UNDERSTANDING

AND

APPLYING

The Fourfold Approach to the Human Being
Table of Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>General Introduction</td>
<td>Annelies Brüll</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Part 1

I The Four Physical Elements of the Fourfold Human Being Nick Blitz 5
1. Introduction
2. The solid element
3. The fluid element
4. The gaseous element
5. The warmth element
6. Possible Points of Observation 11
7. Sources
8. Bibliography 12

II The Etheric Body Annelies Brüll 13
1. The Concept of the Etheric Body 14
1.1. The Etheric body as the Body of Formative Forces 15
1.2. The Etheric body as the Life Body
1.2.1. Breathing (Taking-in)
1.2.2. Warming (Adapting)
1.2.3. Nourishing (Breaking down)
1.2.4. Secreting (Sorting)
1.2.5. Sustaining (Maintaining)
1.2.6. Growing
1.2.7. Reproducing (Bringing into being)
1.2.8. Wider Application of the life processes
1.3. The Etheric body as the Habit Body 18
1.4. The Etheric body as the Thought Body 19
1.5. The Etheric body as the Time Body 20

2. The Interrelationship of the Four ‘Bodies’ with Special Reference to the Etheric Body 20
2.1. The Birth of the Etheric Body 21
2.2. The Etheric Body in Sleep and Death. 22

3. Possible Points of Observation 23
3.1. Explanation of Physical Aspects: watery-growthsleeping 24
3.2. Explanation of Non-Physical Aspects 24
3.2.1. Memory
3.2.2. Habit Forming
3.2.3. Rhythm
3.2.4. Resilience
Part II: The Individualising Processes of Four-fold Integration

The Individualising Processes of Four-fold Integration: John Ralph

1. **Introduction** ........................................................................................................... 65
2. **The Progressive Development of Individual Human Capacities** ......................... 66
   2.1. The Individualising Process .............................................................................. 66
   2.2. Boundaries and Interpenetration .................................................................... 69
   2.3. The Guiding Forces of Individual Development ............................................. 72
3. **Significant Indicators of Developmental Integration** ........................................ 75
   3.1. Physical and Etheric Configuration ................................................................. 75
   3.2. Etheric and Sentient Configuration ................................................................ 77
   3.3. Sentient Configuration and I-being ............................................................... 80
   3.4. The I-being and the Environment .................................................................. 81
   3.5. Development in Early Adulthood .................................................................... 84
   3.6. Development in Old Age ............................................................................... 85
4. **The Integration of Self** ........................................................................................ 86
   4.1. A Sense of Self, Identity and Trauma .............................................................. 86
   4.2. The Development of Memory ......................................................................... 88
   4.3. Traumatic Memories ..................................................................................... 90
   4.4. Resilience and Moral Development ............................................................... 91
   4.5. Early Sensory and Motor Development ......................................................... 96
5. **Making a Difference** .......................................................................................... 99
   5.1. The Pedagogical Law and Self-Development ............................................... 99
   5.2. Individual Integration: a Path to Social Integration ....................................... 100
   5.3. Sustainable growth for all, or sustainable development of all? .................... 101
6. **Points of Observation** ....................................................................................... 103
7. **Bibliography** ....................................................................................................... 104
Introduction

One of the key approaches to assessing individuals in Social Pedagogy and Curative Education is based on the understanding of the fourfold nature of the human being, as presented by Steiner. This approach has proved a valuable tool for engaging in finely tuned, phenomenological observation, inspiring carers, teachers, pedagogues, therapists and doctors to find individual responses to the constitutional situation of individuals.

The purpose of this collection of articles is to support students and interested readers in understanding and applying the fourfold approach to the human being and also to act as a guide for finding literature for further study. One hurdle for those studying the fourfold approach is the inconsistent use of terminology. The available literature uses a great variety of terms - partly because Steiner himself used different terms. The confusion is often aggravated in translations and can prove to be an obstacle for students and interested readers.

The authors have attempted a process of collecting and ordering what Steiner and other authors have said on the subject of the fourfold approach to the human being.

The book consists of two parts, preceded by a brief basic outline of the fourfold approach. In Part One different authors give detailed descriptions of the four different principles, how to recognise them, pointing out changes in their function during the course of development. Part Two takes up the developmental aspect and describes the changing integration of the four fold organism in the normal course of life and when development is impaired. One could liken the first part to learning the notes on the piano, the second part to playing tunes, sometimes quite complex.

Most contributors of this publication have intentionally used many quotations in order to encourage students and other readers to extend their understanding by further reading.

Aberdeen, 2012
A Basic Sketch
The Fourfold Approach towards an Understanding of the Human Being

One way of acquainting oneself with this fourfold approach is to start observing the 4 elements: solid, fluid, gaseous and warmth in the human body and then lead on from there. Each element is the basis, the tool for a specific organisation. As the elements interpenetrate each other, so do the organisations anchored in these elements, which in literature are usually called: physical body, etheric or life body, soul or sentient field and ego organisation.

solid substances $\rightarrow$ physical body
fluid substances $\rightarrow$ etheric or life body
air or gaseous substances $\rightarrow$ astral, soul or sentient body
warmth $\rightarrow$ Ego or ‘I’ organisation

a) The Physical Body
We can observe the human body, its shape and texture. The most solid parts are the bones and the teeth; cartilage and muscles are softer; the smooth skin and hair are finest. All this we can observe with our senses. We can recognise the human body as a closed solid system. (See chapter I: The Four Physical Elements by N. Blitz)

Camps et al (2009: 19)

*The physical body: this concept refers to what can be perceived by the senses, what can be weighed and measured.*

Steiner (1994: 28)

*Through the mineral mode of existence we are related to everything visible.*

b) The Etheric Body
In the human body we also observe fluid substances which are excreted: saliva, sweat, urine. Other fluids form closed circulatory systems and are not usually excreted. We find a dynamic, fluid system, (biological processes), which gives life to the body, and provides the physical foundation for the organisation usually referred to as life body or etheric body.

(See chapter II: The Etheric Body by A. Brüll)

c) The Astral or Sentient Body
The third element we can observe is the moving, gaseous substances. e.g. oxygen in breathing, or the gaseous substances in body cavities such as the sinuses and stomach. The organisation based on this element is called the astral body or soul body or sentient body. (See chapter IV: The Astral or Sentient Body by A. Brüll)

d) **The Ego-Organisation or I-Organisation**

The fourth element permeating the human body is warmth, differentiated throughout the body, (e.g. on the skin or in the different organs). This warmth organism is the physical tool for the 'I', often referred to as ego-organisation. (See chapter V: The “Ego and I” by A. Monteux)

Camps et al (2009: 23) give the following synopsis:

- *Because human beings have an “I”*
- *We have individuality*
- *We have a consciousness of ourselves*
- *We have a wakeful consciousness*
- *We carry responsibilities*
- *We can distinguish between thoughts and can choose to develop them further.*

Another way of understanding the fourfold approach is to consider the four kingdoms of nature: mineral – plant – animal – human.

In curative education we hold the view that each human being is a spiritual, unique entity, incarnated in a physical body. Hence the connection between the spirit and matter has to be looked into. Steiner’s four-fold perception of the human being provides a dynamic process to consider this. Bos & v.d. Bie in Bie, G. v.d. and Huber, M. (2003) consider this question. Looking at a stone it is hard to imagine how spirit can manifest in “dead matter”. The authors discuss then that:

- The first requisite is a metamorphosis of matter into dynamic substance, which we find in living nature.
- Plants show this living dynamic – but they have not yet consciousness.
- Ibid. pg. 212

It is only in the animal kingdom that we find slowly evolving forms of consciousness. Yet animals cannot be held responsible for their deeds. They can respond. Through conditioning they have the ability-to-respond, but not yet respons-ability, as this requires self-consciousness. Self-consciousness is a characteristic of human beings.

- Only human organisms meet the requirements which enable them to make a connection with the spirit: They are both material, alive and conscious --- and self-aware.
- Ibid. pg. 213
- In our faculty of self-awareness we can surmise the manifestation of the spirit.
- Ibid. pg. 212.

Already Hippocrates mentioned four qualities: matter – aliveness – consciousness – and self-consciousness and linked them to the four structures or bodies. Of these ‘four bodies’ only the material body can be seen, touched and measured directly. The other three are invisible as such and can only be observed in their physical manifestation.

Steiner, R. (1981: 53) states in The Being of Man and his Future Evolution
.....You know.... That man can only be understood when we know he has a fourfold structure of physical body, etheric body, astral body and ego. These four members of man's being are connected with and dependent on one another in the most manifold ways. Each member influences the other, and therefore they are in constant connection one with another.
Note: See Part II, J. Ralph

This interrelatedness and integration makes the fourfold assessment at the same time complex and rewarding. The specific interrelationships and integration of these four structures allow the social pedagogue to avoid superficial typology and to engage in seeing each person as a uniquely composed individual.

Bibliography

Chapter I

The Four Physical Elements of the Fourfold Human Being.  

Nick Blitz

See thou, my eye,  
The Sun’s pure rays  
In crystal forms of Earth.

See thou, my heart,  
The Sun’s spirit power  
In Water’s surging waves.

See thou, my soul,  
The Sun’s cosmic will  
In quivering gleam of Air.

See thou, my spirit,  
The Sun’s indwelling God  
In Fire’s abounding love.

Rudolf Steiner. Notebook Autumn 1924

1. Introduction.

This verse by Rudolf Steiner brings to expression in a beautifully meditative manner the four foldness of human existence and that of the universe. He has described on many different occasions, the richness and complexity of the fourfold human being from differing, but interrelated, aspects.

From the physical dimension he describes four elements: the solid, the fluid, the gaseous and the warmth elements. He has also referred to four specific forces associated with each of those elements. Thus gravity is the force associated with the solid; he describes buoyancy as being associated with the fluid. He did not, to my knowledge, describe the forces related to gaseousness and warmth; perhaps dispersion and radiation could be considered as possibilities.

From a functional point of view Rudolf Steiner also described four, as they are called meteorological organs: the lungs, heart, liver and kidney.

And beyond the physical body, Steiner described three other ‘bodies’ of the human being: the etheric, or life body, the astral body or soul, and the spirit or ego organisation.

All these dimensions of 4 foldness inter-penetrate and work together in the development and constitution of the human being.

This Chapter focuses on the four physical elements of the physical body and the four forces associated with them.

In relation to these four elements we are not talking about four different chemical elements, like Iron, Sodium, Carbon, etc, nor about different types of substance like metal, stone or plastic etc. What we are describing are four different states of being, or levels of energy. Thus
every physical substance can exist in a solid form at its lowest temperature or state e.g. ice or iron ore. If the energy level of the substance, its temperature, is raised these change to water or molten iron, i.e. the fluid state. If the temperature/energy level is raised further, then you have steam or vapourised metal. And finally even that can be transformed into pure energy or heat, as in an atomic or nuclear reaction. This describes these four states of being in the purely physical, non-living, situation.

It is instructive to briefly describe cosmic evolution in relation to these four elements. From the natural scientific point of view all things began with the so-called “big bang”, an enormous explosion of unimaginable, perhaps infinite heat. With this came expansion and gaseousness. Gradually, through further expansion, and as the temperature decreased, the fluid element condensed and, as the last step, from this molten state solid substance emerged.

This mirrors Rudolf Steiner’s spiritual scientific perspective: he describes Old Saturn and its warmth as the beginning of cosmic evolution followed by the stage of Old Sun which brought with it gaseousness, which in turn was followed by the fluid phase of the Old Moon and then finally the solid earth phase evolved. Thus there was a “descent” from warmth to the solid phase.

Human evolution originated with the all embracing spiritual archetype of the human being and went through a similar fourfold process of cooling and condensing from warmth to solid phases. From there, during earth existence, the solid phase was the first to separate out as the mineral kingdom, and with it perhaps viruses, which are almost crystalline forms with no living forces of their own (they can only multiply within living cells). Following this, the plant kingdom separated out with their fluid, bearing etheric life forces. This was followed by the separation out, and evolution of, the animal kingdom, culminating in air breathing animals, along with the astral/sentient body. And as the final step the human being was able to manifest as the image of the human archetype, possessed of an Ego/I organisation carried in the warmth sphere.

In a living human being, these four elements, the solid, the fluid, the gaseousness and the warmth refer to the four states in which physical substances can exist in the human body, but on a much more subtle level than that described above in the inorganic world.

In the physical body these states merge into each other; there is no clear boundary between them, between solid and fluid, fluid and gaseous, gaseous and warmth and, in addition, they totally interpenetrate each other throughout the physical body. For example our teeth and bones, which are the most solid and mineral parts of the human body, in as much as they are alive, contain fluid such as bone marrow and dental pulp. And the bony structure of the shafts of our bones is not solid but trabecular, containing fluid filled spaces. All our body fluids carry the gaseous element such as oxygen from the lungs to the tissues, and carbon dioxide from the tissues to the lungs; in addition nitrogen and other gases are also dissolved in these body fluids. And finally, the warmth of the living human being penetrates throughout all the body substances.

In terms of embryonic development, think of the ovum, which is like a drop of water, a fluid filled vesicle, in which a small amount of substance is dissolved. The ovum is passive and reflective like the moon; this could be seen as a manifestation of the fluid organisation. In contrast, the sperm is much more dense and is highly motile and active. Perhaps it could be seen as being the first contribution of the solid and warmth elements (energy), and possibly even the gaseous. Thus initially the female aspect, the fluid ovum, can be seen as life-giving and life-sustaining, into which the solid, gaseous and warmth of the sperm penetrates, perhaps carrying with it the archetypal death forces. Throughout embryonic and human development the proportion of solid, fluid, gaseousness and warmth changes significantly,
with the fluid component particularly declining in relation to the solid as part of the process of ageing and sclerosis or hardening. Thus the ovum is probably composed of 99% fluid, the newborn baby around 80% fluid and an older adult around 50% fluid. Life forces are in decline, and with that also comes a decline in temperature and a reduced lung (gaseous) capacity. Finally, following death, the body cools, stiffens and hardens in a process referred to as rigor mortis.

Returning to embryonic development, this is accompanied by a process of increasing mineralisation of parts of the developing embryo. First protein structures are formed, then cartilage and much of this is eventually calcified as bone. At the same time organs are formed with interior spaces such as the heart and blood vessels, lungs and airways, digestive tract and urinary system. Within them fluids and air/gaseousness can circulate.

How do these forms and structures come about in a process known as morphogenesis? This is still a total scientific mystery: the notion that form is encoded in our genes is one of the myths of modern science. There is no scientific explanation how form comes about in living organisms. The human genetic code basically codes for 21 amino acids, the building blocks of proteins, i.e. our genes code for substance, and substance not only enables form but also limits it. A round sphere like the ovum carries within it the potential of evolving into any form one could conceive of. The substances available at every moment of our growth and development both enable and limit what forms can arise through the working of “formative forces”.

Note: See Brüll: The Etheric Body. Section 1.1.5.

As a very simple analogy consider a building site: the architect has designed a house and the builder has ordered all the myriad of necessary materials to construct it, each material to be delivered to the site when it's needed. For some reason there is insufficient concrete or bricks available, so extra glass is delivered instead. Clearly this imbalance in substance available will limit what is structurally possible and the appearance of the house.

Rudolf Steiner, has described how form comes about from a spiritual scientific perspective, and this theme has also been picked up and developed by Karl König (2006) and Thomas Weihs (1986). It is a hugely complex process, dependent on the simultaneous activity of cosmic forces, life forces and physical forces working together in different balances throughout the substance of the living physical body during the course of tissue differentiation, growth, development and ageing.

The four elements of our physical body, the solid, fluid, gaseousness and warmth also exist in our immediate environment of course and in relation to our human four-foldness we are in intimate connection with the four foldness around us. This is particularly true in relation to warmth. This relation becomes less and less apparent as one moves from the gaseous to the fluid and then the solid.

