

**R.D.Laing (1967): *The Politics of Experience and The Bird of Paradise*
Penguin, England. 1967**

R.D. Laing is a verbal gymnast who turns words inside out to get his meaning across. As a widely read interpreter and critic of conventional psychiatric medicine, Laing endured the approbation and the censure of his peers with courage and determination. In many ways, he took to heart Blake's proverbial axiom that "the road of excess leads to the palace of wisdom."

This collection of essays represents an account of a nascent social phenomenology that focuses primarily upon the experience of the other. This provides a welcome revisioning of a psychotherapeutic view that was based on the objectification of the other, with little attention given to the experience of relationship and the subtle person to person communications that occur continuously beyond the role of patient and therapist.

Laing's focus is on the balance between behaviour and experience, and his evaluation of traditional psychiatric approaches is strongly determined by which of those elements is favoured or emphasised. Laing strongly criticises the signatory depersonalisation that characterises much of the "acceptable" psychological medicine practised during the twentieth century. Small wonder then that Laing was himself marginalized and outlawed by many of his professional colleagues.

"The Politics of Experience" is an important document in the difficult realm of relational psychology. Laing understands intimately the nature of alienation – personal, social and professional – and offers an acute sense of the reality of others as beings in the world as intensely sentient as ourselves.

Laing is an immensely humorous author who remains equally capable of spelling out the pathos and tragedy that engulfs so many lives. He holds an immense view of human capability, and of our capacity to deal with the immensity within which we find ourselves.

It is clear that many of the reflections offered in this collection have been inspired by Laing's own experience with LSD. They offer a clarifying entry into difficult worlds and of ways of experiencing that can barely be articulated. Laing has skilfully related his insights to both the lived world of those deemed mad, and to the excesses of a civilisation that is itself alienated from its own humanity.

Laing will be long remembered for his insight into the relational rather than genetic dimensions of schizophrenia, for his understanding that madness can be the inevitable expression of an existential impasse created by relation binds and familial collusions. This is a difficult notion that is more easily dismissed than carefully examined. R.D. Laing will also be remembered for articulating the notion that madness may also represent a transient mental state that can, with sensitive guidance and support, be resolved and transformed into a deeper understanding of one's place in the world.

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Introduction

Our alienation goes to the roots. The realization of this is the essential springboard for any serious reflection on any aspect of present inter-human life. Viewed from different perspectives, construed in different ways and expressed in different idioms, this realization unites men as diverse as Marx, Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, Freud, Heidegger, Tillich and Sartre.

We are bemused and crazed creatures, strangers to our true selves, to one another, and to the spiritual and material world - mad, even, from an ideal standpoint we can glimpse but not adopt.

We are born into a world where alienation awaits us. We are potentially men, but are in an alienated state, and this state is not simply a natural system. Alienation as our present destiny is achieved only by outrageous violence perpetrated by human beings on human beings. p. 12

Persons and Experience

We can see other people's behaviour, but not their experience. This has led some people to insist that psychology has nothing to do with the other person's experience, but only with his behaviour.

The other person's behaviour is an experience of mine. My behaviour is an experience of the other. The task of social phenomenology is to relate my experience of the other's behaviour to the other's experience of my behaviour. Its study is the relation between experience and experience: its true field is *inter-experience*. p. 15

Social phenomenology is the science of my own and of others' *experience*. It is concerned with the relation between my experience of you and your experience of me. That is, with *inter-experience*, It is concerned with your behaviour and my behaviour *as I experience it*, and your behaviour and my behaviour *as you experience it*. pp. 16-17

The relation between experience and behaviour is the stone that the builders will reject at their peril. Without it the whole structure of our theory and practice must collapse. p. 17

The relation of experience to behaviour is not that of inner to outer. My experience is not inside my head. My experience of this room is out there in the room.

