

**Seeds for Renewal:  
The Camphill Village Conferences**

*by Karl Konig*

*Edited by Wanda Root*

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In 1962, 1963 and 1964 Dr. Karl Konig gave three lectures each year during the Camphill Village conferences in Scotland, which centred around the question 'What is the human being?' The content of these lectures progressed as the years passed to provide leading images for participating co-workers to take back to their communities in order to work further on them with others. This in turn established thought content in the communities which could serve as a light for those in their care with special needs.

The three main parts of this long overdue second edition are organised according to the three years in which the lectures were given. Each part contains the lecture by Konig followed by the discussion among participants based on that lecture. The discussions are given verbatim and are now included in this second edition for the first time. Konig's research is based fundamentally on the insights that Rudolf Steiner provided through his work with anthroposophy (meaning 'wisdom of the human being'). Where Steiner has provided wisdom, Konig brings this wisdom down to earth in heart-filled understanding through experience with, and observation of, his fellow human beings, bringing it down into the sphere of activity. His lectures have their roots in the soil of humanity, you and me, and as such are easily accessible. I found them inspiring, containing advice that can be lived with, discussed and practised immediately. Whilst Steiner's language is rich in spiritual content, it can sometimes be hard to grasp, obscured by the linguistics of his day and being in German requires a sensitive translation. With Konig I felt I was listening to a contemporary, speaking a language that can be understood by all, although it must be said that the reader would be helped by a basic grasp of fundamental anthroposophical ideas and principles in order to follow his thought progression. The discussions that follow the lectures are a help in that respect, as it allows the reader to review the concepts once more, from different angles, highlighting specific issues.

Konig's insights in human development ought to be essential reading for all those working in education, healthcare and care, whether special needs or other, such as raising a family. He deserves to be read much more widely outside the Camphill movement. It seems extraordinary that these lectures have not been more widely available. They were first published 25 years after they were given and, prior to this second edition, they had been out of print for 12 years (which means they were out of sight and therefore out of mind for a whole generation and more).

The first part offers profound insights into the changes and processes undergone during puberty. Konig describes these in terms of masks and images of humanity; the former hide the true individual, the latter mature adults carry inwardly to guide young people in their care (bearing in mind that Konig originally gave these lectures in the context of the care that the Camphill Villages afford to people with special needs). They provide consciously created images, like leading spiritual lights, so the youngsters don't disappear behind or identify too much with these masks. The lectures then carry on deepening this journey of maturation and how the masks live with us. Konig points out that the adult villagers are especially vulnerable to carrying fixed masks, being less flexible to change and adapt according to their situation. Examples of literature and drama are touched upon in the description of character and personalities as a means of understanding human nature, as are figures and images of mythology. Differences in male and female constitutions are also discussed.

In the second part of the book, the concept of the masks is then expanded to include ornamentation and clothing as expressions of the soul in establishing identity. Konig delves into ethnology and the use primitive people make of these soul expressions. Thinking, feeling and willing and their manifestation in male and female are explored.

In the third part, he discusses karma and reincarnation, and the importance of telling karmic stories as the new fairy tales of our time. The relationship between learning and working and the balance between them is explored. The development of a special organ of perception is discussed which enables us to look through the false identity we have of ourselves towards the spiritual truth. Steiner's fundamental ideas of a threefold social order is the culmination of these lectures and Konig emphasizes the importance of living life in Camphill according to these principles, for the future of all humanity, as the seed for social renewal.

Konig's main concern in the explicit detailing of these concepts is to generate a feeling of wonder in us towards all people we meet. He encourages people to accept the facts in the person as they present themselves, not to judge them.

The book is provided with a foreword by Christopher Bamford offering a rich summary of Konig's life and the universally human content of these lectures. Bamford indicates 'self help' possibilities and underlines the importance of Konig's on equal footing with Steiner's. This is followed by a preface by Nicholas Pooler who focuses more specifically on the impact these lectures had, and can have, on those living with special needs in Camphill communities

This is the fifth book to be published in an initiative to edit, update and publish all the work that Konig

produced. A reworking of the language and text was necessary, however. The editors increased the accessibility of the meaning with the help of Michael Schmundt, who was present at the lectures. They added material like colour prints, appendixes, endnotes and footnotes. I applaud the efforts of the people behind the Karl Konig Archive to make his work available in print. It is a tremendous task, not only because of the volume of material but also because of its importance. Serious, yet very accessible; a work not just for Camphill.

*Anna Phillips*