, once two hours before a parent evening a student's mother telephoned me to warn me of a brewing conflict. I went into the meeting with the appropriate anxiety and on this evening I experienced myself as especially empathetic and perceptive toward the parents. Through my own anxiety, an openness had come about that made it possible for me to have a much more intense bonding or sharing with the parents than was previously possible. I was actually grateful for the telephone call.

Let us summarize the helpful qualities of anxiety in daily life. Anxiety can help us develop a more alert consciousness. It allows us to experience being restricted to ourselves and our separateness from the world. It makes us aware of the precipice at the barrier and, if we engage it, it leads us to the zero-point where our masks fall away.

The task of the consciousness-soul must be to get past the closeness and anxiety of the zero-point and into new areas. We have seen how thinking, feeling, and willing are the soul-foundations for the working of the ego and how they are being relentlessly attacked in our time. Just think how much thought-energy, how much time, how much money are used to try to corrupt these three activities of the human soul. Human thinking, feeling, and willing must be very precious indeed.

If we want to get past the zero-point and forge a path into the future, we must establish a healthy relationship with anxiety in order to develop a new relationship to thinking, feeling, and willing. With thinking, with our consciousness, we will need to overcome the Ahriman-influenced understanding of the material world. If the spiritual character of reality is also to be recognized material can not be considered the origin of all things. Material should be understood as an emanation of the spirit if one wishes to think in terms of reality.

Consequently, in order to apply this knowledge concretely in our lives, we must deal with the laws of reincarnation and karma. If it is true that spirit is the origin of all things, then the conditions and events that I meet in my physical incarnation also have something to do with me and my state of development. Joy in discovering truths about destiny can be awakened with

this insight. Every social encounter has something to do with me specifically and can not be explained away as something accidental. When we think that our guardian angel has been working for eight hundred to one thousand years in order that we meet a certain personality so that further development can occur, then the significance of an encounter starts to become clear.

What a complicated preparation: Finding the parents at the right time, the appropriate language and nationality, childhood and adolescent development so that the desire arises to work within a certain group, and all this for two people.

Imagine that these two people actually come together. Naturally, it occurs through a conflict because they have something that they have to carry-through together. What if one person says: "No, thank you, I want nothing to do with this conflict!" What a disaster! Eight hundred years of work for nothing! Now everything has to begin again from scratch.

How do we interact with others when we have come to the realization of supernatural reality? Steiner described the quality that lies at the beginning of an extrasensory path to knowledge as the ability to be awed. I am awed when I realize that what I perceive in the physical world is only a part of the whole and the rest of it resides in the spiritual realm. I am amazed about what I encounter in the physical and I open myself to spiritual knowledge. Spiritualization of thinking can begin in this way. It makes possible a completely new approach, including a new approach in the social arena.

With a second step, I can, through this insight, acknowledge the spiritual origin of others. A lively interest in the essence of others is awakened in me. Encounters between the essence of beings can take place that are supported by sympathetic forces. In crass opposition to this stands all hardened nationalism which measures the worth of a person by ethnic origin, skin color, and language. These are characteristics of the past when people were identified according to group associations that provided their members with supportive social energy. In our time of development of individuality these outmoded identifications can only have a detrimental effect as we have clearly experienced in the conflict in Yugoslavia. Here is the proof of Steiner's insight that evil is just good at the wrong time. However, if we bring a real interest in the essence of another, try to understand another in his or her unique individuality, we spiritualize our feeling nature.

Spiritualization of the third area, the will, is especially difficult because the will is unconsciousness. Using the example of biography, I would like to demonstrate how an expansion is possible through inner cognition. Hiltgunt Zassenhaus was selflessly engaged in helping those persecuted by Hitler's regime. In her autobiography, *A Tree Blooms in November*, she described how her constant attention to the welfare of others brought her to the brink of exhaustion and led her to sharply judge her fellow human beings according to their dedication and, as need be, mercilessly condemn them.

She was a translator and given the duty by the Nazi Regime to oversee all the Scandinavian political prisoners. In a military uniform, armed with the keys to the prison, day after day she cared for these prisoners both physically and psychologically. Thanks to her care and dedication, shortly before the end of the war, all of the prisoners were saved from execution and with the help of the Danish and Swedish Red Cross taken to Scandinavia.