To say that my experience is intra-psychic is to presuppose that there is a psyche that my experience is in. My psyche is my experience, my experience is my psyche. pp. 18-19

We can begin from concepts of the single person, from the relations between two or more persons, from groups or from society at large; or from the material world, and conceive

of individuals as secondary. We can derive the main determinants of our individual and social behaviour from external exigencies. All these views are partial vistas and partial concepts. Theoretically one needs a spiral of expanding and contracting schemata that enable us to move freely and without discontinuity from varying degrees of abstraction to greater or lesser degrees of concreteness. Theory is the articulated vision of experience. This book begins and ends with the person. pp. 19-20

In a science of persons, I shall state as axiomatic that: behaviour is a function of experience; and both experience and behaviour are always in relation to someone or something other than self.

When two (or more) persons are in relation, the behaviour of each towards the other is mediated by the experience by each of the other, and the experience of each is mediated by the behaviour of each. pp. 21-22

As adults, we have forgotten most of our childhood, not only its contents but its flavour; as men of the world, we hardly know of the existence of the inner world: we barely remember our dreams, and make little sense of them when we do; as for our bodies, we retain just sufficient proprioceptive sensations to coordinate our movements and to ensure the minimal requirements for biosocial survival - to register fatigue, signals for food, sex, defaecation, sleep; beyond that, little or nothing. Our capacity to think, except in the service of what we are dangerously deluded in supposing is our self-interest, and in conformity with common sense, is pitifully limited: our capacity even to see, hear, touch, taste and smell is so shrouded in veils of mystification that an intensive discipline of un-learning is necessary for *anyone* before one can begin to experience the world afresh, with innocence, truth, and love. pp. 22-23

Men can and do destroy the humanity of other men, and the condition of this possibility is that we are interdependent. We are not self-contained monads producing no effects on each other except our reflections. We are both acted upon, changed for good or ill, by other men; and we are agents who act upon others to affect them in different ways. Each of us is the other to the others. pp. 25-26

It is quite certain that unless we can regulate our behaviour much more satisfactorily than at present, then we are going to exterminate ourselves. But as we experience the world, so we act, and this principle holds even when action conceals rather than discloses our experience.

We are not able even to *think* adequately about the behaviour that is at the annihilating edge. But what we think is less than what we know: what we know is less than what we love: what we love is so much less than what there is. And to that precise extent we are so much less than what we are.

Yet if nothing else, each time a new baby is born there is a possibility of reprieve. Each child is a new being, a potential prophet, a new spiritual prince, a new spark of light, precipitated into the outer darkness. Who are we to decide that it is hopeless? p. 26

Personal action can either open out possibilities of enriched experience or it can shut off possibilities. Personal action is either predominantly validating, confirming, encouraging, supportive, enhancing, or it is invalidating, disconfirming, discouraging, undermining and constricting. It can be creative or destructive.

In a world where the normal condition is one of alienation, most personal action must be destructive both of one's own experience and of that of the other. p. 29

All experience is both active and passive, the unity of the given and the construed; and the construction one places on what is given can be positive or negative: it is what one desires or fears or is prepared to accept, or it is not. The element of negation is in every relationship and every experience of relationship. The distinction between the absence of relationships, and the experience of every relationship as an absence, is the division between loneliness and a perpetual solitude, between provisional hope or hopelessness and a permanent despair. The part I feel I play in generating this state of affairs determines what I feel I can or should do about it. p. 32

Being and non-being is the central theme of all philosophy, East and West. These words are not harmless and innocent verbal arabesques, except in the professional philosophism of decadence.

We are afraid to approach the fathomless and bottomless groundlessness of everything. "There's nothing to be afraid of." The ultimate reassurance, and the ultimate terror. p. 33

At the point of non-being we are at the outer reaches of what language can state, but we can indicate by language why language cannot say what it cannot say. I cannot say what cannot be said, but sounds can make us listen to the silence. Within the confines of language it is possible to indicate when the dots must begin. But in using a word, a letter, a sound, OM, one cannot put a sound to soundlessness, or name the unnameable.