Moreover, the four forces of gravity, buoyancy, dispersion and radiation do not only work within man but also in his immediate environment. Steiner (1998) describes in the course on curative education (Chapters 3 and 4) how one is integrated into the world, and becomes aware and conscious of it, through what he describes as a “magical connection”, whereby in waking, one’s ego organisation “takes hold” of these forces within and out-with the physical body and brings them into harmony or resonance. Conversely, in sleep, this “magical connection” is largely lost as the ego organisation (and astral body) excarnates and with it conscious awareness is lost too.
2. The solid element.

Turning now more specifically to the solid element of the physical body, as expressed in teeth and bones, one can explore the functional morphology of the solid element. A number of functions come to mind: first and foremost, form can only come into existence in the solid state. Think of the different shapes of the various organs: brain, liver, muscles etc, all of which also have highly complex internal structures. The skeleton is obviously a scaffold on which all the other tissues are attached. In addition it is through the skeleton that man can achieve uprightness and movement. Parts of the skeleton also have a protective function e.g. the ribs and particularly the skull. And finally the teeth clearly have a role in mastication.

The fundamental properties of the solid state are, of course, very different from the other three elements. A solid inorganic object, such as a piece of metal or mineral, is rigid and more or less impermeable. It occupies its own space and its position is irrelevant to itself i.e., there is no top or bottom or front or back etc. Solid objects can be disrupted or fragmented through heavy contact, or eroded through wind and water. They are divisible into self-contained pieces and each piece has its own identity. The substances (molecules/atoms) of solids are bound through electromagnetic forces, and the force of gravity attracts/holds solid substances to/onto the earth, as in the process of sedimentation, whereby sediment builds up and gravity tends to level it out and hold it together.

The different forms and shapes of inorganic/non-living solid objects are generally (micro)-crystalline, the shapes of the crystals depending on their chemical composition and the electromagnetic and gravitational forces working on them as they are formed (crystallised). As described above, two types of forces then generally work on them. Fragmentation and disruption brings about countless different shapes and sizes. Erosion through water and air generally rounds them off, leaving pebbles and boulders of different sizes or, on a smaller/micro scale sand and clay. In living organisms, the wonderful variety of forms seen in bones and shells are testimony to the living formative forces.

3. The fluid element.

In relation to the fluid element in humans there are number of different systems: think of the vascular/circulatory system, the lymphatic system, the digestive system, the biliary system, the cerebral spinal fluid and the urinary system. In terms of volume these are not even the most important fluid systems, in that most of the body fluid is located in the intracellular (within cells) and extracellular (between cells) fluid compartments within the tissues. It is in these “micro-environments” that most living processes really take place.

What are the main properties of the fluid element? Most fluids are dense and have weight and mass, not unlike solid elements, although as I mentioned there are no fixed boundaries between the solid and fluid states. Think of the metals mercury and lead, or of some very volatile liquids, where the fluid–gaseous interface is hardly definable. Fluids tend to be planar and have a smooth and horizontal surface which is like a delicate skin with a reflective quality to it. The fluid itself is supportive, it has buoyancy, and things can swim or float in it. Gravity, wind and heat impart movement to fluid which generally has a wavelike quality. Fluid tends to be consistent and homogeneous in its composition.

In relation to fluid processes, fluid is continuous; separate “parcels” of fluid fuse, think of raindrops or droplets of mercury, and the fluid spreads over a solid surface, flowing downhill through the force of gravity. Fluid has a dissolving, transforming and changing power and is essential for chemical, biochemical and physiological reactions to occur. Fluid also has
inherent movement (Brownian movement) and structure as is seen in crystallisation and frost formation.

The element of fluid is formless; it fills the sides and base of a container or riverbed, taking on the inner shape of whatever contains it except for the horizontal flat top surface. Obviously, the situation with fluid flowing over a waterfall, or emerging from a tap, or waves crashing against rocks is different; there the form, if one can call it such is determined by a host of factors, including the velocity of its movement, the surface it flows over, etc.

What is the function of the fluid element in man? In possessing buoyancy it has the capacity to carry other elements throughout the body; even more relevant, however, is its dissolving power. Thus most substances are carried dissolved within the fluids and in that state can undergo transformation, as in (bio)chemical and physiological reactions through the activity of enzymes and hormones. One could describe the fluid element as the transformative and transport system of the body. On a more subtle level the fluid element is the vehicle or carrier of our life forces or etheric body; without fluid there can be no life.

4. The gaseous element.

Some gases have weight and tend to sink to ground level where they spread more like very light fluids. Generally, however, most gases are more or less weightless under normal circumstances. They tend to fill three-dimensional space but in a random, relatively chaotic manner. In a wind free space they diffuse, expand and disperse cohesively but without specific direction. One could say they create space. Gases tend to be in constant motion either as wind in response to different barometric pressures or in a more random fashion, called Brownian motion, as can be observed in the movement of dust particles in sunlight. Many gases are readily dissolved in various fluids, the degree depending on the physical properties of the gas and fluid, as well as the temperature.

The gaseous state is essential for life as the facilitator of respiration, which is intimately related to our warmth organism. Gaseousness mediates between our fluid and warmth organisms in the process of respiration: without the oxygen of respiration there can be no warmth/energy for the transformation of substances and no life.

Finally, the gaseous element of our physical body is the vehicle or carrier of our soul or astral forces; together, they maintain the movement and rhythm of physical and soul processes.

5. The warmth element.

Warmth radiates outwards from its source; it activates processes in different ways depending on the temperature. Warmth mediates movement and transformation; warmth is movement. The warmth of a solid substance is mediated through its inner movement and with each phase, as a substance changes from solid to liquid, to gaseousness and then pure warmth or energy this inner movement increases. All living physiological and biochemical processes require some degree of warmth, and most inorganic processes or reactions are accelerated through warmth. At higher temperatures, however, warmth denatures living substance, then burns and consumes it and ultimately annihilates life.

In a healthy human being the body temperature is fairly constant at around 37°C or 98°F. However, there is a circadian rhythm in which body temperature changes throughout the 24
hours of the day and night, being lowest in the morning on waking and highest late in the evening. This is partly but not only due to the fact that exercise also raises body temperature. However, a person lying relatively immobile in bed shows the same circadian temperature which suggests that the relationship is more to do with the state of consciousness or incarnation of the higher members. Fever of course also raises body temperature, and so too does ovulation. Finally, certain metabolic conditions particularly affecting the thyroid gland also cause an increase or decrease in body temperature. Heat-stroke, that can result in temperatures of 43°C or higher can be lethal.

Warmth is really a threshold phenomenon or state of being between the physical and spiritual domain, where it manifests as the warmth ether, and is intimately linked to our state of ego incarnation as indicated above.
# Possible Points of Observation

## PHYSICAL BODY

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<td></td>
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Any illness or accident whereby significant change came about?

Also look at the physical manifestation of:

- Etheric body  - See Chapter II
- Sentient body  - See Chapter IV
- Ego and I organisation see Chapter V
7. Sources:

In writing this section, I have primarily drawn on my own thinking, reading and experience over many years. However, a bibliography follows. In addition reference can be made to standard texts on Physics, Chemistry, Biochemistry and Physiology where much of the above is contained.

The notes on Gaseousness and particularly Warmth are preliminary only and should be extended through reference to Steiner and others who have built on his work.

8. Bibliography


Chapter II

The Etheric Body

1. The Concept of the Etheric Body

In the introductory sketch on fourfoldness we looked at the ‘place’ the etheric body occupies within the fourfold framework of the human being, situated between the physical body and the sentient body. We can now characterise in more detail various aspects of the etheric body and also describe how its function changes in the course of a child’s development.

Layer, M (2006:8)

*The ether body is a separate and specific system of powers that is not perceptible to the senses. Its effects can however be observed. The watery element enables the ether body to take effect in the organisation; for all the properties of the watery element together make it the ideal vehicle for vital processes.*

The first “effect” that can be observed is that the etheric body is the “bearer of life”. Life exists only where there is water. Hence also the name life-body.

Camps et al (2009: 20)

*The life body functions through the medium of the element of water. It takes hold of the physical body through its liquid (watery) components. All fluids in the human being can be bearers of life.*

For me this manifestation of life is encapsulated in a phenomenon we can observe each spring: a crocus, with its soft, squishy substance pierces through the hard tarmac: growth against all odds.

The great variety of functions and the complexity of the etheric body is the reason that the terminology can vary and confuse the reader.

Some authors have emphasised a particular function of the etheric body, according to their specific perspective, and have therefore used different names that highlight this particular quality or function of the etheric body.

I will enumerate these names and give the briefest explanation, with a view to looking at them in more depth later. Authors use the word etheric body or ether body interchangeably.

1. **Body of formative forces** → points to the task of shaping, forming the physical organs.
2. **Life body** → the ‘body’ that gives life to dead matter.
3. **Habit body/memory body** → memories are ‘stored’ in the etheric body. What we call skills are memorised movement patterns.
4. **Thought body** → points to the relation of thinking to the etheric forces.
5. Time body points to the quality of never being stagnant, but always being involved in processes, metamorphosis – the task of the etheric body changes during biography.

Note: For further discussions on the concept of the etheric see Rawson 2003 and Goldberg 2009

1.1 The Etheric Body as the Body of Formative Forces

Steiner points out that any living organism does not owe its form to the material physical forces, as this form decays at the moment life has abandoned it. It is rather the etheric body which is the true ‘architect’.

Layer, M (2006: 8)

The etheric forces are constructive by nature, configurating and shaping the body. They are considered to be the ‘architect and sculptor’ of the living body …… in conjunction with the other three bodies.

Steiner (1994: 36)

Within an organism there is simply something additional present, something that is not inorganic, namely the formative activity of life whose basis is the ether body or body of formative forces. Recognising the existence of the ether body in no way impinges on the legitimate task of science, which is to trace the effects of forces observed in inorganic nature into the world of living organisms. Spiritual science, however, also finds it justified not to imagine these effects as altered by a particular ‘vital force’ within an organism. A spiritual researcher speaks of an ether body at the point where an organism discloses something that a lifeless object cannot.

In as much as the progression from mineral to plant demonstrates the transition from form imposed from without, to form from within, examples of the plant world are often used to characterise and exemplify discussions on the etheric body. De Bie and Huber for instance explain the working of formative forces in the plants. This approach can be helpful to enhance one’s understanding of the etheric forces.

De Bie and Huber (2003: 214/215)

A first feature of the plants is that they have an individual shape, in contrast to dead nature.

Not only does the etheric body determine the shape, it also maintains this as much as possible. Think of what happens after mowing or pruning. The plants will continue growing as much as possible in the same shape. The plant (the ether body) strives to maintain and preserve form.

The changing task of the formative forces is described in 1.4
1.2. The Etheric Body as the Life Body

Camps et al (2009: 20) define the life-giving quality of the etheric body as follows:

*The life body carries the principle of life in a seven fold way.*

This sevenfold way contains the seven Life Processes as named first by Steiner.

Various authors have partly changed Steiner’s terminology in view of a broader application, particularly including psychological and physiological aspects.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Breathing</td>
<td>Taking in</td>
<td>Breathing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Warming</td>
<td>Adapting</td>
<td>Warming</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nourishing</td>
<td>Breaking down</td>
<td>Nourishing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secreting</td>
<td>Sorting</td>
<td>Distinctive responding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sustaining</td>
<td>Maintaining</td>
<td>Sustaining resilience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Growing</td>
<td>Growing</td>
<td>Developmental growing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Generating / Reproducing</td>
<td>Bringing into being</td>
<td>Generative Creativity</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Secreting/sorting/distinctive responding has a certain middle position, is in a way a transition between the first three and the last three life processes.

1.2.1. Breathing (Taking In)

“Taking in” can refer to oxygen, to food, to sensory impressions.

Breathing uses the polar directions of taking in --- (changing substance) --- giving out.

Schoorel (2004: 85)

*Taking in is the first step in the interaction of the 7 life processes with the substances of the outer world ….. these substances can be material or non-material.*

*Note:* for more physiological details see Schoorel 2004 pages 86-88
1.2.2. Warming (Adapting)

Schoorel (2004: 88)

* I call it adapting to indicate that it is not only a matter of adjusting temperature, but that it is a matter of accommodating and preparing for all kinds of further processing (e.g. chew bread, moisten it, warm it up)*

The general task of this life process is to ‘ward off heat and chill’ coming from without and to enable the body to give off warmth.

1.2.3. Nourishing (Breaking Down)

A complete change of the taken-in substance takes place; this means a destruction that leads to life e.g. the eye destroys the light. Here we become aware of allergies, where substances cannot be broken down. Breaking down needs energy, therefore an ill child needs easily digestible food.

1.2.4. Secreting (Sorting – Distinctive Responding)

Secreting – especially in the digestive process - shows a response to the inward directed activities in order to prepare the outward directed activities.

Schoorel gives this life process therefore a middle position always between an outward and inward directed life process. I quote his table as it might be helpful for some situations.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Directed</th>
<th>3 breaking down</th>
<th>sustaining</th>
<th>5 Directed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>inward</td>
<td>2 adapting</td>
<td>growing</td>
<td>6 outward</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 taking in</td>
<td>bringing into being</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1.2.5. Sustaining (Maintaining – Sustaining Resilience)

This life process has to be seen in conjunction with the concept ‘body of formative forces’ (See 1.1)

Schoorel (2004: 93)

*This process helps the body to recover from fatigue, damage and breakdown – it is an activity that mostly takes place during the night but also needs to happen during daytime.*

The third and fifth life processes (breaking down and sustaining) need to work together to create the necessary energy: the physiological process of assimilation.

The healing of wounds and the replacing of our skin every seven years, belong here.

Note: See also examples by de Bie and Huber 1.1.

Schwartz (1999: 158) too sees the sustaining, maintaining life force interrelated with the quality of the “body of formative forces” (1-1) and also with the “memory body” (3.2.1).
In its capacity as the “body of formative forces”, the etheric body holds the memory of the form of our physical body, so that we retain a recognizable physical identity throughout our life. In spite of aging and the vicissitudes of life, fingerprints and blood types and certain facets of our body chemistry remain the same, a “signature” of the form-creating and form-maintaining activity of the etheric body.

It is important to realise that the activity of sustaining the form has led to the concept that each living being and each organ has its own etheric body.

Husemann/Wolff: (1982: 2)

“Each living being has its own etheric body which has an organising activity and contains the structural plan of that being…..”

de Bie and Huber: (2003: 217) – express it as follows:

We are concerned with a ‘body’ or field which is to be imagined spatially, and which determines the shape of the physical body and its changing forms in the course of time. Spatially, it coincides with the physical body. Hence one can speak of ‘the etheric arm or ‘the etheric liver’.

“Spatially” implies that one should imagine the etheric form like a surround or sheath, similar in shape but not identical.

This signifies that not only do we speak of one etheric body, but that each part/organ of the physical body has its etheric counterpart. This observation that every physical organ has an etheric counterpart is of great importance for therapies. Therapies such as eurythmy therapy, massage and even music or speech, can work directly on a specific part of the etheric body which then in turn can “heal” or enliven the corresponding physical organ.

Example: a student had two fingers of the right hand damaged in military action, bent double; no cure was possible according to the surgeon. Eurythmy therapy, working particularly with the etheric forces of the finger managed to nearly straighten out these fingers.

1.2.6. Growing (Developmental Growing)

There is a fundamental difference between growth in a mineral and growth in beings that have an etheric body. In the mineral, growth is a process of adding-on from outside. In the human being, growth takes place from the inside towards the outside.

It seems that the existing substances (cells) undergo a change or metamorphosis.

After birth the etheric body of the baby is very closely interrelated with the physical body according to Steiner, actively engaged in developing the organs (See 1.1.).