In her autobiography, Hiltgunt Zassenhaus looks back at this wartime with brutal honesty and describes how her readiness for sacrifice also made her overbearing. She felt superior to all her compatriots who had silently accepted the injustice of the Nazis, consciously looked away, remained passive, or even complied with the Nazis. A dramatic experience in her life precipitated a fundamental change of heart. Her brother was a physician and sent to the front for duty. He came home for a few days leave. The siblings felt an inner connection to each other and for this reason he sought her out to discuss everything he had experienced and suffered. But Hiltgunt had so much to do with “her prisoners” at that time that she never found the time for a talk with her brother. Disappointed, her brother returned to the war, and just a few weeks later he was killed.

When Hiltgunt received the news of his death, not only was she overcome with a deep sadness, but also an agonizing bad conscience and the devastating feeling of failure. She gained understanding for the weaknesses and failures of others through her own experiences of making such sacrifices to do good while at the same time miserably and irrevocably failing to make time for her dearly-loved brother. Through her own failure she learned to allow others the right to fail. The more she overcame her tendency to judge others based on good and evil, the more tolerant she became and the more freedom she could give to herself and others to make mistakes and learn from those mistakes. From the narrowness of judgment, Hiltgunt reached a level in which acting in freedom was possible.

Our will, unconscious as it is, can be expanded when we recognize the value of development. We learn to handle our mistakes openly and positively. Without failures there is no possibility of further development. Steiner one time pointedly expressed it this way: “There is little that is right that was not at one time done wrongly.”

In education we still have much to learn in this area. We should develop a pedagogical ethos which teaches children the joy of learning. When a teacher enters the classroom with a pile of corrected papers and a grim look the mood becomes immediately heavy. Taking the paper with the most mistakes and slamming it down on the poor student’s desk with an appropriate gesture will certainly not teach the joy of learning through making mistakes. How different it would be for the student if the teacher returned the paper with the comment: “You have already learned much, but there are a few mistakes that we should go over together. You still have some more to learn. I will be

happy to help you with it!” All of us are predisposed to coming down hard on discovered mistakes. Naturally, it is mostly the mistakes of others that are discovered and exposed. This is a behavior which encourages us to fear one another and especially hinders our development and the development of others. Only when we recognize the value of mistakes will we be able to create a level of encounter in which it is possible to learn. Learning means to want to more intensely connect with the world. Every learning process is a connection process which is only possible if it is accompanied by sympathetic forces.

Rejection, accusation, and prejudice with their antipathetic gesture can not awaken a will to learn. In short, no one learns if they are being threatened with the whip. This consciousness calls for a completely new jurisprudence; one in which the deeds are judged and the perpetrator must be stimulated to further development.

We know that when it comes to these conditions of development, all too quickly they become lost in the course of daily interaction. Only when we make ourselves repeatedly aware that our behavior towards mistakes and errors is a decisive factor in whether an atmosphere of freedom can exist where development is possible will we muster the strength to overcome our everyday behavior. This is the only way that the maxim which Rudolf Steiner proposed of a free human being can be fulfilled: “Live in the love of action and let live in the understanding of the other’s will.” (*The Philosophy of Freedom* by Rudolf Steiner).

The path up and over the total closeness of the zero-point, with all its attending anxiety phenomena, can be found only by achieving a new level thinking, feeling, and willing. If we make it clear to ourselves that such an undertaking is a process then we will not lose patience. We will assiduously continue the struggle to achieve it. Let us pay attention to our own practice and effort (and not that of others) and freedom can move into our dealings with our own efforts as well as interacting with others.

- *Acknowledgement of the spiritual origin of all things* so that reincarnation and karma are recognized as a reality.
- *Acknowledgement of the spiritual essence in every human being* that awakens sympathy and love for fellow human beings.
- *Acknowledgement of individual states of development and individual development dynamic* that allows for true tolerance of the behavior of others.

This threefold acknowledgement leads through the darkness and powerlessness of the zero-point of our developmental situation into a new expanse. Steiner provided us with help in this development process in many aspects. In his book *Knowledge of the Higher Worlds*, which he labeled an anti-war book, Steiner describes exercises that appear to me to be explicitly for overcoming anxiety. He points out the fundamental causes of anxiety in daily life by telling how we have isolated ourselves inside our own consciousness from our physical bodies, from our life forces, from our soul forces, and from our own "I." In order to overcome this separation Steiner gives us conditions which, upon being met, can create a bridge to our own consciousness. The effort to meet these conditions is a prerequisite for attaining knowledge of higher worlds. As we will see, this effort is also a prerequisite for life in general.