The silence of the preformation expressed in and through language, cannot be expressed by language. But language can be used to convey what it cannot say - by its interstices, by its emptiness and lapses, by the latticework of words, syntax, sound and meanings. The modulations of pitch and volume delineate the form precisely by not filling in the spaces between the lines. But it is a grave mistake to mistake the lines for the pattern, or the pattern for that which it is patterning. p. 35

The experience of being the actual medium for a continual process of creation takes one past all depression or persecution or vain glory, past, even, chaos or emptiness, into the very mystery of that continual flip of non-being into being, and can be the occasion of that great liberation when one makes the transition from being afraid of nothing, to the

realization that there is nothing to fear. Nevertheless, it is very easy to lose one's way at any stage, and especially when one is nearest. p. 36

The fate that awaits the creator, after being ignored, neglected, despised, is, luckily or unluckily according to point of view, to be discovered by the non-creative. p. 37

Words in a poem, sounds in movement, rhythm in space, attempt to recapture personal meaning in personal time and space from out of the sights and sounds of a depersonalized, dehumanized world. They are bridgeheads into alien territory. They are acts of insurrection. Their source is from the Silence at the centre of each of us. Wherever and whenever such a whorl of patterned sound or space is established in the external world, the power that it contains generates new lines of forces whose effects are felt for centuries. p. 37

The Psychotherapeutic Experience

Psychotherapy consists in the paring away of all that stands between us, the props, masks, roles, lies, defences, anxieties, projections and introjections, in short, all the carry-overs from the past, transference and counter-transference, that we use by habit and collusion, wittingly or unwittingly, as our currency for relationships. p. 39

The therapist may allow himself to act spontaneously and unpredictably. He may set out actively to disrupt old patterns of experience and behaviour. He may actively reinforce new ones. One hears now of therapists giving orders, laughing, shouting, crying, even getting up from that sacred chair. Zen, with its emphasis on illumination achieved through the sudden and unexpected, is a growing influence. Of course such techniques in the hands of a man who has not unremitting concern and respect for the patient can be disastrous. p. 40

The metapsychology of Freud, Federn, Rapaport, Hartman, Kris, has no constructs for any social system generated by more than one person at a time. Within its own framework it has no concepts of social collectivities of experience shared or unshared between persons. This theory has no category of 'you', as there is in the work of Feuerbach, Buber, Parsons. It has no way of expressing the meeting of 'I' with 'an other', and of the impact of one person on another. It has no concept of 'me' except as objectified as 'the ego.' The ego is one part of a mental apparatus. Internal objects are other parts of this system. Another ego is part of a different system or structure. How two mental apparatuses or psychic structures or systems, each with its own constellation of internal objects, can relate to each other remains unexamined. Within the constructs the theory offers, it is possibly inconceivable. Projection and introjection do not in themselves bridge the gap *between* persons. p. 42

Why do almost all theories about depersonalization, reification, splitting, denial, tend themselves to exhibit the symptoms they attempt to describe? We are left with,

transactions, but where is the individual? the individual, but where is the other? patterns of behaviour, but where is the experience? information and communication, but where is the pathos and sympathy, the passion and compassion? p. 44

Any technique concerned with the other without the self, with behaviour to the exclusion of experience, with the relationship to the neglect of the persons in relation, with the individuals to the exclusion of their relationship, and most of all, with an object-to-be-changed rather than a person-to-be-accepted, simply perpetuates the disease it purports to cure. . . .

