

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

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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.

FOREWORD

“Whenever I can, before starting my workday, I like to spend some quiet time mulling over my leftover thoughts and dreams from the preceding day and evening.”

It is thus that the author, a practicing Jungian analyst, introduces himself to his readers, and we immediately trust this man who assures us right from the start that he himself is in the habit of reflecting on his life, keeping track of himself as he goes along, and assimilating his “leftovers” before they pile up around him and block the emerging view of his inner blueprint.

This book is about learning to hear and interpret the nudging and out-and-out messages of that inner blueprint, which Dr. Harris defines as the “pattern of creation longing to be fulfilled within each of us.”

The more faithful we are in working to discern this personal pattern of ours (the Jungians have named this work the individuation process), the less buffeted by fate, or life’s Pattern-at-Large, we will be. That doesn’t mean our awareness can buy immunity from the cataclysms and heartbreaks the Wheel of Fortune has in store for every one of us at some time or other. The message of *Living the Answers* is that the more conscious we become of the personal pattern, the better able we will be to *live* the answers to life’s questions rather than just suffering through them and learning nothing from or about them. (The author provides some daunting examples of illnesses or disasters in the lives of patients that paradoxically became opportunities for growth because they were *taken to heart*.)

Dr. Harris has given his book the accessible and satisfying format of a psychological Book of Hours, dividing the stages of our lives into periods we can easily recognize. (Let me hasten to add that this is no chopped-up, pop-psych type of scheme, in which the person checks off each “passage” and moves on to the next level. Harris repeatedly stresses how we are embedded in *all* our previous Hours and must go back and visit them continually throughout our allotted Day.)

With the dawn of childhood comes our search for identity, the time in which we begin developing the *form* our personality will take. In this form dwell particular imprints, pains, that can never be quite dissolved as long as we have our own form. Later, if we become one of those people who keeps track, we will have to find ways to understand and assimilate those early fixations and sorrows and relate them to our present lives.

Then comes the passage into adulthood, the era in which we are building our public

persona, “focusing,” choosing the specialization that will earn us a useful role in the human community. This means, sometimes regrettably, shedding other desires and talents or stashing them away in a closet. But we can’t do everything at once. Later we will have to go back and open the closet and see what creatures those unlived, unfinished aspects of ourselves have grown into. We will be wise to take them out and dust them off and get to know them before they turn mean and destructive. Here the author reassures us with Dr. Jung’s consolation that even if we have done the wrong thing in our early lives in pursuit of conventional goals, the “common gold,” we will eventually get to the right place if we maintain our self-awareness and stay open to change. Sometimes we will be obliged to retrace in order to find our lost future.

In the chapter titled “Encountering Life,” we are heading into the afternoon of life. Seeing through things begins at noontime, when the sun is directly overhead. More complexities and ambivalences are spotted in our landscapes. We find ourselves reexamining old conventions, obligations, responsibilities. Do we want to keep this? Is this still true for us? Shouldn’t we get rid of this now? Often we have to double back on ourselves and reestablish our bearings. Dr. Harris tells the story of a man whose marriage is poisoning him, but who becomes physically sick when he considers divorce. Why? Is there something in his landscape that needs to be reexamined here in the sharp noonday light? In our noon hour we begin to experience the complexity of being who we are and yet of never being the same again.

Then midlife is upon us and, just as at an actual midday, the shadows have shifted. The light of consciousness is also shifting. Though we are still caught up in striving to fulfill our form, to “make our mark,” we begin to feel the urgent *rightness* of letting go our obsession with performance. “Night begins at midday,” Jung once remarked, and if we don’t reorient ourselves and loosen up for the second half of life, nature may intervene and do it for us, assaulting our rigid form through depression, obesity, panic attacks, chronic fatigue syndrome, or some other modern malady that baffles medical science.

A crucial part of our midlife experience, says Dr. Harris, consists in passing back and forth from yesterday’s standpoint to today’s. “Our dreams may begin forewarning us that the house we are living in is in fact an apartment or a dormitory.” Or the dreaming self may resort to more dramatic midnight images to force us to look hard at our midday location: like the successful, driven woman who dreamed she was trapped in her silver BMW with a company of vampires.

After midlife, we meet the gift of life in all its ambivalent heat. This is a time, says Harris, when we find ourselves *emotionally crucified* more often, even as life is

becoming less painful in the old neurotic ways. Paradoxes abound in this new clarity. We must construct sacred spaces to protect ourselves. We may learn to recognize the tonic benefits of justified anger. The author gives some striking examples: the doctor who has difficulty treating a man who is known to have been cruel to others. Another man who cannot forgive his father for killing himself with a shotgun in the presence of his wife and child. (Dr. Harris offers this patient an unorthodox remedy which, shocking in itself, turns out to be just the right thing.)

Many people seek Jungian analysis because they *want their difficulties to be valued*, Harris tells us. After they realize there are no “quick fixes,” they learn, through the dialogues that are an integral part of the Jungian method, to recognize the “inner lesson plan” behind the problems.

At this point the nature of their journey changes from the extended wanderings of an odyssey to the dedicated journey of the pilgrim. A pilgrimage is a journey into spirit. Once we accept that we are on this pilgrimage, we are in fact acknowledging, as St. John implied in the fourth Gospel, and Dante illustrated in *The Divine Comedy*, that our eternal life has its beginning in this life.

It is during our late afternoon “Journey to the Center” that we are faced with a remarkable reversal. “Slowly we realize,” Harris tells us, “that we are struggling for a greater and more comprehensive version of ourselves for which we have no blueprint. The deeper we seek, though we do not fully understand what we are seeking or even why, the more we begin to realize that *something has found us*.”

Once we reach the book’s chapters on pilgrimage, we learn that time becomes two-fold. As each of us moves toward her or his individual night in *Chronos*, or historical time, we also move within the realm of *Kairos*, God’s time, the eternal aspect of evolutionary time, here and beyond. Now (and Dr. Harris illuminates important aspects of it in his final chapter, “Journey to the East”) begins a totally new kind of comprehension required of us by our Inner Teacher, who has at last found us.

Having become proficient at knowing life through our minds, we must now learn to know it with our hearts.

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