The body is submissive to gravity. When toddlers make their first independent steps one could compare this to the triumphant cry of overcoming gravity. Now the etheric body is “free” to take in, embrace the surrounding. Some authors e.g. Goldberg (2009) use the image of a sponge, absorbing all that comes from the environment: sensory impressions, language, ways of moving, but equally factors such as affection, warmth, order and regularity, rhythm. All these factors influence the growth of a child. The years up to puberty show that growth focuses at different times on different parts of the body: a growth in length (stretching) or in the trunk (filling out). (See Lievegoed 2005: 30/31).
When considering growing, two qualities work together:

1. Metamorphosis from within (see above)
2. Overcoming of gravity.

The anti-gravitational quality of etheric forces is aided by the watery element that facilitates their functioning.


*The physical is subject to gravity. In water, levity cancels this to some extent.*

One could point here to the brain where the weight of the heavy mass of the brain is mostly cancelled out by the fluid it floats in.

Various authors, when referring to the overcoming of gravity, speak about the ‘earthly’ and ‘cosmic’ forces and mostly demonstrate the working of these forces at the hand of plant growth. The earthly forces emanate from one point. The cosmic forces come from the periphery and are directed towards one point. The result of this is a diametrically opposite working gesture.

*Note:* for detailed descriptions see Bie & Huber (2003: 162) and Schoorel (2004: 35-45)

1.2.7. Generating (Bringing into being).

The last of the life processes points in physical bodies first of all to procreation.

To become aware that this life process expresses that something new is coming about, one might consider the difference between development and evolution. The latter demands a “jump” whilst some old elements (structure, form, life) are metamorphosed.

*Note:* For those interested in deepening their understanding, I suggest they read Schoorel: *The First Seven Years* page 84-102 where details of physiological processes are given. The author also suggests that through this life process the changing activities of the etheric forces can be understood when the child is seven years old.

1.2.8. Wider Application of the Seven Life Processes

The primary understanding of the 7 life processes within the individual human being has been extended and applied in different context. V. van Duin (2008) uses them as a guide for Homemakers, in their personal development and becoming aware of actions in daily life. C. van Houten (2003) develops them at the hand of their progressive schooling of the will.

1.3. The Etheric Body as the Habit Body

This name is based on the fact that the etheric body also has the function of storing memories. Not creating memories, but preserving memories until they are called up again. (See also 3.2.2. and 4.1.)

What is a habit? We usually speak about a habit if an action or behaviour is repeatedly carried out without the need for conscious thought about it. Such habits can be skills (eating with spoon, dressing, writing etc.), they can be related to our culture, or they can be individual traits. There is a subtle difference in acquired skills and habitual behaviours in specific situations, differences which are often determined by fashion, culture or belonging to a particular social group.
Boogerd (2009: 132) points to the learning curve presented in the development from the point where an action (e.g. tying shoelaces) requires a conscious effort, to the point where, as a result of constant repetition, it is imprinted as memory and can be performed without thinking about it. The action becomes a movement pattern imprinted into the etheric body.

Here we encounter again a typical characteristic of etheric forces: repetition of more or less the same. As it is a characteristic feature of the etheric forces to be in constant movement and to adapt, it is important that we do not confuse unhealthy fixations with healthy repetition. (See also 1.1.)

Steiner (1996: 55)

*The human ether body … becomes, in a person, the bearer of enduring traits such as… memory…*

### 1.4 The Etheric Body as the Thought Body

For some authors, including Steiner, it seems clear that the etheric body can, in part, also be considered as a Thought Body.

Lindenau in Bockemuehl et al (1985: 199 – 216) in his article "*The dual nature of the human etheric body*" points to two aspects of the etheric forces.

Vital activity

and

Thinking activity

Lindenau refers to the primary function of forming and organising life in shaping the organs of the physical body (See 1.1. the body of formative forces). This activity is prominent during the first seven years of a child’s development. After the shedding of the first teeth those shaping forces are now partially directed towards forming and shaping our thought life.

It is essential to understand this change, which takes place around the second dentition, as it widens our comprehension of a disrupted or accelerated development in special needs children. I will therefore give some more quotations relating to this, (underlining by me), even when they seem to be repetitions.


*At the beginning of human life on earth the forces of the etheric body act as powers of configuration and growth. With progressing life a part of these forces becomes emancipated from the activity of configurating and growing and is transformed into the process of thought.*

De Bie and Huber (2003: 287)

*The forces that prevail in the etheric body are active at the beginning of man’s life on earth, and most distinctly during the embryonic period; they are the forces of growth and formative development. During the course of earthly life a part of these forces emancipates itself from this formative and growth activity and becomes the forces of thought.*

Steiner (2003: 27)

*The forces that build the physical body in the first seven years of human life are the same forces by which we think later.*
We can therefore imagine that part of the etheric forces remain with their task of giving life and health to the physical body. The other part enters into a close connection with the soul body.

Note: For more literature on the changing task of the etheric forces see Appendix 2 where discussions relating to the Waldorf School approach are included.

1.5. The Etheric Body as the Time Body

Some authors emphasise the time aspect of the etheric body, focusing on the changing, metamorphosing characteristic, yet clearly presenting the unity of an organisation.

Boogerd (2011: 27) formulates it as follows:

_The image of a stream leads us to the etheric reality which is invisible but which we sense nevertheless. An important aspect of the etheric is time. Etheric processes are in constant movement, and work in time. Therefore we can call the etherbody an organism of time._

Through the use of the example of creating a timetable, Boogerd points to two different modes of observation. A timetable can be determined by the clock and the various activities that have to be fitted into it: the object-picture.

The process-picture, on the other hand, asks: how do these activities lead from one to the next? Is there an organic beginning and end? Is the activity placed at the right time of day? And so forth. Here a quite different understanding of time arises. It is not difficult to see that by implementation of such a process-picture the etheric forces of a child can be strengthened.

Here we have a key tool for understanding the separate existences in the spatial world (objective picture) and additionally a flow, a process, a time concept in the etheric forces (process picture).

The English language has the apt expression “a time space”. For the fundamental change in the time-body aspect, occurring around the second dentition, see also Section 2.1. and 4.

2. The Interrelationship of the Four ‘Bodies’ with Special Reference to the Etheric Body.

This section wishes to address some woolly superficial assumptions surrounding the interaction of the four “bodies”. See also Section 4 for some examples from curative education.

For a general understanding of these interrelationships it is helpful to keep in mind that the etheric body is an intermediate between the soul world and the physical world.

Whereas the solid forms in the world are characterised by a static quality, the soul world with its changing moods, wishes and desires is in constant movement.

In between the two, the etheric body can be represented by the image of a river: the river is in constant movement (the life processes) and yet there is the holding element of form. Since the etheric body has both qualities (movement and sustaining of the wholeness) it has the ability to implant the impulses of the soul into the physical body by giving it life and movement.
2.1. The birth of the etheric body, the interrelationship as observed in child development.

The expression: the “birth” of the etheric, astral and I is often interpreted as if before their “birth” these ‘bodies’ were somewhere ‘floating around’.

The fact is, that from the embryonic time onwards the child has an inherited etheric, astral/sentient body and ‘I’ organisation. In child development two interrelated processes take place. The penetration of the physical body by the etheric, sentient and ‘I’ organisation differs at various stages (Goldberg 2009). The other process pertains to the individualising of the inherited bodies by the child.

During the embryonic time the baby’s physical body is enveloped by the mother’s womb. Birth is the separation of the two physical bodies.

Similarly Steiner speaks about an invisible etheric envelope of the mother that protects and nourishes the child during the first seven years of life. At seven years, with the second dentition this task is completed and the child from now on relies on its own etheric body. Sometimes this is termed: “The freeing of the etheric body” or “the birth of the etheric body”. This refers, as with the physical birth to a separation and individualising process. The child’s life body comes into its own. This is followed later by a similar process for the sentient body and ‘I’. (See Ralph: The Individualising Processes)

Note: The role of the etheric “envelope” of the mother or main Carer is especially relevant to attachment problems.

Although in this chapter no detailed description is given of the changing interrelationships between the etheric “body” and the other three “bodies” it is important to point out that with ageing – whenever this takes effect in the individual – a loosening of the etheric body from the physical framework occurs, causing both physical and mental symptoms.

Note: A good explanation of the changing relationship can be found in Steiner, (2004: 25-28) Educating Children Today.

2.2 The Etheric Body in Sleep and Death

The authors Camps et al (2006) turn to the aspect of the etheric body related to energy. In health we feel energetic. During the day, when energy is used for our senses, our thinking, physical activities and emotional life, this energy is then withheld from the life processes. This causes an increase of the catabolic physical process, resulting in tiredness in the evening.

In sleep the sentient body and the “I” loosen themselves from the confinement of the body (physical and etheric) and expand.


Remaining behind in bed is the physical body, now fully penetrated by the energy of the life body. This can now, unhindered by the senses’ impressions, perform its sevenfold work through the life processes – restoring the strength of the human being during sleep.

The authors then describe that four times during sleep the sentient body re-connects with the etheric (the REM-sleep) and gives structural impulses to the etheric body: e.g. to restore in the physical body what has been bruised, damaged or suppressed during the day.
Science has confirmed that REM-sleep is vital for the health of a person; regular disturbances during the REM-sleep cause both physical and mental illness.

Death is seen as the big brother of sleep. Then also the etheric body loosens itself from the physical. The withdrawal of the etheric or life forces causes the disintegration of physical substances. During the first three days after death, the etheric body still keeps its configuration, although freed from the physical body and now the “I” can “read” in this etheric body all the stored memories of a lifetime. Camps et al (2006) say: “like looking in a photo album” – Steiner speaks about a “panorama of life”. This becomes increasingly vague, while the etheric body dissolves in the world ether, until it has vanished entirely from the perception of the “I”.

Steiner (1994: 37)

*Just as we belong to the mineral world through our physical body, we belong to the world of life through our ether body. After death, the physical body disintegrates into the mineral world, the ether body into the world of life.*
3. Possible Points of Observation

Some guidelines for observing the functioning of the etheric body.

See next page for explanations.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ETERIC BODY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Physical Aspects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall impression:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Breathing:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sleeping:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Warming:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eating and drinking:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secretion:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sleeping:</td>
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<td>Warming:</td>
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<td>Eating and drinking:</td>
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<td>Secretion:</td>
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<td>Secretion:</td>
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<tr>
<td>Secretion:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muscle tone:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recuperation (healing):</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slow - difficult</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Growth:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nail growth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hair growth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexual maturity:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Physical Aspects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Memory:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning of skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Habits (not fixations)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flexibility - Inflexibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bounciness: ability to regain harmonious function:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rhythm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resilience:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Temperament:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Explanations for use of Table 3

3.1. The physical aspects:

“Overall impression is *watery*” (see 1.1, Camps et al).

Camps describes that, for life to exist, the presence of water is necessary. The etheric forces use the fluids in the physical body. An excess of fluid in the physical body points to the etheric forces not having sufficient strength to permeate the fluid completely, which then becomes "waste fluid", e.g. oedema or swollen feet in the evening. The etheric body has then partly withdrawn from the task of permeating, and the physical forces dominate. The result is that body fluids become partly subject to gravity.

**Growth:**

Tall people do not necessarily have “much ether”! Conversely observe stunted growth where the form-element of the sentient body may be too strong.

In a rather leptosomic figure the etheric forces are not held completely and in a certain way “evaporate” a little.

Growth of hair, nails, and new tissue in wounds points to healthy etheric forces.

**Sleeping:**

Observe whether there is a relation between deep sleep and recuperation, or disturbed sleep and lingering illness.

3.2. The non physical aspects:

The three qualities of *memory*, *learning of skills* and *habits* can often cause confusion in the reader.

3.2.1. Memory (See also 1.3. Habit Body)


> the etheric forces sustain memory. Everything we meet and learn in life leaves its imprint in the ether body.

Memories lie dormant in the unconscious, waiting to be recalled. Thus the etheric body is often called ‘the store room of memory’.

This should be distinguished from what is asked when the child has reached the second dentition. Steiner education suggests waiting until then to *memorise actively*, to imprint consciously into the etheric body.

In old age, the etheric body loosens itself. After death the memories are viewed by the Ego like a panorama. (See also 2.2.)

Layer, M. (2006: 10)

> In old age ether forces are becoming free. Apart from bodily symptoms (like swelling) this may also mean an increasing inability to remember everyday things.

**Note:** See Appendix 3 for the development of memory in childhood
3.2.2. Habit forming (See also 1.3.)
Poppelbaum (1952) cites Steiner, explaining that:

*The etheric body has the tendency to reproduce the identical form over and over again.*
I would question the word ‘identical’ – although ‘nearly the same’ is true.

This is visible in plant life, where one can observe leaf after leaf, a repetition of the basic form, until a ‘leap’ occurs in the formation of the flower. According to Poppelbaum the working of these repetitive forces in the etheric is brought to a conclusion by an impact of “general astral forces” ending the repetition and causing ‘the leap’.

As animals and humans have their “own” astral/sentient body, the influence on the etheric forces is more individual.

Habits are deeply inscribed into our etheric body. Therefore habits learned as a child continue their influence both in a good way (skills, customary, traditional behaviour) but also in a detrimental way (violence, rude language at home)

Healthy habit forming in childhood includes eating regularly, habits of hygiene, handwriting, but also important social courtesies such as saying “thank you”, waiting for others and greeting people.


*We all know how difficult it is to change one of our habits once it has become established. The difficulty arises, because habits are inscribed as it were in the ether body and therefore have to be “re-written” in active processes of the conscious mind.*

Yet… habits CAN be changed, but it is a long process of un-learning and then re-learning through repeated exercise. It is therefore important to realise that when we meet Fixations, the habit-forming process has lost its flow, its life; one could say the process has ‘calcified’ (hardened like bones) in the physical body, and needs to find a fluid form again.

A quite striking effect of “habit-forming” I encountered myself. As a child I had piano lessons. After 50 years I again sat down and read a musical piece and to my amazement my fingers remembered what to do – they played the musical score. That shows how good habits and skills learned as a child are important for later life.

3.2.3. Rhythm

In 1.2.1. looking at the breathing process, we described the inward directed activity of the first three life processes, then a pause of the fourth life process, followed by the outward direction of the last three life processes: contraction – pause – extending. This offers an image of how the etheric forces are IN FLOW. Everything we can provide rhythmically (in music, in seasonal festivals, the conscious use of activity – rest) nurtures the etheric forces; but conversely a well-functioning etheric body influences the rhythmic life of body and soul.

3.2.4. Bounciness and Resilience

These are the counterforce of gravity and expression of the healing quality. This can be observed in body, soul and spirit. It does not refer to the up-and-down bouncing of some autistic children! It presents itself when a younger does not drag his feet; a child with high fever quickly bounces back to health. In the soul we speak of resilience after a difficult episode. Here we turn to a person remaining healthy and well, in spite of bad circumstances even crisis conditions. True resilience is the only way to survive traumatising experiences.

**Note:** This aspect attracts at present much attention in articles on Salutogenesis e.g. Gloeckler & Goebel 2003. For resilience see Gilligan 2009 and Saleeby 2006, Chapter 11.
4. Examples Illustrating Dysfunction of the Etheric Body

4.1. One of the most commonly used phrases but, in fact abstract and not helpful, is “a weak ether body”. We should rather ask questions like:

“What could have weakened the function of the etheric body?”

“Are the vital or thought forces involved?”

“Is the general lack of health primarily caused by an etheric weakness or by a dominance or overpowering by the physical or the sentient/soul body?”

Sometimes it is helpful to “translate” the outcome of one’s observations into an image:

- H, a young lady with Down’s syndrome shows a total lack of form (bodily and soul wise). One could say her etheric body is so proliferating – expanding – that it loses its own structure. She can do beautiful eurhythmy movements, as if giving herself over to the general ether forces around her.