We are not concerned with the interaction of two objects, nor with their transactions within a dyadic system; we are not concerned with the communication patterns within a system comprising two computer-like sub-systems that receive and process input, and emit outgoing signals. Our concern is with two origins of experience in relation. p. 45

The inner does not become the outer, and the outer become the inner, just by the re-discovery of the 'inner' world. That is only the beginning. As a whole generation of men, we are so estranged from the inner world that there are many arguing that it does not exist; and that even if it does exist, it does not matter. Even if it has some significance, it is not the hard stuff of science, and if it is not, then let's make it hard. Let it be measured and counted. Quantify the heart's agony and ecstasy in a world which, when the inner world is first discovered, we are liable to find ourselves bereft and derelict. For without the inner the outer loses its meaning and without the outer the inner loses its substance. We must know about relations and communications. But these disturbed and disturbing patterns of communication reflect the disarray of personal worlds of experience whose repression, denial, splitting, introjection, projection, etc. - whose general desecration and profanation our civilization is based upon. p. 46

The Mystification of Experience

From the moment of birth, when the stone-age baby confronts the twentieth-century mother, the baby is subjected to these forces of violence, called love, as its mother and father have been, and their parents and their parents before them. These forces are mainly concerned with destroying most of its potentialities. This enterprise is on the whole successful. By the time the new human being is fifteen or so, we are left with a being like ourselves. A half-crazed creature, more or less adjusted to a mad world. This is normality in our present age. p. 50

Natural scientific investigations are conducted on objects, or things, or the patterns of relations between things, or on systems of 'events.' Persons are distinguished from things in that persons experience the world, whereas things behave in the world. Thing-events do not experience. Personal events are experiential. Natural scientism is the error of turning persons into things by a process of reification that is not itself part of the true

natural scientific method. Results derived in this way have to be dequantified and dereified before they can be reassimilated into the realm of human discourse. The error fundamentally is the failure to realize that there is an ontological discontinuity between human beings and it-beings. p. 53

Only by the most outrageous violation of ourselves have we achieved our capacity to live in relative adjustment to a civilization apparently driven to its own destruction. Perhaps to a limited extent we can undo what has been done to us, and what we have done to ourselves. Perhaps men and women were born to love one another, simply and genuinely, rather than to this travesty that we can call love. If we can stop destroying ourselves we may stop destroying others. We have to begin by admitting and even accepting our violence, rather than blindly destroying ourselves with it, and therewith we have to realize that we are as deeply afraid to live and to love as we are to die. p. 64

Us and Them

Only when something has become problematic do we start to ask questions. Disagreement shakes us out of our slumbers, and forces us to see our own point of view through contrast with another person who does not share it. But we resist confrontations. The history of heresies of all kinds testifies to more than the tendency to break off communication (excommunication) with those who hold different dogmas or opinions; it bears witness to our intolerance of different *fundamental structures of experience*. We seem to need to share a communal meaning to human existence, to give with others a common sense to the world, to maintain a *consensus*. p. 65

In the nexal family the unity of the group is achieved through the experience by each of the group, and the danger to each person (since the person is essential to the nexus, and the nexus is essential to the person) is the dissolution or dispersion of 'the family'. This can come about only by one person after another dissolving it in themselves. A united 'family' exists only as long as each person acts in terms of its existence. Each person may then act on the other person to coerce him (by sympathy, blackmail, indebtedness, guilt, gratitude or naked violence) into maintaining his interiorization of the group unchanged. The nexal family is then the 'entity' that has to be preserved in each person and served by each person, which one lives and dies for, and which in turn offers life for loyalty and death for desertion. p. 73

Some families live in perpetual anxiety of what, to them, is an external persecuting world. The members of the family live in a family ghetto, as it were. This is one basis for so-called maternal over-protection. It is not 'over'-protection from the mother's point of view, nor, indeed, often from the point of view of other members of the family.

The 'protection' that such a family offers its members seems to be based on several preconditions: (i) a phantasy of the external world as extraordinarily dangerous; (ii) the generation of terror inside the nexus at this external danger. p. 74

The group, whether We, or You or Them, is not a new individual or organism or hyperorganism on the social scene; it has no agency of its own, it has no consciousness of its own. Yet we may shed our own blood and the blood of others for this bloodless presence.