The first condition has to do with the necessity of connecting once again the consciousness with the physical body. People must re-learn how to enjoy things, an astounding exercise. In the times we are living, I believe it is important for all of us to learn how to rightly enjoy things again. This has nothing to do with pleasure as an end in itself, but rather enjoyment as a counterbalance to a former effort. It is the task of enjoyment to allow body and soul to exhale after exertion and to relax. If one's consciousness is connected to the pleasure, then it must learn to use its ego forces and stop. We all have heard the saying about stopping while the taste is best, or stopping work on a drawing or painting before we go too far. In this way we can achieve a balance between tense, fulfillment of responsibilities and relaxing pleasure. It is an exercise to connect the physical with the consciousness.

The second condition has to do with re-bonding our consciousness with the context of our lives. Steiner described it as the tying of consciousness onto the etheric. Here we must again re-learn to feel ourselves a part of the whole. He gave an example of this which, as an educator, pleased me very much.

When a student has been impertinent to a teacher (this was certainly a terrible thing in 1918) and the teacher's only reaction is to discipline the student, the teacher loses his or her connection with the whole. First of all, the teacher should ask himself what this student's behavior has to do with him. Had he perhaps paid too little attention to the student lately, or was his instruction too boring because it had become routine? There are many questions through which he can reconnect to the entire social-complex of what happened.

What should be practiced here can be applied to everyday life. For example, one could ask: Why do I have this marriage partner, this profession, these friends? What does this have to do with me? Only when I learn to relate to life around me in this way can I accept the fact that the network of relationships around me is a part of my own self. In this way a lively exchange

between the inner and outer sides of my ego can occur. At the end of this journey the world and I will be one again.

The third condition has to do with re-connecting our consciousness to our soul forces, our astral body. This happens when we perceive our thoughts and feelings as being just as real as our physical actions. This is the only attitude with which we can consciously connect our thoughts and feelings so that we accept full responsibility for them.

The fourth condition has to do with completing a bridge to our own ego. Here the task is to very consciously connect with everything that I do so that the consequences of my actions are in line with my possibilities. If I have completed an assignment with alertness and dedication, then praise and criticism from others are not necessary motivators for me anymore because they would not be able to increase my effort. Here Steiner shows us a path to ego-identity that is appropriate to the will-mystery at the end of the twentieth century.

These remarks reveal how separation from our selves within various aspects of life can be overcome. At the same time this path makes clear how loss does not merely signify “not having something” but also proffers the opportunity to gain something totally new. To value loss as a positive possibility opens a perspective that turns one’s view from the past of “no more” toward the future of “not yet, but soon.” Seen from this angle the characteristics of our time such as depression, aggression, and addiction can be reevaluated. On one side they signify loss of security, protection, and identification and on the other side they represent a perverted filling of the empty space created by the loss. Rather, let us understand these traits as a call for help from a deep yearning for one’s own, inner satisfaction and we will learn new ways to direct our efforts.

Let us apply this perspective to anxiety. Anxiety shows us that former securities have been lost; on the other hand it is the harbinger of new insights which can disclose new securities. As an indicator of a consciousness process come due, anxiety calls us to self-action. If we do not accept the challenge, then we merely passively, as an observer, shoulder our anxiety and proceed along in constant danger of being so devoured by our anxiety, our only escapes remaining are typical gestures of avoidance.

The active way out of our anxiety leads us through various stations. First, anxiety should be accepted as a harbinger of new insights and should not be suppressed. Suppression of anxiety prevents the possibility for gaining new attitudes about it and perpetuates the suffering with which it is always connected. This makes it possible to recognize anxiety and suffering from the side of their necessity to our development and not only from their painful side.

With a positive attitude it will be possible, through anxiety and suffering, to gain the insight that I am separate from the world and I desire a new

connection with it. If I consciously acknowledge the yearning, I can acquire an inner listening, a new contact to my innermost being. If the outcome of this contact is a new impulse, then I can actively strive to realize it in the world.

This path gives exemplary insight into how the separation of thinking, feeling, and willing is to be overcome at the threshold and lead us into a new unity. Let us understand anxiety as a challenge to step onto this path. It can be our wakeup call to expanded consciousness for a new task in life and therewith the renewal of life qualities.

## Footnotes

- <sup>1</sup> “Forces of human development which have accompanied human beings unconsciously so that they could move forward, are now exhausted and will be totally exhausted by the middle of the twentieth century, approximately speaking. New forces must be dredged up out the depths of the soul. And, human beings must see how they are connected with the roots of spiritual life in the depths of their souls.” From: *The Mission of Michael* by Rudolf Steiner.
- <sup>2</sup> The double nature of evil represented in the Bible with the names Satan and Diabolus is represented in Spiritual Science by the spiritual beings of Lucifer and Ahriman. Intellectual temptations belong in the realm of Lucifer, and libidinal/sensual temptations belong in the realm of Ahriman.