



# Ways of the Heart

ROBERT D. ROMANYSHYN is a senior faculty member at Pacifica Graduate Institute in the USA, and founder of its doctoral programme in Depth Psychology. In this collection of essays, he draws upon philosophy, history, literature, art and poetry to reanimate psychology and allow it to reflect on how soul can live and thrive in the contemporary world. Just as dream is the royal road to the soul, Romanyshyn proposes reverie as the royal road to the soul of the world. Reverie is a mode of consciousness completely different from fantasy. Whereas fantasy has ego in its centre, reverie allows us communion with the depth of our existence, the existence of the world, and the otherworldly (such as gods, spirits, angels, the dead) – all at once. Yet this is not a book about psychotherapy: rather it describes a therapeutic way of living. It explores the imaginal world and invites the reader to do so too.

Odd as it may seem, technology can help us rediscover soul in the modern world. Romanyshyn demonstrates this in essays on television and virtual

reality. The experience of television (the television body) is an image consciousness (rather than verbocentric and literate consciousness, both still dominant aspects of Western culture). For the television body, knowing is emotional, participatory and sensuous, rather than rational, detached and logical. Waking and dreaming can blur each other. Although this position may not be without its problems, the author affirms that television consciousness helps us to reconnect with the imaginal world, and that our situation is not helped by confining television to the task of amusement. Similarly, virtual reality, although reinforcing the Cartesian separation of body/dream and mind/reason, is helping to reintroduce the body of the dream, as the user participates in an imaginal, virtual world. However, Romanyshyn does raise questions about the consequences – to be a presence without substance is to be without humanity, and if participation in electronic communities occurs at the expense of interaction in organic communities (ie in communal space) we risk losing our sense of home.

# rt *Essays Toward An Imaginal Psychology*

*Ways of the Heart* is steeped in phenomenology. The author sees Jung as at times a radical phenomenologist. One instance of this lies in Jung's work with alchemy – a way of knowing through intimacy and relation rather than through separation and distance. A radical phenomenology *"is devoted to those subtle bodies which are neither facts nor ideas... a work of the heart which is neither that of mind nor eye, a poetics of the soul's landscape where a mind feels its way into those imaginal presences who always haunt the margins of the sensible world"*.

As a practising poet myself, I found the author's reflections on poetry very enriching. Poetry corresponds with reverie, in that one is a witness to what has been lost, forgotten, left behind, or otherwise marginalised and neglected. One of my poems, pertinent in this respect, concerns my present fascination with the display homes that I visited when I was very young, and the visions I then had in them of a possible future life. Indeed, the imaginal world is poetry itself. Romanyshyn draws many correspondences involving

poet, phenomenologist and depth psychologist. For all three, what appears, matters first before one asks what it might mean. The author encourages a state of being coined by Keats – *"negative capability"*, in which one is *"capable of being in uncertainties, mysteries, doubts, without any irritable reaching after fact and reason."* In other words, having the patience to linger in the moment and wait for the presence in the present to appear.

*"The capacity to dream with the world"* forms the heart of what the author is trying to reawaken in this book. He outlines some of the developments in Western culture that have militated against this capacity, such as the fifteenth century invention of linear perspective in art. This has influenced us to become distant spectators of the world. The appeal of this work is enriched by extracts from poets such as Rilke, Blake, Keats and Tagore – each helping *"to redress the imbalance which exists in favour of the empirical over the aesthetic."*