The group is a reality of some kind or other. But what sort of reality? The We is a form of unification of a plurality composed by those who share the common experience of its ubiquitous invention among them.

From outside, a group of Them may come into view in another way. It is still a type of unification imposed on a multiplicity, but this time those who invent the unification expressly do not themselves compose it. Here, I am of course not referring to the outsider's perception of a We already constituted from within itself. The Them comes into view as a sort of social mirage. The Reds, the Whites, the Blacks, the Jews. In the human scene, however, such mirages can be self-actualizing. The invention of Them creates Us, and We may require to invent Them to reinvent Ourselves. p. 76

Let there be no illusions about the brotherhood of man. My brother, as dear to me as I am to myself, my twin, my double, my flesh and blood, may be a fellow lyncher as well as a fellow martyr, and in either case is liable to meet his death at my hand if he chooses to take a different view of the situation.

The brotherhood of man is evoked by particular men according to their circumstances. But it seldom extends to all men. In the name of our freedom and our brotherhood we are prepared to blow up the other half of mankind, and to be blown up in turn. p. 79

All those people who seek to control the behaviour of large numbers of other people work on the *experiences* of those other people. Once people can be induced to experience a situation in a similar way, they can be expected to behave in similar ways. Induce people all to want the same thing, hate the same things, feel the same threat, then their behaviour is already captive - you have acquired your consumers or your cannon-fodder. Induce a common perception of Negroes as subhuman, or the Whites as vicious and effete, and behaviour can be concerted accordingly. p. 80

There is a race against time. It is just possible that a further transformation is possible if men can come to experience themselves as 'One of Us.' If, even on the basis of the crassest self interest, we can realize that We and Them must be transcended in the totality of the human race, if we in destroying them are not to destroy us all.

As war continues, both sides come more and more to resemble each other. The uroboros eats its own tail. The wheel turns full circle. Shall we realize that We and Them are shadows of each other We are Them to Them as They are Them to Us. When will the veil be lifted? When will the charade turn to Carnival? Saints may still be kissing lepers. It is high time that the leper kissed the saint. p. 83

The Schizophrenic Experience

In using the term schizophrenia, I am not referring to any condition that I suppose to be mental rather than physical, or to an illness, like pneumonia, but to a label that some people pin on other people under certain social circumstances. The 'cause' of 'schizophrenia' is to be found by the examination, not of the prospective diagnosee alone, but of the whole social context in which the psychiatric ceremonial is being conducted.
p. 86

A child born today in the U.K. stands a ten times greater chance of being admitted to a mental hospital than to a university, and about one fifth of mental hospital admissions are diagnosed schizophrenic. This can be taken as an indication that we are driving our children mad more effectively than we are genuinely educating them. Perhaps it is our very way of educating them that is driving them mad.
p. 87

It is only in the last ten years that the immediate interpersonal environment of 'schizophrenics' has come to be studied in its interstices. This work was prompted, in the first place, by psychotherapists who formed the impression that, if their patients were *disturbed*, their families were often *disturbing*. Psychotherapists, however, remained committed by their technique not to study the families directly. At first the focus was mainly on the mothers (who are always the first to get the blame for everything), and a 'schizophrenic' mother was postulated, who was supposed to generate disturbance in her child.

Next, attention was paid to the husbands of these undoubtedly unhappy women, then to the parental and parent-child interactions (rather than to each person in the family separately), then to the nuclear family group of parents and children, and finally to the whole relevant network of people in and around the family, including the grandparents of patients. By the time our own researches started, this methodological breakthrough had been made.
pp. 93-94

In over 100 cases where we [Drs R.D. Laing, David Cooper and Aaron Esterton] have studied the actual circumstances around the social event when one person comes to be regarded as schizophrenic, it seems to us that *without exception* the experience and behaviour that gets labelled schizophrenic is *a special strategy that a person invents in order to live in an unlivable situation*. In his life situation the person has come to feel he is in an untenable position. He cannot make a move, or make no move, without being beset by contradictory and paradoxical pressures and demands, pushes and pulls, both internally, from himself, and externally, from those around him. He is, as it were, in a position of checkmate.