- In many hypersensitive (formerly called hysteric) children the etheric forces seem to be “around them”. They show extreme excretion (sweat, often incontinence). Here the etheric forces, based physically in the fluid system, are pushed out by too great an impact of the sentient body. This fluid is no longer ‘alive’. The sentient body does now no longer find a hold in the person, vibrates partly too much around the person and acts like an antenna, sucking up all impressions and sensing danger.

- In some children in the autistic spectrum, one can have the impression that the fluid element has dried up; it is no longer living fluid and therefore has succumbed to gravity. It is like dried up clay. With it, all the imprints of habits have fallen into gravity in the physical sphere: stuckness, fixations. The physical forces remain in a static, fixed form; healthy etheric forces in their rhythmical repetitiveness can undergo transformation, and can change at all times.

- R. is dominated by physical problems: partial paralysis, epilepsy after a liver transplant. Here the etheric forces are drawn into the chemical, physical functioning and are “over demanded” so that they cannot really develop. Here is a case where we can really speak of etheric weakness. Steiner gives a related example in the Curative Course where the etheric form is so shaped that it cannot contain the world ether properly. See the milk jug example in Steiner 1998: pp. 37–40.

- Similarly, prematurely born children need to use their own etheric forces that are not yet fully developed, for building up their physical organs. Under normal circumstances this happens in the womb, aided by the mother’s etheric forces. Also here we observe an etheric weakness with a physical cause.

- Children who have suffered neglect in their early childhood, where the “cocoon that envelops mother and child” (Winnicott, article, unknown origin) has not consistently been cared for, may have an etheric body ‘full of holes’. Unpredictable attention, sweets and smothering one moment, total lack of care and attention the next moment, do not provide a harmonious protective sheath of the mother; as a result an even development of the etheric body of the child is hindered.

4.2.1. Here are two examples of children where the normal transformation of the etheric forces around the second dentition did not take place, and their appearance and behaviour could nearly be called “opposite”, demonstrating the “dual nature” of the etheric body. (See 1.4.)
• A. is an 8 year old boy. He is small and thin and emaciated, very fussy with eating, only eats while reading his favourite book. He poses probing, thoughtful questions if it is a subject he is interested in. He has hardly any social connections.

• D. is a plump, sociable young lady of 16 years; she has hardly any speech and dreamy eyes; she loves singing and nursery rhymes, becomes aggressive when she does not understand a situation, or what is asked of her.

What should have happened around the second dentition happened far too early in A., whereas in D. the change of emphasis hardly happened, or not at all. A. could read fluently at the age of four, and therefore insufficient vital forces were available for sustaining the bodily functions. In D., (whether because of brain damage or an autistic tendency), the soul and "I" forces did not unite with the etheric forces to bring about thought activities, and as a result vital forces in abundance are directed towards the physical body.

4.2.2. Another contrasting pair of children:

• A. is given up to sense impressions, resulting in being hyperactively drawn towards them. As a result, movement patterns arise, that at times can be destructive or misguided. Here the sentient body needs to be “educated” to react appropriately to sense impressions, and the etheric body needs strengthening to become a “cushion” for these impulsive movement patterns, and to calm them down.

• B. shows little understanding of the surrounding world and situations. Here the life body receives only superficial sensory impressions that do not leave an imprint; the etheric is stiff, clinging to the physical body. The image of stagnant water arises. We have the impression of lethargy or even laziness.

5. Imitation and the Etheric Body

When speaking about the habit-body aspect of the etheric body it became clear that repeated actions can create movement patterns and skills, which are then imprinted into the etheric body and can be performed without thinking later on. Many of these unconsciously performed actions come about through imitation, and the question arises of whether one can understand the process of imitation. We spoke about the quality of formative forces, that shape the organs; a helpful comparison would be to imagine how fluid can shape and penetrate the solid (See also 1.2.5.).

The interaction of etheric forces and the solid part of the body has its consequences, especially considering early childhood, roughly up to the age of seven.

Steiner (2004: 30) says:

*Two magic words indicate how the young child enters into relationship with its environment. These are imitation and example.*

The younger the child is, the more unconsciously actions, gestures, language, and moods imprint themselves in the child’s habit body, especially when they are often repeated. One can visualise this more easily when accepting the notion that the mother’s etheric forces act like an envelope around the child’s etheric body before the age of seven (see 2.1.). It is like a direct communication or reverberation from etheric body to etheric body; this can then be transmitted to the physical body, e.g. the brain. The ability of resonance is not limited to the mother’s etheric body but reaches out to other etheric forces in the environment.
A consequence of what is described above makes us realize that imitation is a great teacher; this puts a great responsibility on the adult world.

Describing this later stage of childhood, Jack Petrash (In Schwartz 1999: 181) writes:

*There comes a time somewhere near the age of seven when imitation must recede. Children know this innately, and it takes expression in their games. “Simon Says” is a favourite of the early grade school children. It urges them to distinguish between the authorized spoken command and the immediate imitation of an action. This is not a game that would be a meaningful experience for most preschool children. In fact, it is often a good indication of maturity in a first-grader.*

*Not only the children’s games but their jokes also now reflect the inappropriateness of involuntary imitation. Children’s teasing will often take the form of direct mimicking or “parroting”, and few criticisms in the early grades carry the sting of “copy-cat”.*

At a later age imitation is handled half-consciously. A prime instigator is the wish to imitate, that involves sensing through the sentient body. The process is now initiated by the sentient body, stimulating the etheric forces and affecting physical actions.

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Appendix 1 - The Life Process of sustaining

De Bie & Huber 2003: (214/215)

Granite, limestone or iron do not have their own shape but are shaped by natural forces from the outside. Crystalline forms arise out of a combination of inner natural forces, the molecular structure, and outer circumstances. (Antimonite crystals from Japan look different from European ones, and pyrite crystals have an even greater diversity of form, depending on where they are found.) Every plant species has its own shape, with variations depending on its location. So this shape is a characteristic of being alive. It is a trait of the ether body of that particular plant. But where does DNA come in? In A New Science of Life, the English biologist Rupert Sheldrake writes about the problem that DNA only contains the code of a sequence of amino acids in proteins. How are we to imagine that it also contains a design for the shape of the organism, especially since every cell is equipped with the same ‘genetic code,’ which implies that, every new cell would have to look like the old one? That would result in a shapeless lump. Of course regulatory mechanisms such as the suppressing or the activating of genes play a role, but here we are faced with the same paradox again: how does matter know it has to do one thing in one place and something else in another place? There are no natural laws on which these mechanisms would be based. Formulated in this way, it is a spatial problem. Therefore, Sheldrake postulates his morphogenetic fields theory, which shows striking similarities to the Anthroposophical concept of the ether body. The ether body is also conceived as being morphogenetic. Steiner used to speak of ‘the body of formative forces’ at times.

Appendix 2 - Changes in the task of the etheric forces

Schwartz speaks extensively in his book, The Millennial Child, about the consequences of this transformation at the ages between 6-7 years. I simply give here some more quotations to illustrate this aspect of the etheric body.

Schwartz (1999: 158-159)

*It is this particular aspect of the etheric body (the form creating and form maintaining activity) that goes through an important transformation after the first seven-year period of life. As the etheric body is released from its intensive and ceaseless work upon the formation of the physical body, as that body’s growth (when compared, for example, with its growth in the womb or in the first three years of life) slows down, etheric forces are “freed” to be utilized as our power of memory.*

Schwartz (1999: 180/181)

*In this second seven-year period, the child’s etheric body is to some extent “freed” as the child’s growth slows down and the internal organs attain greater stability in relation to one another. In the kindergarten years, the teachers left the etheric forces alone, so that they could build a framework for the child’s future health. When these etheric forces are liberated, they can – indeed, they must – be directed by the teacher. One of Rudolf Steiner’s most important gifts to education was his recognition that these liberated life forces become the power of human memory.*

Lindenau, C. (cited in Bockemuehl et al. 1985) has turned extensively to the dual nature of the etheric forces (pg. 199-216) and a comparison of the vital activities and the thinking activities of the etheric forces referring to the seven life processes (pg. 212). This may inspire further research.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Life organization</th>
<th>Thought organisation</th>
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<tr>
<td>Taking in (breathing)</td>
<td>Observation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Adapting (warming)</td>
<td>Memorizing</td>
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<tr>
<td>Digested (nourishing)</td>
<td>Distinguishing</td>
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<tr>
<td>Secreting</td>
<td>Questioning</td>
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<tr>
<td>Maintaining</td>
<td>Grasping the Totality</td>
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<tr>
<td>Growing</td>
<td>Becoming an Organ</td>
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<td>Reproducing</td>
<td>Creating</td>
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It would be wrong to assume that Steiner denied the physical basis for thinking. In “The Case for Anthroposophy” (1970) he says that just as on the body side, the forming of ideas is based on the nerve-function, so does on the other side something flow in, that is spiritual by nature: “this spiritual principle is called the ether body, or life body in my works”.

The article of M. Glöckler, www.waldorflibrary.org/journal-articles, discusses and evaluates Steiner’s concept of the dual nature of the etheric forces. Although the vital and thinking activity are similar, they work on different levels, from different aspects. The article compares different characteristics and shows for each the correspondences between the vital and thinking activity. This could be useful for a research paper.

**Appendix 3 - The development of memory in childhood**

As also with other etheric characteristics, in the first seven years memory is very dependent on the impressions from the environment.

In consecutive phases memory becomes increasingly conscious.

The memory of very young children is still bound to the body; working e.g. as a ‘biological clock’, remembering the daily care actions. However well-known people, particularly the mother, are recognised visually and from their voice from the earliest months.

The next phase of the development of memory is related to objects. When the child sees a familiar object a memory arises that relates this object to a previous situation when the child saw this object.

In the middle phase of the first seven years memory expands to the field of feeling. The child remembers something when experiencing the same/similar mood. This is often related to a social experience, e.g. the child is sitting on grandma’s lap and suddenly remembers in detail, when sitting earlier on grandma’s lap grandma read that special story and at that time the pussycat sat on that special chair.

Only towards the seventh year has the memory of the child become so free that the child can remember something independent of the environment.

**Note:** For more literature on Memory in Child Development
Goldberg (2009: 15 ff)
Modern science has begun to investigate phenomena relating to what anthroposophy calls the etheric organisation. Scientists tend to avoid using the terms ‘etheric’ or ‘ether’ but that does not mean they are not concerned about the realm to which we apply these words. One can recognise firmly entrenched opinions for and against such research, which are divided about the value of experimental findings. I will outline some examples that represent some of the relatively well-known areas of work. Whether these are significant to the anthroposophical research on the etheric is left for the reader, and further research, to determine.

Rupert Sheldrake is a biologist who has developed a theory of morphic fields and morphogenetic fields. Building on the idea that biological forms and behaviour are ‘remembered’ and passed on from one member of a species to another, he proposes that there is “a field within and around a morphic unit which organizes its characteristic structure and pattern of activity” (1995). Through an intensive study of Darwin’s work on the evolution of species, he came to the conclusion that genes and gene products do not sufficiently explain the development of plants and their morphogenesis: the study of how plants grow and take different forms. Sheldrake hypothesises that the morphogenesis of plants and the development of animals depend on organizing fields, biological fields, developmental or positional fields, or morphogenetic fields. He suggests that a powerful development in one place will create a tendency in all other organisms or morphic units within the morphic field to tune into that developmental change, by a principle he calls morphic resonance.

Sheldrake’s work is controversial among many scientists who dismiss his ideas as quasi-mystical. He has conducted a number of experiments with support from volunteers through his website (www.sheldrake.org) in support of the underlying phenomena that his theory attempts to explain. This work is exploring heredity and the evolution of organisms. In the context of anthroposophy, we speak of these themes in relation to the etheric body. It is a small jump from etheric body to etheric field, so we need to be careful that we do not claim, on his behalf, that Sheldrake is exploring the etheric. It would appear that there is a cross-over, but so far that is all. A clearer connection may appear in the future. The phenomena of metamorphosis relate directly to influences of the different ethers. Nick Thomas’s as yet unpublished article, The Four Ethers, explores this in detail. For now it seems useful for us to develop clear concepts of etheric fields rather than continuing to speak only of etheric bodies.

Another kind of field is electromagnetism. It has long been known that the nervous system and the brain are electromagnetically active. The electromagnetic fields of the human brain and heart have been measured by a new generation of extremely sensitive instruments. Scientists are hoping to be able to explain how the brain mediates electromagnetic activity in the sensory system to the experience of sensory impressions. What has surprised scientists is that the electromagnetic field of the human heart is considerably more powerful than the electromagnetic field of the brain, and extends measurably beyond the physical body by over a metre. Studies by HeartMath (Reid et al, 1995; 8(2):87-105) have shown that emotional states and healing capacity can be influenced by inducing a harmonious rhythm in the bodily functions. They attribute this to electromagnetic resonance. HeartMath programmes that use bio-feedback to train people to harmonise their electromagnetic rhythms have been adopted in a number of American schools on the basis of statistical claims that they are socially beneficial to health and wellbeing. The widespread reports of increased wellbeing are helping HeartMath (www.heartmath.org) to sell their products and finance further research. None of these studies suggest that there is an etheric effect, only offering evidence that the observed phenomena are real, based on electromagnetic data, rather than merely subjective.
imagination. Whether these studies of electromagnetic phenomena are really investigating effects relating to the etheric realm remains open to question, yet beneficial effects on health and healing could be an indicator that the human etheric is also involved.

One of the most perplexing and well-known healing effects is the placebo: usually an inert salt solution or sugar pills dressed up to look like a medicine. Studies of the placebo effect have had a profound influence on the testing of all new medicines. Even the colour of the placebo seems to make a difference to its effects, as the colour seems to affect the expectation of patients. Some new products have little more effect than an inert pill that contains no active ingredient. The strength of the placebo effect is so great that medicines are tested with a double-blind procedure where neither doctor nor patient knows whether a real medicine or an inert pill is being administered.

What causes the placebo effect? The relationship between patient and practitioner seems to be a critical ingredient. When the University of Aberdeen brought genuine patients to an actor who just imitated the actions of a spiritual healer, which was shown on BBC TV (Open University, 2006), the patients experienced relief. (Cleland et al, 2006) Two groups of patients in this study thought they were going to a real healer and, whether they met the faith healer or the actor, the measure of healing response was similar, although the study noted the quality of life benefits recorded in the follow-up survey were not statistically significant. In a 2001 American study (BBC/Open University, 2006) patients were either given surgery on severe knee problems or treated as if they had. The patients did not know whether they had received actual surgery or whether the surgeon had merely opened up the skin around the knee and stitched it back up again. Yet they all benefitted from the procedure. Such studies show that self-healing can be promoted psychologically, and may also be interpreted as offering some evidence of the effects of one person upon another, as formulated in the Pedagogical Law (Steiner, 1998) although this has not been investigated by any study so far. Although the question of the body-mind relationship is hotly debated among mainstream scientists, the anthroposophical view of the four members of the human organism, as outlined in this book, offers a comprehensive approach to understanding this.

Controversial research by the Transcendental Meditation (TM) movement suggests that a coordinated group of meditators can reduce the amount of crime in an inner city district (istpp.org/crime_prevention, undated). Many commentators suggest that the TM movement are producing valueless research that is prejudiced and self-fulfilling. Let the reader decide.

A very different, but highly contentious area, is homeopathic medicine. Homeopathic remedies are prescribed within the British National Health Service yet the senior professional medical body, the British Medical Council officially rejects homeopathy because of the lack of evidence-based research. The issue I want to highlight here is that even if homeopathic remedies are proven to be more effective than a placebo, the nature of the active component is non-physical. Some would say that this non-physical influence is etheric. There are no scientific instruments or methods that can identify etheric forces. So mainstream science says that these forces do not exist. One might hope that in the future techniques will be discovered to directly detect etheric activity. Despite some recent tentative claims, today we have no method of providing evidence of etheric forces beyond the ability of some individuals to perceive them. On the other hand, physicists have coined the terms, dark matter and dark energy, as components of the prevailing theory of the origin or matter. Will these turn out to be etheric forces?

