

FOREWORD BY GAIL GODWIN

Knowing the
QUESTIONS
Living the
ANSWERS

A JUNGIAN GUIDE THROUGH THE PARADOXES OF PEACE,
CONFLICT AND LOVE THAT MARK A LIFETIME

BUD HARRIS Ph.D.

Copyright © 2010 Bud Harris, Ph.D.
All rights reserved.

ISBN: 1453736778
ISBN-13: 9781453736777
eBook ISBN: 978-1-4392-8797-2

I would like to beg you, dear Sir, as well as I can, to have patience with everything unresolved in your heart and to try to love *the questions themselves* as if they were locked rooms or books written in a very foreign language. Don't search for the answers, which could not be given to you now, because you would not be able to live them. And the point is, to live everything. *Live* the questions now. Perhaps then, someday far in the future, you will gradually, without even noticing, live your way into the answer.

– Rainer Maria Rilke

Author's Note

All stories, dialogues, and dreams in this book, except those I specifically designate as being my own, reflect material people have shared with me. To protect the privacy of those people, I have carefully altered anything that might disclose the identity of particular individuals or permit the identification of actual relationships or circumstances. Any similarity between the people and situations I have used for illustration and actual people or situations is unintended and purely coincidental.

6 (Excerpt)

PASSING MIDLIFE—CRITICAL MASS

IN THE HEAT OF LIFE

Often, especially in late summer, the intensity of the sun seems to increase after it has passed midday. The same is true with our experience of life. Passing the midlife boundary doesn't mean we are declining. In fact, the primary ingredients of growth—the heat and light of our lives—may be increasing. Our emotional intensity, the desire for self-knowledge, and a more fulfilling orientation toward living may be developing.

This early afternoon heat, which includes emotional intensification, may strike us like restlessness struck King Arthur's knights once their world had been tamed. In a manner similar to theirs, we may feel agitated and confused as the increasing heat of approaching and arriving midlife has begun to stir some of the content of our depths. Our "stuff," which has settled over the years, is becoming unsettled.

In their quest to find the meaning of life, the old alchemists taught that the stuff settling in the alchemical vessel (the symbolic container of life) needed to be heated in order to generate new life and to renew the course of transformation toward symbolic gold. To them, symbolic gold represented wholeness, the fulfillment of the pattern that lies within us with the potential to be fulfilled.

Once heated, the substance of a settled life may need careful distilling, since the alchemical heat stirred by life's early afternoon, as it bubbles through us, frequently is a product of the emotions we worked the hardest to regulate in our earlier development. The careful distillation of our bubbling interior can best come through insight. Insight follows the ageless decree of Apollo, the sun god, to bring balance to our life by turning inward and seeking self-knowledge. Apollo's influence, however, seems slowly to have withered in our imagination, as society appears bent on an endless quest for experience, with little desire for insight and even less for moderation.

In its early days, the practice of psychotherapy was founded on insight, but psychotherapists found this method difficult to sustain. Freud nevertheless opened a

psychotherapists found this method difficult to sustain. Freud nevertheless opened a door to our interior, revealing a dimension formerly reserved for poets and prophets, endeavoring to bring the notions of religion and philosophy into the no-longer-sacred temple of Apollo in search for the truth of our lives. But the literal mind still has difficulty in the subterranean cosmos of our non-rational selves. Moreover, as we use a brighter light, the shadows often seem to become darker. Collectively, we have apparently become too easily frightened by these shadows. And we seem to long for simplistic models as ways of dealing with them—the comfort of cursory humanistic healers, the denial practiced by psychiatry when it substitutes taking drugs for healing, and the superficial labels and quick-fix techniques becoming popular in counseling and psychology. Facing our inner self with courage is becoming a forgotten art, and even beginning the search for our own truth is no easy task. Many of us will find it easier to blame somebody else for our troubles or look for an easy way around them.

But insight is difficult to forget once it has been tasted. One small bit of awareness leads us to seek another, and before we know it a journey is underway. Soon we realize that this bittersweet addiction is built into our nature, for we are born to be seekers. If we are also able to find a little courage (and life can help us find this courage through a feeling of desperation), we may begin to share our insight with someone else who is kind and understanding—and we may find that experience helpful. Initially, doing so can be painful, and we must proceed carefully until we are sure we can trust the other person and trust ourselves when we are with that person.

In ancient Greece, entering the temple of the sun god meant entering a sacred place. Very little space is sacred today, so we must somehow learn to construct or discover this space on our own. As we communicate our beginning insights to a special or gifted person, if we do so gently, we find out that we receive further insight in return, though it will rarely turn out to be what we expect. As we continue doing this, we begin to sense that some yet unknown destination is beckoning us. Immediately our modern minds will say there must be a “right” way to do this process. At such a point, we are in danger of replacing our quest for insight with a quest for methodology. Deeper insight into ourselves, however, may soon teach us to begin reserving our judgment. It will also dampen our tendency to turn from sharing insights, our inclination instead to make pronouncements and declare conclusions. As we journey farther, we slowly learn that neither “the way” nor “our way” is so easy to discern. We must then start to wonder if the way of insight is enough, or whether it is only a beginning. In truth, we discover, it is a beginning—an afternoon beginning.