This state of affairs may not be perceived as such by any of the people in it. The man at the bottom of the heap may be being crushed and suffocated to death without anyone

noticing, much less intending it. The situation here described is impossible to see by studying the different people in it singly. The social system, not single individuals extrapolated from it, must be the object of study. p. 95

The untenable position, the 'can't win' double-bind, the situation of checkmate, is by definition *not obvious* to the protagonists. Very seldom is it a question of contrived, deliberate, cynical lies or a ruthless intention to drive someone crazy, although this occurs more commonly than is usually supposed. . . A checkmate position cannot be described in a few words. The whole situation has to be grasped before it can be seen that no move is possible, and making no move is equally unlivable. p. 96

Gregory Bateson , in a brilliant introduction to a nineteenth-century autobiographical account of schizophrenia, has said this:

It would appear that once precipitated into psychosis the patient has a course to run. He is, as it were, embarked upon a voyage of discovery which is only completed by his return to the normal world, to which he comes back with insights different from those of the inhabitants who never embarked on such a voyage. Once begun, a schizophrenic episode would appear to have as definite a course as an initiation ceremony - a death and rebirth - into which the novice may have been precipitated by his family life or by adventitious circumstances, but which in its course is largely steered by endogenous process.

In terms of this picture, spontaneous remission is no problem. This is only the final and natural outcome of the total process. What needs to be explained is the failure of many who embark upon this voyage to return from it. *Do these encounter circumstances either in family life or in institutional care so grossly maladaptive that even the richest and best organized hallucinatory experience cannot save them?*

I am in substantial agreement with this view. pp. 97-98

Our society may itself have become biologically dysfunctional, and some forms of schizophrenic alienation from the alienation of society may have a sociobiological function that we have not recognized. p. 99

The process of entering into *the other* world from this world, and returning to *this* world from the other world, is as natural as death and giving birth or being born. But in our present world, that is both so terrified and so unconscious of the other world, it is not surprising that when 'reality,' the fabric of this world, bursts, and a person enters the other world, he is completely lost and terrified, and meets only incomprehension in others.

Some people wittingly, some people unwittingly, enter or are thrown into more or less total inner space and time. We are socially conditioned to regard total immersion in outer space and time as normal and healthy. Immersion in inner space and time tends to be regarded as anti-social withdrawal, a deviancy, invalid, pathological *per se*, in some sense discreditable.

Sometimes, having gone through the looking glass, through the eye of the needle, the territory is recognized as one's lost home, but most people now in inner space and time are, to begin with, in unfamiliar territory and are frightened and confused. They are lost. They have forgotten that they have been there before. They clutch at chimeras. They try to retain their bearings by compounding their confusion, by projection (putting the inner on to the outer), and introjection (importing outer categories into the inner). They do not know what is happening, and no one is likely to enlighten them. . . .

The person who has entered this inner realm (if only he is allowed to experience this) will find himself going, or being conducted - one cannot clearly distinguish active from passive here - on a journey. . . .

In this journey there are many occasions to lose one's way, for confusion, partial failure, even final shipwreck: many terrors, spirits, demons to be encountered, that may or may not be overcome. . . .

We are so out of touch with this realm that many people can now argue seriously that it does not exist. It is very small wonder that it is perilous indeed to explore such a lost realm. pp. 103-105

If the human race survives, future men will, I suspect, look back on our enlightened epoch as a veritable age of Darkness. They will presumably be able to savour the irony of this situation with more amusement than we can extract from it. The laugh's on us. They will see that what we call 'schizophrenia' was one of the forms in which, often through quite ordinary people, the light began to break through the cracks in our all-too-closed minds. p. 107

Transcendental Experience

If we can begin to understand sanity and madness in existential social terms, we shall be more able to see clearly the extent to which we all confront common problems and share common dilemmas.