Resonance and coherence is a common theme that relates to the etheric body. A very influential and popular book exploring socially beneficial effects is The Field by Lynne McTaggart (2003) who has joined the advocates of the idea that the human body/mind connection is comparable to phenomena of quantum physics and quantum coherence. Whether the mysterious Zero Energy Field of quantum physics can effectively account for various mysterious human phenomena, as is claimed, remains conjecture. However, there is
no doubt that this is a relatively easily grasped conceptual approach to powerful experiences that are part of so many peoples' life experience.

In conclusion I would like to point to the research that has been done on the Anthroposophic mistletoe (*viscum album*) therapy for cancer (www.mistel-therapie.de/mistletoe.html, undated). The small dilutions used in the treatments have been proved to work with great effect in a range of research studies. Although these dilutions are comparable to those used in Homeopathy the principles behind Anthroposophical Medical Treatments are entirely different. In Europe, mistletoe is the most commonly used complementary therapy in cancer care and is integrated into a range of conventional cancer treatments. So far this therapy is one of the most proven techniques available in Integrated Medicine. When an understanding of how this treatment works has been researched more fully, etheric forces will be seen to play a significant role.

**Bibliography**


Introduction

This chapter on the astral/sentient body, like the other chapters attempts to provide guidance and help to students in social pedagogy, curative education, the caring professions and to others who wish to understand Steiner’s presentation of the 4 fold human being in order to apply such insight in their practice.

A vast amount of statements by Steiner and followers, spread over many publications exists. It can be confusing to meet this variety.

I have attempted to avoid two dangers that loom up for someone who wants to show a path through what at first seems a maze of interpretations.

One can over-simplify the matter by stating: sentient body is all about feelings and passions. Or one can boast about one’s reading in presenting an overabundance of views.

I tried to minimise both dangers by discussing what the sentient body essentially is, whilst offering the readers a choice of referenced views, tempting them to make their own discoveries of how one statement supports or challenges the other and how exploring this can enrich the practice of understanding a person.

Steiner, R. (1981:53) states in The Being of Man and his Future Evolution

*These four members of man’s being are connected with and dependent on one another in the most manifold ways. Each member influences the other, and therefore they are in constant connection one with another.*

In understanding the human being the astral/sentient body plays a crucial role, as it provides a bridge between the spiritual and the bodily aspect (See Section 2 and 3).

1. Terminology

In his earlier works Steiner often refers to the third of the 4 ‘bodies’ as related to the element of air and the animal kingdom, terming it the ASTRAL BODY. Steiner has taken the term astral body from old occult tradition. Strangely, this word has persisted into our modern world. The word astra = star expresses the always perceived connection of the astral body to the planetary world and the fixed stars. I believe we should question the use of the word “astral” today, especially as Steiner himself in later years has used an alternative term.

What would be alternatives? Currently many different terms are used, each conveying a specific aspect of the wider concept.

Some authors have suggested SOUL BODY. I believe this term can be confusing. The use of the term ‘soul body’ does not allow a clear distinction between the various processes of this body and the soul itself.

**AWARENESS BODY** this term would certainly be very relevant as the word awareness points to consciousness, an outstanding characteristic of this body.
Awareness also expresses the direct relation to the nervous system: Bos & Bie (in Bie, and Huber. 2003: 221) call the nervous system: One of the structures through which the astral body can penetrate a body.

Sometimes the term ‘BODY OF EXPERIENCES’ is used in English. This may relate to the fact that Steiner increasingly used an alternative terminology for Astralleib: Empfindungsleib. It is possible to translate ‘Empfindungen’ as experiences, but in this context it can be questioned as a valid translation, because it does not do sufficient justice to the feeling quality the German word carries. Experience can imply the feeling quality that is inherent in the German word, but it is not the primary meaning.

My preferred terminology would be SENTIENT BODY. Steiner, (1994) when describing further developments of the soul in ‘Theosophy’, coins the first transformation of the Empfindungsleib (Astralbody) the ‘Empfindungs Seele, which is commonly translated as sentient soul. It seems therefore logical to also use in English the corresponding term sentient body leading to the sentient soul.

Note: for the important step from sentient body to sentient soul see Treichler 1996: 37

However, habits die hard, especially as the vague use of the term ‘his/her astrality’ accommodates a certain laziness in expressing ourselves correctly; it is then left open whether we mean with ‘astrality’ the body or the soul.

I will in the following chapter use the word Sentient Body; although when quoting, I have to adhere to the author’s terminology.

2. Interlude: A Different Approach to the Sentient Body

When fourfoldness is introduced, most authors start with dead matter, moving gradually through aliveness and ensoulment towards spiritual qualities. (See Bos & Bie in Bie & Huber 2003: 212) stone – plant – animal – human. This corresponds with the most common way to look at development, starting with the lower, simpler species or form and trace the development to a higher, more complicated manifestation.

There is however another way of approaching this. In the anthroposophical view of evolution the spiritual aspect is the original, gradually becoming manifest in increasingly visible density. Compare: the architect’s plan comes before bricks and mortar.

In that view even the physical body begins as a purely spiritual process (See Steiner 2011: Occult Science an Outline). This anthroposophical view: only spirit can create matter (Steiner 1994: 40) throws a quite different light on the sentient body.

H. Muller-Wiedemann in an oral, unpublished, presentation approached the question: how can soul experiences, belonging to the invisible world cause physical symptoms such as change of colour, fast breathing, goose pimples etc?

When looking at the soul world, the etheric world and the material world, the etheric world occupies an intermediary and mediating place. By focusing on the etheric world as the primary, central area, ‘breathing’ between the invisible and the physical, we can, according to Muller-Wiedemann describe the physical body as the ‘breathed out’, hardened manifestation of the etheric body. On the other hand, the etheric body ‘breathes in’ the soul experiences. Between the etheric body and the soul arises the changing, flexible structure which facilitates these two activities: the sentient body

Also Goldberg (2009: 79) seems to approach the sentient body from this angle: When the soul forces engage with the physical/etheric body, a sentient or soul body comes into being.
3. The Sentient Body between the Physical/Etheric and the 'I'

In Steiner’s presentation of the fourfold human being, the sentient body occupies a unique place between the bodily nature of the human being (physical/etheric body) and the more spiritual nature of the ‘I’ with its physical, supporting base. The sentient body thus takes on the role of the mediator through its ability to conduct, or translate invisible experiences to the physical body via the etheric body. (See Section 2).

Two examples:

- Every night in sleep there is a separation between the physical - etheric body remaining in bed and the sentient body and ‘I’, freed from the body. (Camps et al (2009: 25). In sleep the qualities discussed in Section 4 e.g. awake consciousness and movement, directed from within, are nearly totally dimmed down.
- Some people show in the morning, when the sentient body again connects with the physical/etheric body, a puffy face and eyes. How can one explain this? During the night the etheric forces are able to expand more freely, not being permeated by the sentient body and lacking therefore also directed movements, a characteristic of the sentient body. This can cause excess of ‘waste fluid’; a cigarette or a cup of coffee stimulates the excretion of the excess fluid, allowing the sentient body to insert itself slowly into the physical etheric organisation.

4. Descriptions of the Sentient Body

In this chapter I present descriptions of the sentient body by various authors. Please note that in quoting I have to use the terminology of the authors, which means, most of them use the word astral body. Each author highlights a different aspect of the sentient body.

v.d. Wal, J. in Bie, & Huber, (2003: 131) Foundation of Anthroposophical Medicine, describes the sentient body by making the step from dead matter to life in the plants and then to ensouled living matter, which implies that the animal

> has an inner life which can interact with the environment ---- we can begin to speak of perception and consciousness.

Steiner, R. (1981: 23) Theosophy of the Rosicrucian

> We come now to the third member of man’s being, to the astral body – the “Soul Body” in Rosicrucian terminology. Man has the astral body in common only with the animals. The astral body is the bearer of feeling, of happiness and suffering, joy and pain, emotions and passions; wishes and desires too, are anchored in the astral body.


> In describing the astral body the soul level is addressed. In the soul life all sensations and movement have their home.

Steiner, R. (1986: 17) At the Gates of Spiritual Science

> The astral body consists of two parts; one part with animal-like desires; the other part man has himself worked into it. This refers to the transformative work of the ‘I’ on part of the sentient body.
Two indications by Steiner how the sentient body appears to the clairvoyant

Steiner, R. (1986: 13) At the Gates of Spiritual Science

The astral body is the seat of everything we know as desire, passion, and so forth. This is clear to straight-forward observation as an inner experience, but for the Initiate the astral body can become an outer reality. The Initiate sees this third member of man as an egg-shaped cloud which not only surrounds the body, but permeates it. If we “suggest away” the physical body and also the etheric body, what we shall see will be a delicate cloud of light, inwardly full of movement. Within this cloud or aura the Initiate sees every desire, every impulse, as colour and form in the astral body. For example, he sees intense passion flashing like rays of lightning out of the astral body.

Steiner, R. (2008: 14) Educating Children Today

The astral or sentient body is a figure of inwardly moving, coloured and luminous images. The astral body deviates in both size and shape from the physical body. In human beings it appears as an elongated ovoid form in which both the physical and etheric body are embedded. It projects beyond them – a vivid luminous figure on all sides.

5. Characteristics of the Sentient Body

Many authors when describing the sentient body relate it to the animal kingdom. It may therefore be helpful to note briefly what qualities and abilities are added when we compare the animal with its sentient qualities to the plant (etheric field).

a) The plant is “rooted” to the spot, although they have automatic movements like turning to the sun. This movement is subject to forces of the environment. Animals can MOVE, responding from within to influences of the environment.

b) Whereas plants can react to outer stimuli, the animal, especially the higher animal, has developed CONSCIOUSNESS, which can be expressed in behaviour. This behaviour is mostly a conditioned response, or a response to satisfy an inner drive. This does not contradict that higher primates (e.g. elephants and dolphins) seem to have an emotional life that is not only determined by ‘drives.’

c) As the animal can move its awareness to the without, FEELINGS arise which impact on the physical organism: pleasure makes a cat purr; a dog feels the mood of his master. The sentient body translates these invisible feelings to an observable phenomenon.

d) The animal can move its awareness to inner bodily stirrings: drives, hunger, thirst, drive for self-preservation. The responses of the sentient body can be observed in the animal’s behaviour.

Now let us consider these qualities in human beings. They will show similarities to animals, but are always modified by the presence of ‘I’, even in the young child where it has not yet assumed control.

5.1 Movement

In the world of animals we meet for the first time the ability to move autonomously, that means that the movement is directed from within. This directed movement arises as a reaction to outer perceptions (e.g. a deer flees from hearing a noise) or inner perceptions (e.g. hunger, thirst). All these are directed, reactive movements.
We recognise the presence of an astral body within an organism, and with that of inner life, when we see expressions of conscious experience of the world and reaction in the form of behaviour or movement.

van der Bie & Huber 2003: 302

It seems that Camps et al (2009: 21) use the archetypal gesture of sympathy (going towards something) and antipathy (withdrawing from) to explain the coming about of movement:

….in sympathy one is attracted to something or one wants to unite with an object or fact, which arouses sympathetic feelings. Feelings of antipathy are caused when one is repelled by something. Between attracting and repulsion movement comes about. This has its home in the astral body.

The same expressed differently:

When the quickly changing soul moods make their impact, the sentient body makes an imprint on the other bodies and they together sway quickly between attraction and repulsion. These fluctuations change the structure that is woven between soul experiences and body functions. Thus movement becomes a characteristic of the sentient body.

Reminding ourselves that the sentient body is related to the element of air, we may not be surprised to find here, analogous to expansion and compression of air, a quality of relaxing and contracting e.g. in the way we breathe or in the tension and tonus of the muscles.

When observing a person it can be helpful to listen to a person’s breathing. Here we find an important psychosomatic indicator, e.g. snorting, laughing, sighing and so on. In fact we then observe the interrelationship of depth and rhythm of the breath. The ‘how’ of breathing speaks a ‘soul-language’.

Note: For more detail see Camps et al 2008: 21

We have already pointed to the close interaction of the soul and the structure of the sentient body arising between the soul and etheric body. (See Section 2 Interlude.) Sensory perceptions cause sensations and feelings. These feelings can be sympathetic or antipathetic, and can cause pleasure or discomfort. We meet polar qualities which become observable through the sentient body.

5.2 Consciousness

In biochemistry the phenomenon of consciousness is related to the formation of hollow spaces. It is not difficult to recognise this as a working of the element of air. In nature we can see how air-pockets are formed. The gesture of forming pockets is called GASTRULATION. The process of gastrulation starts early in embryonic development. Studying gastrulation in the embryonic development of animals, we can see: the greater the extent of gastrulation, the more intricate, the more specific the consciousness that develops; gastrulation can appear as pockets or as grooves. Gastrulation allows a more free response to the environment. (See list of Bos & Bie below). The response is no longer an automatic reaction but an “inner” answer. This throws an interesting light on the bodily basis of consciousness. In order to be aware of an outer world there has to be first an inner space.

For consciousness to work, a nervous system needs to be present. The more consciousness is refined, the more complex is the nervous system: the nervous
system is one of the structures through which the sentient body penetrates the physical body.

Note: See also Steiner, R. (1981) Theosophy of the Rosicrucians lecture 8.

We can call consciousness also an internalised awareness. This interiorised awareness appears first in animals, especially in higher animals. Bos & Bie (in Bie & Huber 2003: 220) show the progressive strength of this awareness.

- From behaviour we can conclude whether organisms have consciousness and to what degree.
- We call the behaviour of amoebas still automatic; for animals of a slightly higher order we use the term instinctual.
- In animals of a still higher order we also recognise like and dislike, we therefore in addition speak of feeling.
- When we surmise that a process of combining and deducing underlies behaviour, we speak of intelligence.
- Higher animals can display impressive forms of intelligence.
- We have seen that these forms of consciousness cannot be separated from bodily characteristics.

We can also observe an example of this “impressive form of intelligence” in human beings who temporarily cannot make use of their ‘I’. They present episodes of behaviour that resembles the intelligent behaviour of higher animals. In the case of amnesia, a person has lost self-awareness and cannot remember anything of what s/he did; yet the actions show perfectly normal intelligence – e.g. buying a train ticket and going on a journey or driving a car. One might also say that the ‘I’ was not aligned to the sentient body and its inter-relationship with the physical and etheric body.

Another specific form of awareness belonging to the sentient body is PAIN.

Pain signifies an increased awareness in an area of the body i.e. a stronger inward directed consciousness. In view of this it is interesting to consider the ability of the sentient body to change the focus of attention. Concentrating on outer, non-bodily events usually decreases the sensation of pain.

In Manifestations of Karma Steiner (2000: Lecture 6) says about the relationship of sentient body and pain:

> In healthy people the astral body is normally partly asleep. When the astral body presses itself into the physical/etheric body it is like an abnormal awakening and this is expressed as pain.

Sedation by drugs puts the sentient body partially to sleep.

5.2.1. Physical Phenomena as a result of feelings

Symptoms in the body are often a direct result of the impact of feelings and experiences which are mediated by the sentient body.

Bie and Huber (2003: 302) express it as follows:

> Next to the manifesting on the level of behaviour, the astral body also manifests on the level of organic processes.

Bos & Bie point for instance to the occurrence of tonus, as seen in the building up of blood pressure, often caused by experiencing stress.
Some other examples are: ‘butterflies in the tummy’ which one could call temporary and positive. A negative and lasting symptom might for instance be irritable bowel syndrome. In both cases a stronger awareness in the sentient body is taking place. (See also Pain Section 5.2)

We can describe most feelings as appearing in polarities, joy – sadness, irritability – relaxedness, and so on. The sentient body passes calm, pleasurable feelings onto the physical etheric body as an impulse to relax, whereas exciting or non-pleasurable feelings make the body tense up.


