



### M. Scott Peck (1936 - 2005)

Educated at Harvard and Case Western Reserve, Dr. M. Scott Peck has served in administrative posts in the government during his career as a psychotherapist. He was Medical Director of the New Milford Hospital Mental Health Clinic and a psychiatrist in private practice.

<http://www.mscottpeck.com/index.html>

## Acceptance of Responsibility

We cannot solve life's problems except by solving them.

...we must accept responsibility for a problem before we can solve it. We cannot solve a problem by saying 'It's not my problem'. We cannot solve a problem by hoping that someone else will solve it for us. I can solve a problem only when I say 'This is my problem and it's up to me to solve it'. But many, so many, seek to avoid the pain of their problems by saying to themselves; 'This problem was caused me by other people, or by social circumstances beyond my control, and therefore it is up to other people or society to solve this problem for me. It is not really my personal problem'.

Most people who come to see a psychiatrist are suffering from what is called either a neurosis or a character disorder. Put most simply, these two conditions are disorders of responsibility, and as such they are opposite styles of relating to the world and its problems. The neurotic assumes too much responsibility; the person with a character disorder not enough. When neurotics are in conflict with the world they automatically assume that they are at fault. When those with character disorders are in conflict with the world they automatically assume that the world is at fault.

Few of us can escape being neurotic or character disordered to at least some degree. The reason for this is that the problem of distinguishing what we are and what we are not responsible for in this life is one of the greatest problems of human existence. It is never completely solved; for the entirety of our lives we must continually assess and reassess where our responsibilities lie in the everchanging course of events... To perform either process adequately we must possess the willingness and the capacity to suffer continual self-examination...

Whenever we seek to avoid the responsibility for our own behaviour, we do so by attempting to give that responsibility to some other individual or organisation or entity. But this means we then give away our power to that entity, be it 'fate' or 'society' or the government or the corporation or our boss. It is for this reason that Erich Fromm so aptly titled his study of Nazism and authoritarianism *Escape from Freedom*. In attempting to avoid the pain of responsibility, millions and even billions daily attempt to escape from freedom...

...Frequently our choices lie between the lesser of two evils, but it is still within our power to make these choices.... We have the freedom to choose every step of the way the manner in which we are going to respond to and deal with ..

excerpt from: M Scott Peck (1978) The Road Less Traveled.