Experience may be judged to be invalidly mad or to be validly mystical. The distinction is not easy. In either case, from a social point of view, such judgements characterize different forms of behaviour, regarded in our society as deviant. People behave in such ways because their experience of themselves is different. It is on the existential meaning of such unusual experience that I wish to focus. pp. 108-109

No one who has not experienced how insubstantial the pageant of external reality can be, how it may fade, can fully realize the sublime and grotesque presences that can replace it, or that can exist alongside it. p. 109

We experience in different modes. We perceive external realities, we dream, imagine, have semi-conscious reveries. Some people have visions, hallucinations, experience faces transfigured, see auras, and so on. Most people most of the time experience themselves and others in one or other way that I shall call *egoic*. That is, centrally or peripherally, they experience the world and themselves in terms of a consistent identity, a me-here over against a you-there, within a framework of certain ground structures of space and time, shared with other members of their society.

This identity-anchored, space-and-time-bound experience has been studied philosophically by Kant, and Ponty. Its historical and ontological relativity should be fully realized by any contemporary student of the human scene. Its cultural, socio-economic relativity has become a commonplace among anthropologists and a platitude to the Marxists and neo-Marxists. And yet, with the consensual and interpersonal confirmation it offers, it gives us a sense of ontological security, whose validity we *experience* as self-validating, although metaphysically-historically-ontologically-socio-economically-culturally we know its apparent absolute validity as an illusion.

In fact all religious and all existential philosophies have agreed that such *egoic experience* is a preliminary illusion, a veil, a film of *maya* - a dream to Heraclitus, and to Lao Tzu, the fundamental illusion of all Buddhism, a state of sleep, of death, of socially accepted madness, a womb state to which one has to die, from which one has to be born.
pp. 112-113

The light that illumines the madman is an unearthly light. It is not always a distorted refraction of his mundane life situation. He may be irradiated by light from other worlds. It may burn him out.

This 'other' world is not essentially a battlefield wherein psychological forces, derived or diverted, displaced or sublimated from their original object-cathexes are engaged in an illusionary fight - although such forces may obscure these realities, just as they may obscure so-called external realities.
p. 114

Our time has been distinguished, more than by anything else, by a drive to control the external world, and by an almost total forgetfulness of the internal world. If one estimates human evolution from the point of view of knowledge of the external world, then we are in many respects progressing.

If our estimate is from the point of view of the internal world, and of oneness of internal and external, then the judgement must be very different.

Phenomenologically the terms 'internal' and 'external' have little validity. But in this whole realm one is reduced to verbal expedients - words are simply the finger pointing to the moon. One of the difficulties of talking in the present day of these matters is that the very existence of inner realities is now called in question.
p. 115

Sanity today appears to rest very largely on a capacity to adapt to the external world - the interpersonal world, and the realm of human collectivities.

As this external human world is almost completely and totally estranged from the inner, any personal direct awareness of the inner world has already grave risks.

But since society, without knowing it, is *starving* for the inner, the demands on people to evoke its presence in a 'safe' way, in a way that need not be taken seriously, etc., is tremendous - while the ambivalence is equally intense. Small wonder that the list of artists, in say the last 150 years, who have become shipwrecked on these reefs is so long - Holderlin, John Clare, Rimbaud, Van Gogh, Nietzsche, Antonin Artaud. . . .

Those who survived have had exceptional qualities - a capacity for secrecy, slyness, cunning - a thoroughly realistic appraisal of the risks they run, not only from the spiritual realms that they frequent, but from the hatred of their fellows for anyone engaged in this pursuit.

p. 116

True sanity entails in one way or another the dissolution of the normal ego, that false self competently adjusted to our alienated social reality: the emergence of the 'inner' archetypal mediators of divine power, and through this death a rebirth, and the eventual re-establishment of a new kind of ego-functioning, the ego now being the servant of the divine, no longer its betrayer.

p. 119