Humans and animals have in common the ability to give expression to feelings by **sounding**. This is one of the qualities of the sentient body. Non-verbal sounding can express a great variety of feelings and often is like a key to another soul.

### 5.2.2. Observable Behaviour as a Result of Inner Bodily Experiences

Often the image is used of the chariot, the charioteer and the horses, respectively the physical/etheric body, the 'I' and the sentient body. In the time of puberty/adolescence, the “charioteer” needs to get to know the “horses” and therefore also from time to time has to let go of the reins in order to know what the “horses” are up to. We can observe this in leisure activities. The youngster wants to experience, to take risks. If the reins are too slack, the drives take over e.g. binge drinking; if the reins are kept too short, neurotic behaviour develops.

**Note:** this ‘explanation’ is only one aspect of the situation of the adolescent. See also Treichler 1996

In Psychology of Body, Soul and Spirit, Steiner (1999) describes how out of the physical body drives rise up to the border of the soul. Drives can rise up with elemental force. Through education and the influence of civilisation these drives are tamed by the ‘I’ taking control. Steiner therefore distinguishes a “naturally given” part of the sentient body, harbouring instincts, drives etc. and another part which is already changed by the ‘I’.

Steiner (1986: 17):

*The astral body consists of two parts; one part with animal like desires; the other part man has himself worked into it.*

**Note:** for further study see Steiner (1996: 85) The Seven Fold Will
6. Possible points of observation

SENTIENT BODY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Physical Aspects</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Movement:</td>
<td>overactive – underactive – unable to move. age appropriate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(e.g. appropriate instinctive reflexes)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>gross motor skills – fine motor skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gestures:</td>
<td>mechanical – stereotypical purposeful (ensouled) – not</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>purposeful.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Body Language:</td>
<td>any? how?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facial expression:</td>
<td>lively – inexpressive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>appropriate – inappropriate.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experience of pain:</td>
<td>hypo (does not show/or shows little pain)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>appropriate – hypersensitive (general or specific areas)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>in/ability to pin-point pain.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sounding:</td>
<td>non-verbal expressive or reflexive sounds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>repetitive sounding – babbling – sighing - moaning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>musical sounds.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non Physical Aspects</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consciousness:</td>
<td>sleepy - dreamy – inconsistent – awake – over-awake</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drives and urges:</td>
<td>strong, must be fulfilled</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>no apparent drives – weak – passive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feelings:</td>
<td>many – few – mood swings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>over sympathy – sympathy – apathy – antipathy –</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>oppositional antipathy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social contact:</td>
<td>‘drowning’ in other person – empathy –</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>sensitivity towards other person – lack of empathy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sensory impressions:</td>
<td>over aware – chaotic – integrated – partial –</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>unaware</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

7. The Sentient Body in the Course of Life

Each child is born with all four members: the physical body, the life body, the sentient body and the 'I' organisation. However their function, their strength and interaction changes in the course of life (Steiner 2008). In the same way as the physical body of the baby existed before birth in the womb, within a protective envelope of the mother, so also the other three "bodies" are after birth sheathed in a protective envelope for some time. This implies that the activity of these bodies changes over time. In the section on the etheric body (Section 2:4) was shown how the life body during the first seven years uses its formative
moulding growth forces predominantly for developing the physical organism. Then, after the change of teeth, part of the life body continues to foster growth and to maintain the body; another part is now free to use the formative forces in shaping thoughts. What previously was forming the body is now used for cognitive activity.

In Educating Children Today (Steiner 2008: 25) points to a similar transformation of the sentient body when puberty sets in:

> An astral enclosure remains until puberty when the astral or sentient body is emancipated on all sides, just as the physical body was emancipated at birth and the etheric body at the change of teeth.

The freeing of the sentient body from its envelope is in most literature referred to as puberty or sexual maturity. Steiner prefers to speak of “earth-maturity” as not only the sexual organs are involved. As Selg (2008: 89) writes:

> This stage thus implies maturity gained at the three levels of physiological activity: in the senses (neuro-sensory system), breathing (rhythmical system) and sexuality (metabolism, limbs). We should speak therefore of the “Maturity for Earth” rather than sexual maturity.

Steiner (1995: 99) describes that the sentient body before this “freeing” was like “a loose cloud in which the child lives.”

> The astral body really only develops full activity upon sexual maturity. It is only then that it is really wholly active within the human organism.

Selg (2008: 94-96) draws together the various discussions of Steiner on the changing role of the sentient body, describing the following process.

Between birth and the second dentition the etheric body is, as it were, partially “drawn out” of the physical body and it turns towards the soul, establishing the foundation of cognitive development. Between the seventh and the fourteenth years, the etheric body gradually attracts the sentient body to itself. Only when this process is completed, when the sentient body is no longer loosely like a cloud around, the human being has reached sexual maturity. This process of entering “wholly and closely” into the physical and etheric body follows the pathways and directions of the nerve fibres from the outside to the inside.

The psychiatrist Treichler describes soul changes during puberty and points to the often occurring feeling of loneliness. Is it too daring to assume, that when the youngsters free themselves from this ‘enclosure of the mother’ they go through a period of feeling naked, feeling alone? Treichler (1996: 86) explores how such feelings of loneliness can lead to boredom and inner emptiness and quotes Victor Frankl who researched the experience of existential vacuum in youngsters in Vienna in the twenties of the last century.

Apart from the concept of a protective envelope, we have to see the direction of an activity. Looking at the etheric body we characterised the activity of the etheric body during the first seven year period as directed towards the physical body in forming the organs. At about seven years part of the etheric body takes on a soul-task – forming thoughts. It is less known that also the sentient body has an early task towards the physical/etheric body, before at puberty the specific soul qualities are developed.

In lectures to the doctors Steiner explains that during the first seven years the main task of the sentient body is to foster an equal elasticity (not one sided hardening) between the physical and the etheric body. (Steiner: Spiritual Science and Medicine, 1989).
Example: if you notice that a small child is jittery, fidgety and not able to maintain a focussed attention – or you observe the opposite: that a child seems over-focussed, as if hooked to an activity – you can assume both situations are due to the fact that the sentient body cannot achieve a balanced equal elasticity between the physical and etheric body.

If the equal elasticity of the two lower members has not been established the result is comparable to an un-tuned instrument. By puberty a healthy breathing rhythm between the sentient body and the physical/etheric organisation should be established. If the ‘I’ cannot maintain the healthy breathing rhythm disturbances arise and an epileptic or hypersensitive constitution can come about (See Section 8).

The freeing of the sentient body of its envelope has many consequences:

1. The differentiation of boys and girls. The organism of the physical body of boys and girls reacts differently to the new impulses of the sentient body. (Goldberg 2009: 275)
   It is interesting that educationalists remark that at that age the girls seem to be much more certain in themselves and better in learning than the boys. They explain this through the effect of the hormones testosterone and cortisol.

   Can this also be related to another remark by Steiner? He stated that males function predominantly using their ego and physical structures, whereas the females use predominantly their etheric and sentient body. If that is correct then a girl at age 14 has her “main tools” available (etheric body and sentient body are freed) whereas the boys have to wait for the “maturing of the ego”.

2. Hand in hand with the separation of the sentient body from its maternal cocoon goes a deep questioning of the parents by the youngster. It is a normal transitional phase for many young people in puberty to fall out with their parents. (Treichler 1996:17)

3. Another consequence of the freeing of the sentient body is an enhanced life of the soul. Treichler (1996: 16):

   The period from 14 to 21 years is the period of the astral body which comes to birth at puberty. A new form of soul-life emerges from the cocoon; it has more of a personal note…

4. To this enhanced soul-life also belongs a very strong swaying between sympathy and antipathy. Treichler (1996: 17):

   The alternation between sympathy and antipathy… may come to expression in instinctual inclination or disinclination, emotional dissolution or rational rigidity. Jung spoke….. in connection with puberty of a dualistic phase. He even spoke of a ‘birth of the soul’, though he did not connect this with physical processes the way anthroposophical science does.

5. Another aspect of the “birth of the sentient body” is that “the web of destiny” in a young person becomes noticeable. Freed from the maternal cocoon the individual destiny of the youngster now shows. Selg (2008: 94) has researched this in Steiner’s lectures; in 1905 Steiner said that with puberty the youngster is seeking for what is the “true human being”. During that search is in the youngster:

   …activated the individual past-karma…. that is why one’s own karma only begins to take effect after sexual maturity.

At that age often constitutional illnesses begin to show.
Selg (2008: 95) cites Steiner saying that with sexual maturity, individual events in the youngster’s life often present themselves in such a manner that the young person him/herself senses their destiny quality. Life becomes the person’s true individual life. I think it is very important to observe this in our youngsters with special needs, who at that age often go through turmoil, particularly when they realise that they are “special.”

In asserting his/her own distinctive identity, the youngster often rebels against parents, family and their values. Through trial and error they search for their own path, increasingly allowing the ‘I’ to take the lead.

An indirect reference to the sentient body showing some of the individual karma can be found in Eikenboom (2007 pg. 9-10). The author refers to Audrey McAllan’s distinction between the structural physical body (nerves, bones, muscles) and the constitutional physical body (metabolic system with its organs and processes, and sense perceptive activities). This constitutional body is highly individual. Eikenboom states that:

*The lower astral body… is connected with that part of the physical body that Audrey McAllen named the constitutional body. This is the carrier of the individual karmic element that is connected with destiny and illness.*

It is understandable that when the sentient body is no longer protected by the maternal sheath, the karmic irregularities become “visible”.

Note: for more detail about destiny awareness at that age see Goldberg 2009: 304, 305

8. Examples of How The Four Members Interact with Special Reference to The Sentient Body.

As a conclusion I want to mention a few examples of how the sentient body influences or is influenced by the other bodies.

We already looked at the phenomenon of PAIN (See: 5.2)

Many examples can be found in the Curative Course (Steiner, 1998 now titled Education for Special Needs.

- Steiner speaks about the EPILEPTIC AND HYPERSENSITIVE CONSTITUTION. Another way of understanding this polarity is given by Steiner (1989) in the lectures to the doctors based on the “untuned” instrument.


- Example: The Curative Course, lecture 6, speaks about CLUMSINESS. The description of the 10 year old boy says repeatedly that the nerve-sense organisation (the physical bases of the sentient body) has no control over the metabolic limb system; the body has become hardened through this disharmony; then Steiner (1998: 111) says

  *When the boy wakes up, the astral body and the ‘I’- organisation cannot enter in the organisation as they should…..*

A bit later:
Man’s faculty of attention, the ability to be attentive to the world around us depends on our being able to establish the right adjustment between soul-and-spirit on the one hand and the bodily physical nature on the other hand. Suppose we are unable to do this. Then, in so far as we are concerned merely with the more superficial side of life, the inability to establish the right adjustment will show itself in clumsiness, in unskilfulness (Steiner 1998: 111).

Steiner continues by pointing to the change that happens to the way youngsters move at puberty. Whereas the younger child moves gracefully and rhythmically (the muscular system is enlivened by the blood stream) – now the limbs shoot out, arms swing out, legs kick, things are knocked over. What was rhythmical has become mechanical in character. Steiner explains this saying that the movement no longer penetrates the muscles only, but is getting hold of the skeletal structures. i.e. a deeper penetration of the physical organism.

- In the Curative Course, lecture 5, pg. 101 for example Steiner speaks about a child where the four organisations do not fit well together: the physical organisation is too dense.

> The child will then be absolutely incapable of letting his astral body go down into this densified physical organisation. He will receive an impression in the astral body, and the astral body can stimulate the corresponding astrality of the metabolic system, but the stimulation is not passed on to the ether body, least of all to the physical. We can recognise this condition in a child by noticing how he reacts if we say to him: “Take a few steps forward”. He will not be able to do it.

In reading this quotation, do remember that movement is one of the characteristics of the sentient body. Steiner points out that this child does understand the words but it is as if the legs did not want to receive it (pg.102).

- Another example of movement-disturbance we see in some Downs Syndrome children. Observing their gait one can see that they often have not shed the “walking out of the forces of the blood stream.” Their sentient body has not gone completely through the process of “freeing.” When we ask them to take a new step, to change, they often become “stubborn” and “stuck”. Why? For every new move the sentient body needs to influence the habit-body (etheric body). This seems to be the problem as the sentient body never succeeded in its task to equalise the physical and etheric body. The instrument is not tuned properly. (See Treichler Chapter 6). Moreover the sentient body, the MOVER has not been freed from an earlier stage; it is not free and therefore is unable to progress from a potentiality to a capability of the physical body. The carer’s insistence in offering again and again an opportunity to move on, to take hold of opportunities, can have in the long run some result. It is however clear, here it is not the carer’s ego, but the carer’s sentient quality – his enthusiasm, his motivation that acts as an external mover for the child.

- A last example from the Curative Course is found in Chapter 10 page 174 about a 15 year old girl.

> We can see that the astral organisation has made very weak connection with the organism as a whole..... One notices at once that the astral organisation is far too weak to hold the ego in face of the temptation that always assails man when he eats – the temptation to enjoy the eating too much ----- When the astral body is not sufficiently active in the lower region of the face, then the lips will be found to protrude noticeably.
We know the children, who must put their finger in the honey pot and lick it, who cannot see food without grabbing it. Is this naughtiness? One could try to understand it using the theory of the “task” of the sentient body during the first seven years. If the physical and etheric body are equal in elasticity, the child has a feeling of wellbeing. When this has never been achieved, the child seeks every means to establish another sense of wellbeing – they eat. In how far has such a lack of wellbeing contributed to the problem of child obesity in the UK?

Some other examples:

In “Broken Vessels” (formally the Pastoral Medical Course) Steiner (2003) sketches two possible interactions between the sentient body and the ‘I’.

1. Speaking about visionaries Steiner (2003: 67) says:
   When we study these individuals we find that as a first stage the ego organisation separates from the rest of the human organism. It then draws the astral body closely to it, in a certain sense away from the physical-etheric organism. This happens in the waking state.

   One could picture this as a kind of hesitancy of the ego organisation to fully permeate and inhabit the physical/etheric structure; the ego organisation, a little afloat, draws the sentient body towards it.

   Example: This specific interaction of ‘I’ and sentient body can put the individual in a kind of dreamlike state. Some of our children definitely have super sensible experiences during the day or at night. We also recognise this tendency in children for whom the experiences of fairytales or the Lord of the Rings are absolutely real.

2. The opposite condition would be that the ‘I’ is weak and the sentient body draws the ego too strongly down into the rest of the organs. Then the opposite happens:

   A darkening, a clouding, a lowering of consciousness Ibid pg.68.

   When these individuals talk about themselves they ramble on, elaborating on innumerable details.

   So when the astral body draws the ego organisation in, there comes about a kind of power for reproducing details of memory as though automatically; it is always ready to repeat them; it is indifferent to logical connections. (Ibid pg. 69.)

It is interesting that Steiner relates the coming about of this exaggerated repetition of memories back to what can happen in the period between 7 and 14, when there is too early a certain excessive cleverness, “just like an adult” (See Ibid pg. 71).

Example: On conditions of CRAMPS, Steiner says in the Third Course for Doctors (Steiner 1922) about (Children’s) diseases that are accompanied by cramps, that these are caused by the ego and astral body not being able to enter properly into the physical/etheric bodies.

Example: If a person suffers from sustained exhaustion, anthroposophical jargon often speaks about a weak etheric body. Complementary medicine relates this situation to energy being blocked. It seems a far more precise observation than the reference to only the etheric body’. Why is the ether body weak? Could it be that a blockage points to a dysfunctional relation of the soul to the life processes in the etheric body? Is the cause of the dysfunction in the imbalance between the etheric and the sentient body?
Example: ADHD. Here the sentient body is like a vagabond. The child engages with the world without being guided by the ego; the engagement with the world is like aimless wandering, haphazardly reaching out and taking hold of objects, people and situations. In the activity of “taking hold”, this unguided sentient body wakes up temporarily. This is like an externalised cramp; many ADHD children suffer from tummy cramps as well.

