

CONFERENCE OF THE ANTHROPOSOPHICAL  
SOCIETY IN NEW ZEALAND

## In this Time of Chaos Inner Challenges of Modern Life

Michael Park Rudolf Steiner School, 55 Amy Street,  
Ellerslie, Auckland. 22–25 July 2011

MANY PEOPLE HAVE A SENSE that our times are becoming increasingly chaotic. A feeling that inner thresholds are being approached and crossed. This could be because of an outer event in one's life. The Christchurch Earthquakes are a very current example of that. The trauma which many have experienced there in addition to the physical damage which has occurred show what can happen. Or, it could be simply through the evolution of one's own inner life which, unprepared, can take very difficult forms such as depression, addiction or anxiety. Even where less extreme, few today are untouched. We want to understand and work with these phenomena in the conference.

We have three speakers presenting the mornings' talks. Each is in a profession which works with these phenomena from different but complementary points of view. We hope that this will build a rich picture of what we face with these inner challenges and how we can address them.

**Dr René de Monchy** was an anthroposophical general practitioner and school doctor in Hawke's Bay and then Wellington for about 20 years before working in a rural mission hospital in Africa for four years. He has since specialised in psychiatry as part of an interest in trauma/crisis and illness, physical and emotional, in human biography both individually and communally.

**Dr David Ritchie** works as a general practitioner at Helios Integrative Medical Centre in Christchurch which he co-founded. He has worked in anthroposophical medicine for the last 30 years and has a strong interest in the relationship between soul constitutional states and how illness manifests. He lectures widely on anthroposophical medicine and child development.

**Lisa Devine**, after training as a eurythmist, has worked as a priest in the Christian Community for the last ten years and is based in Australia. She is a chaplain in two Rudolf Steiner schools where she works with youth. She is inspired by working with biographies and relationship journeys. Her current passion is restorative circles.

### Being Human, Here and Now

**René de Monchy**

HOW DO I, INDIVIDUALLY, and how do we, as wider society, cope and find a balance in this world? Unexpectedness, fear and chaos seem to try and reach me from the outside, especially via the instantaneous and chaotically switching communications of the penetrating media. What does that invoke within me, my inner world, and how do I – how do we – react?

I am in this world, it is part of me and I am part of it, as also I am a spiritual being and part of the spiritual world; the tension of human existence. How do I hold on to that, especially when I am not able to keep my balance inwardly and/or outwardly which may result in the one-sidedness of illness, despair or a complete withdrawal from the world. How do I balance that tension?

In my practice as a doctor and psychiatrist I am (daily) confronted with the extremes of un-balance with experiences of being completely "out of oneself" or complete "absorption into oneself" as one-sided defence mechanisms. What is then the essence of "being human" enabling us to live with this tension and to actually grow in awareness, gratitude and service?

### From Normal to Healthy: facing the inner challenge of anxiety

**David Ritchie**

ANXIETY HAS BECOME a major epidemic in our time. My talk will look at how anxiety manifests in a variety of very "normal" people. I will ask, what is our soul life and how can we find a connection to this from our spirit?

Deeper issues lying behind this epidemic will be explored especially the phenomenon of crossing the threshold in this age that Rudolf Steiner described.

### "I am not I..." the everyday tragedy and triumph of the human I

**Lisa Devine**

THE GREATEST STORY ON EARTH is buried under the cold protocols and self loathing of our time. We are not unwelcome guests on this troubled earth but the unlikely heroes and heroines in a mystery drama of cosmic proportions. We can gather the courage and inner certainty to set a true course through the inner storms of our lives and dare to risk our becoming to the heart's intuitive knowing. May we hear, in the words of the poet David Whyte, "the heart after years of secret conversing speaking out loud in the clear air."

### Morning working groups

FOLLOWING EACH TALK, the second half of the morning will be taken up by groups working on the theme presented in both an artistic and a conversational way assisted by artists and facilitators. We hope that this will deepen the content which has been brought and build an understanding and sense for the theme across the three days.

### Afternoon initiative spaces

THE TWO-HOUR PERIOD immediately after lunch on the first and second day will be an open space for your initiative, whatever that might be, or for you to join with the initiative of others.

This could be the time for a section meeting. It could be that you have something new you want to do and would like to discuss it with people. It could be that you want to bring something artistic for others to share. It could be that a group of you arrange in advance to meet in this time. It might be that you want to talk about some aspect of the Society – the recent AGM in Dornach for example. Or you might want to continue to discuss the conference's theme. It can take the session on one of the days or run for both. This is all entirely up to you. A conference is a time to confer which happens, of course, in the breaks in between in ones and twos, but this is a time where you might want to take something deeper or approach it in a more organised way.

If you have any questions, contact Sue Simpson at [sue.simpson0@gmail.com](mailto:sue.simpson0@gmail.com)