Example: Inability to choose. When someone’s sentient body is not well governed by the ego organisation this can be seen in the following situation:

You offer the person a choice; the person asks you to make the choice for him/her; you then offer your choice and immediately the person opts for something else. This may occur also at a later age. The sentient body has mostly a reactive quality and it is a question whether this reactive response happens before the ‘I’ working in the soul is able to ‘govern’ or influence the sentient body.

This list of examples is by no means exhaustive. I hope that by considering the chosen practical examples, the reader may come to a more finely tuned appreciation of how an understanding of the sentient body can influence an effective assessment in child/person study and ultimately lead to practical responses in the daily work.

**Bibliography**


Steiner, R. Third Course to Doctors: [http://wn.rsarchive.org/GA/GA0314/19221028/p02.html](http://wn.rsarchive.org/GA/GA0314/19221028/p02.html)


Chapter V

Aspects of Ego and 'I'  
Angelika Monteux

More radiant than the sun,  
    Purer than the snow  
Finer than the ether  
    Is the self,  
The spirit in my heart  
This self am I — I am this self  
(Steiner 1979, 65)

“I know that Great person  
Of the brightness of the sun  
    Beyond the darkness  
Only by knowing him  
One goes beyond death  
There is no other way to go”

“Svetasvatara Upanishad”  
The Upanishads; Penguin Books1965 page 85pp

1. Introduction

These two verses convey the riddle of the human ‘I’ which has occupied the minds of many people from diverse scientific, cultural and religious traditions over thousands of years. It is central to understanding the human being, the meaning of life and the value of each individual.

Aspects presented in this chapter have been chosen to explore their relevance within the context of Curative Education/ Social Pedagogy and are mainly based on insights inspired by Anthroposophy; further work is necessary to put them into context with other approaches and understandings.

2. Terminology

2.1. Clarifying Terminology

In order to come to an understanding of what is meant by ‘Ego’ it is very important to clarify the concepts of ego, ego organisation, ‘I’, self, individuality, and identity. The following terms are inconsistently used when discussing aspects of the fourth member of the fourfold human being.


There is much unclarity of terminology and unless terms used are clearly defined one cannot even begin the task of understanding the individual human being.

First of all it is important to realise that Identity and Individuality are not the same and that the word ‘ego’ is often used in a way which causes confusion.
In some, mainly Anthroposophic understandings ‘ego’ is used to describe our highest, most spiritual, individual aspect, that part which distinguishes us from the animals and which mankind has to develop fully during this phase of earth evolution. It is precious to us, we are proud of it. Therefore some do not like to hear concepts of Eastern spirituality such as ‘death of ego’, or ‘non-ego’ and quickly turn away from these streams and declare them generally out of date and unsuitable if not dangerous for us ego-proud western people.

This is, however, a superficial misunderstanding, because in the original, eastern context ‘ego’ describes what we call the ‘lower soul forces’ or egoistic aspects of astrality (see glossary) and also everything we mean by ‘identity’.

So here ‘ego’ is used to describe lower soul forces (egoistic aspects of astrality, emotions) and ‘outer’ identity which has many aspects: nationality, race, genes, language, cultural traditions, family values, religion, talents, memory, knowledge, position, possessions etc.

‘Identity’ – from the Latin ‘identitas’ (sameness) can be used to describe outer aspects which make me the same as those people or traditions I belong to: “the fact or condition of being the same or exactly alike” (Encarta Dictionary English UK) Same religion, same race, same clothes, choice of music, clothes, football club or spiritual school. It makes me visible and understandable to myself and others. (For more detail see 3.2.3.)

The same dictionary also offers another definition: “essential self: the set of characteristics that somebody recognizes as belonging uniquely to himself or herself and constituting his or her individual personality for life.”

This seems to indicate that the term ‘Identity’ can be understood as either relating to outer aspects as mentioned above, but also to the inner, unique core of the human being – the Individual.

The term Individual (“singular and separable from others in a group or class; it is whole and cannot be divided into separate elements: non-dividable.” (Encarta Dictionary) can then be seen as the aspect which chooses or builds up the identity in the course of life; it transcends the Ego, or in other words: it can be described as a ‘higher aspect’ of the Ego – the Human ‘I’.

Higher Ego = ‘I’
Lower Ego = astral/sentient, etheric, physical body

Beyond higher and lower Ego are still more subtle and spiritual forces or energies, often referred to as ‘True Self’ or ‘Self’ and Spirit-Self (see glossary)

English translations can be very confusing as they often use ‘ego’ when Rudolf Steiner uses the German ‘ich’ (I) in the sense of ‘higher ego’; but even when using ‘ich’ (I) or Ich-organisation, Steiner often refers to either spirit self, higher or lower ego depending on the context.

Note: One example can be found in ‘Education for Special Needs’ (1998) Lecture 5 where Steiner uses the word ‘Ich (I)-organisation’ in the text, but ‘Ich’ on the blackboard in the illustration, plate 7. In the original German Steiner consistently uses ‘Ich’ or ‘Ich-Organisation’ (See also lecture 2), but the 1998 Edition translates this into ‘Ego’ and Ego-organisation.

Therefore it is highly important to always clarify the use of words, because they are used in so many different ways.
Depending on the author or translation the word ‘Ego’ can have different meanings:

Diagram 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lower Ego</th>
<th>(Soul Forces)</th>
<th>Ego</th>
<th>’I’ = (Higher Ego)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(Etheric)</td>
<td>← Ego → 'I'</td>
<td>(Physical)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- This text will use the word ‘I’ to refer to what is often called ‘Higher Ego’ — but it is important to note that in most English translations used in quotes from anthroposophical literature the word ‘Ego’ is used instead of ‘I’ in spite of the fact that Rudolf Steiner almost never used the word ‘Ego’.

2.2. Understanding the 'I'

In *Theosophy* (Chapter 1,IV: Body, Soul and Spirit) Rudolf Steiner (1994) describes clearly how the ‘I’ lives between our higher, spiritual, true self and lower, bodily nature and in a way forms a bridge between them.

He shows how the ‘I’ forms a subtle sheath for the spirit, just like the soul and bodily organisation form a sheath for the ‘I’. The spirit (spirit self, life spirit and spirit man – see glossary) is separated from the cosmic, universal spirit by a non-material, spiritual sheath, receiving and individualising it; one can compare this to a drop of water from the ocean which is individual when separated, yet one with the ocean when returned.

The ‘I’ (in consciousness, mind and sentient soul – see glossary) is open to this spirit as well as to the body (astral/sentient, etheric, physical) and part of both, connecting spirit and body with each other.

**Spirit or True Self** is open to and nourished by the cosmic forces of the universal spirit and is in a constant process of growing and expansion — there is no limit to our spiritual potential: — whereas our bodily existence has a definite limit and can only grow so far.

‘Through the body the soul is enclosed in the physical; through the spirit-man there grow wings for its movement in the Spiritual World.’ (Steiner 1994: 41)

Steiner also uses the image of the flowering tree (Diagram 2) to show how the human being lives in 3 worlds: — spirit — blossom; body — roots; and connecting both the stem (soul in which ‘I’ lives).
Diagram 2

Diagram of tree

- roots: body; physical, heredity – identity, tool
- branches, flowers: spirit – individual, aims, carried over from former lives; master
- stem: soul
- 'I': Self-consciousness, active listening to spirit and body (Individual and Identity), active within the soul
From this one can conclude that the ‘I’ could be described not just as a ‘thing’, but as an activity like the flow of sap through the stem from root to blossom and back again. The ‘I’ as activity, sensing and regulating the flow from below up and from above down.

Rudolf Steiner (1879) explained in a fragment on Fichte’s ‘Theory of Science’: “The pure I is not, and cannot be described as any ‘thing’ in the strictest sense of the word. Its whole being is given through its activity alone; we cannot know what it is, but only what it does.” (pg. 31 Author’s own translation).

Erik Erikson (1983: 218) uses these words: “One should really be decisive and say that the “I” is all-conscious, and that we are truly conscious only in so far as we can say I and mean it......The selves are mostly pre-conscious, which means they can become conscious when the “I” makes them so and insofar as the ego agrees to it. The ego, however, is unconscious. We become aware of its work, but never of it.”

This statement is a good example of the importance of questioning and exploring the use of words: does he make a difference here between ‘I’ and ‘Ego’ or are they given the same meaning?

Back to the flowering tree again:

We see the ‘I’ between body and spirit, aware of the connection, helping the exchange of earthly will and spirit will. What comes from below is bound to inheritance, given circumstances; it is limited, restricted by outer circumstances, like the roots in the actual tree - Identity

From above comes the unlimited universal spirit; like blossoms of the tree it is open to cosmic forces, and the ‘I’ builds a conscious connection between spirit and body.

Rudolf Steiner (1994:58)

“Within the human soul the “I” flashes up, receives the impact of the spirit and thus becomes the vehicle of the spirit body. Thus we each take part in three worlds – the physical, soul and spiritual worlds. We are rooted in the physical world through the material-physical body, ether body and soul body; we come to flower in the spiritual world through the spirit self, life spirit and spirit body. But the stem, with the roots at one end and flowers at the other, is the soul itself.”

Another way to describe this ‘I’ activity is to compare it to the active listening of the ear, but to an ear that listens in two directions — to the inside and the outside, to true self and ego. And maybe it is not by chance that Rudolf Steiner puts the sense of hearing exactly at the threshold between the middle and the higher, spiritual senses? (See glossary)

The ‘I’ can then be compared to a developing sensory and ordering activity, connecting the super sensible spirit-self which carries our karma, our spiritual aims and reason for this incarnation with our earthly, heredity bound physical reality. It has the task to bring increasing consciousness of our true self or Spirit Self into our life and actions. Ideally it is aware of the lower soul forces, but not determined by them, nor does it rule or overpower them for its own gain, but is a self-less channel for the higher aims of the true self. Thus ego becomes a tool or instrument, an expression of true or Spirit - self, and is not striving to work for its own egoistic aims.

“When the ‘I’ imbues itself with the spirit self, the soul in turn fills the astral body with the spirit self’s forces. As a result, drives, desires and passions are illuminated by what the I has received from the spirit. The ‘I’ has become master over the world
of drives, desires and so on by virtue of participation in the spiritual world. To the extent that this mastery takes place, the spirit self appears in the astral body.” (Steiner 1994: 60)

Sergei Prokofieff (1991: 40-43) considers this in his book *The Occult Significance of Forgiveness*. He refers to Rudolf Steiner’s lecture ‘Foundations of Esotericism’ (18.10.1905) where he says that the **true self** does not live in, but around us and that any positive influence on the ‘I’ and **ego** can only come from this higher spiritual element, not from below or from the egoistic soul forces. Prokofieff then points out a very important aspect, namely that this influence is a gentle, loving one, not a ruling, controlling one of power, but a constant forgiving.

The **true self** has unconditional love for the lower ego and the ‘I’ is the bridge, a selfless channel. In a true act of forgiving oneself or others the individual ‘I’ must consciously let go of hurtful memories and create an empty space — free from hurt, pride, anger etc. — into which the **Spirit Self** can work:

‘For what man’s higher ego accomplishes with regard to his lower ego throughout earthly life can be expressed in human words as a continual process of forgiveness, forgiving all those countless mistakes and errors which the lower ego goes on making.’ (Prokofieff 1991: 40)

### 2.3. The Ego and ‘I’ in context of Fourfoldness

Physical, etheric and astral/sentient bodies can be seen as garments for the ‘I’ – (Steiner 1994 chapter 1, IV):

“To the extent that it (the ‘I’) dwells in a physical body it is subject to mineral laws; through the ether body it is subject to the laws governing reproduction and growth; by virtue of the sentient and mind souls it is subject to the laws of the soul world. And to the extent that it receives the spiritual into itself, it is subject to the laws of the spirit.” (Steiner 1994: 50)

#### Diagram 3, A. Monteux:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>elements</th>
<th>earth</th>
<th>water</th>
<th>air</th>
<th>fire</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>nature</td>
<td>mineral</td>
<td>plant</td>
<td>animal</td>
<td>human being</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Human being</td>
<td>Physical</td>
<td>ether</td>
<td>astral</td>
<td>I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>basis for</td>
<td>matter</td>
<td>life</td>
<td>consciousness</td>
<td>Self-awareness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>quality</td>
<td>resting solid state</td>
<td>flowing, adjusting, rhythmic</td>
<td>dynamic movement</td>
<td>Transforming, heat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>soul quality</td>
<td>Rigid, inflexible, stuck, cold</td>
<td>balanced, peaceful</td>
<td>lively, changeable, impressionable</td>
<td>decisive, strong will, warmth, interest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘birth’ at</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>temperament</td>
<td>melancholic</td>
<td>phlegmatic</td>
<td>sanguine</td>
<td>choleric</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>born into,</td>
<td>physical environment</td>
<td>habits, traditions</td>
<td>social life</td>
<td>values aims, direction</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2.3.1. ‘I’ activities, qualities and attributes:

Self-awareness; self-consciousness; ability to reflect on and learn from pain and joy; contemplation, meditation, interest, enthusiasm; values, meaning, motivation; perseverance; direction, order and control; leadership; uprightness; warmth, eye contact; reflection; biography, purposeful movement; eternal spiritual existence, karma; eternal. (See also Points of Observation)

Through the ‘I’ human beings - in contrast to beings in the mineral, plant and animal kingdoms – can develop an individual biography extending beyond one life-span on earth; life after death, re-incarnation and karma are made possible by the ‘I’ in its relation to and interaction with the Spiritual world. See: (Steiner 2000: Manifestations of Karma, lecture 2)

2.3.2. Some helpful images:

The rider on a horse; master using physical, ether, astral as tools; person wearing garments; musician playing an instrument.

3. Development in Biography

3.1. ‘I’ Integration in Biography – ‘I’ Incarnation

The ‘I’ is the last member of the 4fold constitution to come to maturity. (See chapters on etheric body II and sentient body IV) according to the concept of the 7 year phases of human development this happens around the age of 21 and most Anthroposophic literature speaks about the ‘Birth of the Ego’.

This does not mean, however, that the ‘I’ suddenly appears, but it goes through a gradual process of incarnation from birth, taking hold of the other members, making steps of gaining more and more self-awareness and the ability to connect to and master the ‘tool’ of the other members. This is usually achieved around 21, but then remains an on-going task and challenge throughout life until it begins to gradually let go of the connection, and to start the process of excarnation, finally leading to death.

“During the first three years of the child’s life on earth, while the I is actively preparing the instruments through which it will work into the world, the child is imbued with the universal power of the I which is still closely connected with those realms it came from. However, once the I has created the appropriate organs, it will progressively connect itself with the earthly realm and begin to work through the instruments it has created”. (Goldberg 2009: 374)

This process of “progressively connecting” and through that gradually waking up to more and more self-consciousness can be seen in several crucial and significant milestones in the child’s development:

1. The moment of first saying ‘I’ to themselves; this usually occurs around the age of 3, but often earlier; this is usually also the time to which first memories can be recalled.
2. The age of contrariness (Trotzalter), saying ‘no’; having tempers, usually around 3 years, often the beginning of constantly asking ‘Why?’
3. A new mood of finding fault in adults, criticising them, becoming aware that adults can make mistakes. This can cause deep anxiety, even depression or illness and lack of trust. “Are these really my parents?” This occurs around the age of 9.
4. Adolescence – beginning to consciously asking “who am I?” and trying to find one’s identity.
But even in the new born child and toddler qualities of the 'I' and individual differences of ‘I’ activity can be experienced by others, although the child is not yet aware of this. Some examples are:

- The strength and characteristic way of the voice when crying
- Eye contact
- Strength and purpose of movement
- Quality of walking – firm steps (opposed to walking on tip toe or hesitant steps)
- Uprightness (opposed to a more soft, slouching posture)
- Determination
- Speech and articulation

The ‘I’ can be more or less manifest in these activities according to the unique constitution of the child and any differences should be observed with interest, but without making judgements on the character of the child.

Steiner (quoted in Pietzner 1999: 52) explains this process of gradual incarnation in the following way:

“If we look at the human constitution and apply the knowledge thus gained to the growing human being, to the child, the following emerges: out of the spiritual worlds comes into this one – I should like to say on wings of astrality – the human ego being. When we turn our attention to the first years of the child’s life, observing how the child develops, how by degrees he brings his physiognomy from the depths of its inner being to the surface of its body, how it gains greater and greater mastery over its organism, what we see is essentially the incorporation of the ego.”

Steiner (1909) describes the connection of the ‘I’ to laughing and weeping, and joy and pain.

“What is laughter? Laughter is something that is based on the opposite process. The ego tries as it were to loosen the astral body, to expand and stretch it. Whilst weeping is brought about by contraction, laughing is produced through the relaxing and expanding of the astral body. That is the spiritual state of affairs. Every time someone weeps, the clairvoyant consciousness can confirm that the ego is contracting the astral body. Every time someone laughs, the ego is expanding and making a bulge in the astral body. Only because the ego is active within man's being and not working as a group ego from outside can laughing and weeping arise. Now because the ego only gradually begins to be active in the child, and at birth it is not yet actually active, and has as it were not yet taken hold of the strings which direct the organism from within, the child can neither laugh nor weep in its earliest days but only learns to do so to the extent that the ego becomes master of the inner strings that are, in the first place, active in the astral body. And because everything spiritual in man finds expression in the body and the body is the physiognomy of the spirit — condensed spirit — these qualities we have been describing are expressed in bodily processes.

Steiner continues:
“And that brings us to the significant effect that pain and joy have in life. If man did not have his ego within him he could not experience pain and joy inwardly and these would have to pass him by meaninglessly. However, as he has his ego within him and can work from within on his astral body and consequently on his whole bodily nature, pain and joy become forces that can work creatively in him. All the joy and pain we experience in one incarnation become part of us, to carry over into the next incarnation; they work creatively in our being. Thus you could say that pain and joy became creative world forces at the same time as man learnt to weep and laugh, that is, at the same time as man's ego was put into his inner being. Weeping and laughter are everyday occurrences, but we do not understand them unless we know what is actually happening in the spiritual part of man, what actually goes on between the ego and the astral body when a man laughs or cries". (www.rsarchive.org)

3.2. The so-called 'Birth of the Ego'

3.2.1. The Ego as tool for the 'I' and True Self or: the Lower Ego as tool for the Higher Ego

Hopefully the young person’s ‘I’ wakes up to its task so that the ego can grow, become rich, colourful, — a strong tool for the aims and intentions of the true self, the spiritual, Individuality, — and not be a slave to the aims, needs and wishes of other people or groups.

This process is of course never fully achieved or completed, but usually comes to a certain conclusion around 21.

In this context ‘Birth of the ego’ could be seen as a stage when the forming of the various layers of identity has come to a certain maturity — when another level of "earth-maturity", similar to that achieved at puberty, is reached. (See: R. Steiner 1998, 25)

The 1st stage of development of the tool, - in this context the 'Ego' made up of physical body, etheric and astral/sentient forces, - is ready to be used, put to work, is tested and tried. The ‘I’ has developed its listening ability and it’s balancing and channelling activity into both directions — towards the spirit as well as to the body. A ‘person’ arises; the voice of the true self, carried by the ‘I’ can begin to sound through the instrument of the ego (‘per-sonare’ means ‘to sound through’) and interact with the world. See also the Image of the tree (2.1.).

3.2.2. Awakening of the ‘I’

This manifests in a new level of self-consciousness and ability to master, order and direct the ‘tool’, to make choices and decisions and begin to consciously and purposefully lead one’s life and to accept responsibility for one’s actions. To this belongs the growing ability to critically evaluate and differentiate between expectations and pressures coming towards one from ‘outside’ – society, fashion, profession, social environment, etc – and one’s one, inner conviction, aims, intentions and ideals.

With other words: to be able to distinguish between the various layers of identity and one’s own inner, essential being and to use them consciously.
3.2.3. ‘I’ and Identity

Many layers of Identity are provided at birth or acquired later, provided by family, society, culture, traditions and need to be transformed, in order to become tools the individual can use.

- physical: genes, heredity – extended to immediate environment: home, town, country
- etheric: family habits, traditions, lifestyle
- astral/sentient: social aspects, values, likes/dislikes, beliefs

Human Biography can be seen as a constant activity of the ‘I’ to work with these given elements, to transform them and decide which ones to accept, which not.

Who decides? There is a constant tension between the Inner voice or spiritual core and outer expectations, assumptions, pressures and attitudes.

There is a danger to adapt to outer, social norms and expectations of behaviours and attitudes and to fulfil roles to such a degree that we lose our unique aim and purpose and the ability to be an original, self-determined individual.

Karl König (1986, cited in: Luxford 1995: 33) speaks about ‘masks’ which we all wear; the danger is to begin to believe that we are the mask we are wearing and lose the ability to consciously choose which mask to wear or role to play in which situation.

The challenge of growing older and moving towards old age and death is then to gradually let go of these outer layers of identity, which we anyway cannot take along on the journey into the spiritual world after death.

The questions: “Who am I? Who or what do I identify with?” accompany us throughout our life and the appropriate answer has to found again and again at different stages. One particularly important moment arises around the age of 42—the so-called midlife crisis—when life forces and the physical body deteriorate; it then becomes essential to make the choice between identifying either with the declining physical and etheric body or with the potential of our spiritual reality which cannot be affected by age or illness and can provide resources for new developments, interests and directions. (Lievegoed: 1979: 51-52)

3.2.4. The Loss of Identity

This can occur at any stage in life through accident or illness leading to disability or disfigurement, change of profession, loss of possessions and other events. This can result in existential crisis, depression and even suicide unless one can relate to the reality of one’s inner spiritual being.

Anselm Grün (2000: 30), a Benedictine monk puts it this way:

“It is not sufficient to develop a strong outward self-awareness, to have an impressive appearance, to look imposing, to resist criticism, and to put up with objections and rejection. Of course that will give us the satisfying conviction that we look outwardly self-assured and self-confident. But if we haven’t discovered our own true selves, the self-awareness we are so proud of might as well be built on sand. It has no real foundations because we are not in touch with our authentic selves.

My authentic self is more than the sum of all that has happened to me, of my life-history. It is more than the sum of my upbringing, education, and all the work I have done to develop myself and to make myself what I think I am now. My true self is a mystery because it is God expressing himself in a unique way. It is the original image that God shaped of me. It is the unique word of God that is intended, longs, and strives to become flesh in me. It is the primal word of God, which, as Romano Guardini says,
has only one unique meaning: this singular, unrepeatable person that I am. My Self is the word that is intended to come into this world through me and in me, and to be born as my true self. My spiritual self is this unique and inimitable word of God that longs and throbs in its longing to be made visible and audible in me alone.”

4. Relevance for Curative Education/Social Therapy/ Social Pedagogy

4.1. Approaches to facilitate the development of 'I'

In supporting people with special/complex needs it is important to facilitate the development of all aspects of Ego and 'I'. This needs respect for their unique personality and dignity and careful listening to who they really are or want to be. This could be done through, for example, helping them to:

- make choices: food, clothes, furniture, pictures, activities, work placements
- make own decisions
- discover and respect likes and dislikes
- movement exercises
- speech exercises
- develop interests, hobbies
- voice own opinions
- find friends
- understand own biography – diary, photo album, counselling
- explore beliefs, religion, spirituality
- avoid becoming identified with ‘masks’
- appropriate therapies

4.2. ‘I’ and Ego in Autism

Autism is a highly complex phenomenon, affecting individuals in many different ways. Therefore it is essential to always consider the individual person first and then any manifestation of Autism in them. One could say that there is no such thing as Autism as such, only people with Autism, all with their own, characteristic personality.

Therefore it is important not to make general statements in connection with the ‘I’ and/or ego when trying to understand a person diagnosed with Autism.

It seems justified, however, to explore the question of ‘I’ integration and incarnation, as this process seems to be different in people affected by Autism.

The fact that many children do not make the step of saying ‘I’ to themselves by the time they are three years old, or only much later and in some cases never, seems to indicate this.

One way of understanding this could be to look at the relationship of the ‘I’ to the ego, - ego in the sense of multiple layers of identity, - as the ‘tool’. Looking at the image of the tree one could say that the 'I' is not active in the stem, but lives outside in the periphery. In that case it is more or less unable to be the link between the Individual and the Ego and can make no or only limited use of the ‘tool’.

“..we find a fundamental problem of active Ego-integration (please note the use of Ego in the sense of ‘I’) in these children. If the ego, the being of the child, is unable to properly take hold of its physical, etheric and astral bodies and gradually penetrate and individualize them, then this situation will have consequences, sooner or later, on both
Possible reasons for this are manifold and are the subject of on-going research. It is important to accept the fact that there are as many possible answers as there are researchers and individuals with Autism.
5. **Possible Points of Observation:**

The following form can be helpful to guide the observation of an individual of any age and lead to an understanding of their constitution or present situation as basis for supporting their development and well-being.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>I</strong></th>
<th><strong>Physical Aspects</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Motor skills:</td>
<td>gross – medium – fine</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| **Environmental contact:** | (e.g. glance, body language), receptive – closed off. |
| **Speech:** | no speech – echolalia speech at appropriate age level. clarity of speech. stating only; ability to question |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Non-Physical Aspects</strong></th>
<th><strong>Enthusiasm</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Interest</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consistency</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perseverance:</td>
<td>can complete tasks does not give up easily.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Direction:</td>
<td>having and following aims.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concentration:</td>
<td>ability to focus on a task concentration only for something specific.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morality:</td>
<td>awareness of fairness in play – expressing a sense of justice understanding of values, meaning. accept responsibility for own actions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-control:</td>
<td>handling of emotions handling of impulses strong (not egoistic) will.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Self-image</strong></th>
<th><strong>Focused or peripheral consciousness?</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Making choices</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Social contacts</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
6. Bibliography (and suggested further reading)


Spiritself, Lifespirit, Spiritbody, these are three different names for what in eastern terminology was called Manas, Buddhi and Atman.

In his writings Steiner differentiated the soul as well as the spirit in three aspects.

- **Sentient soul** - signifies that the ‘I’ has transformed part of the sentient body and takes on to be at the helm of soul life; feelings are dominant.

- **Heart and Mind Soul** - the double name signifies that the ‘I’ works through both the emotional, feeling aspect, as well as through thinking. The mind brings calm and reason in the flowing of sentient responses.

- **Consciousness Soul** - This signifies that the soul development has progressed to allow the individual to recognise the essential nature of the world and leads to self-awareness.

- **Spirit Self** (Manas) - is the result of the conscious transformation of the sentient body by the ‘I’; one can also speak of the revelation of the spiritual world within the ‘I’

- **Life Spirit** (Buddhi) - the conscious transformation of the etheric body by the ‘I’; transforming of habits.

- **Spirit Man** (Atman) - the conscious transformation of the physical body by the ‘I’; this process begins with transforming the breathing; Atma means breath.

- **Senses** - Steiner has proposed that the human being has 12 senses – divided in bodily senses, middle senses and spiritual senses. For full explanation see Steiner (1981) The Education of Human Consciousness.
Part II
The Individualising Processes of Four-fold Integration: John Ralph

1. Introduction

*Childhood shows the man, as morning shows the day.* – John Milton (1608-1674)

The study of the four-fold human being cannot be complete without some understanding of how the ‘members’ are progressively integrated together in the course of the developmental journey towards adulthood. Whether or not we are aware of it, our relationship to another person embraces the wholeness of that individual. Once we have looked at each of the four members separately, we need to consider their interrelationships as a whole.

*These four members of man’s being are connected with and dependent on one another in the most manifold ways. Each member influences the other, and therefore they are in constant connection one with another.* (Steiner, 1981: 53)

Modern research is continually adding new and interesting dimensions to our understanding of human development, which can prompt us to ask increasingly penetrating questions about the human constitution.

“...there is the life that flows to us from the magnificent discoveries of modern natural science. ...we cannot ignore the potent contributions of natural science to knowledge of the human being” (Steiner, 2004: 2/3).

In the study of how the four configuring constituents of the developing human being relate to one another we enter the contested territory of the mind-body relationship. This writer’s view is that the development of mind and body can be usefully explored in terms of four-fold integration, and that this approach can complement modern discoveries in shaping social pedagogical practice. When my understanding of the archetypal human being enters into a contemplative dialogue with an empathic understanding of each individual I encounter, I have found learning that enables our relationship and work together to bear fruit for us both.

The four-fold nature of developmental integration towards adulthood defines the human journey into Earthly life. The three developmental phases of the individualising process are differentiated by the step by step withdrawal of the spiritual forces of individualisation, increasingly giving the human organism into Earthly life. The interactions of physical, etheric, sentient and soul-spiritual, change profoundly during childhood and youth. Participation in life depends on the effective integration of the individual soul (bearing capacities of thinking, feeling and will) and spirit (a spectrum of consciousness) into the physical, etheric and sentient organism. The progression of integration, transformation and synthesis that we call individualisation is a subtle field of research and scantily documented. Steiner only published early indications of his findings in relation to the organic basis of thinking, feeling and will in 1917 (*Riddles of the Soul*; 1970: *The Case for Anthroposophy*, Lecture 7), after 30 years of intensive work. He described his findings in more detail in 1919, relating them to educational methods in the Lecture Course, *Foundations of Human Experience*.

Every four-fold constitution is unique, and only some of the possible configurations are included here. There is much more to be explored and this chapter offers a beginning, tentatively written from over 20 years of experiential inquiry into Rudolf Steiner’s research. Errors undoubtedly remain...
despite revisions. This is research-in-progress into the changing nature of the four-fold process of integration in child and youth development. The further phases of individualisation during adulthood and old age will be mentioned only briefly. The themes are complex so the main ideas are repeated in different words to aid critical thought. As you read, please consider carefully the resonance of your own experience and insight in relation to what is presented here.

2. The Progressive Development of Individual Human Capacities

Take care of your body with steadfast fidelity. The soul must see through these eyes alone, and if they are dim, the whole world is clouded. – Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

The three phases of child and youth development are completed at adulthood. The organism’s four configuring members (bodies) transform, and are transformed by, one another. The developmental milestones are the signature phenomena of the processes of progressive individualisation. Development within the four configurations, and their maturing interrelationships, enable new capacities to be achieved. Many of the impairments mentioned in Part I result from partial or impaired four-fold integration. Our observations will become more meaningful if we learn to recognise how the underlying processes of integration enable various characteristic faculties and traits to develop.

2.1. The Individualising Process

The use of the word ‘I’ as a noun can become a source of confusion so, instead of adopting the conventions of ‘ego’ and ‘I’ used by translators of Steiner’s lectures, the term ‘I-being’ will be used to refer to the defining spiritual source of forces of individualisation and initiative. The ‘ego’ and ‘I’ are commonly used to designate selfishness and the lived consciousness of self, whereas the spiritual I-being normally works beneath and beyond the horizons of waking self-consciousness.

The phases of development progress in distinct phases of roughly seven years. They will be referred to as the first, second and third developmental phases.

The life of an individual can be divided into periods of seven years. The first period, in which the physical body simply builds its forms, extends from birth to the change of teeth at the age of seven. The second period, in which the etheric body is active in growth and forming, continues until puberty. The forms are defined until the age of seven and the already-defined forms are then enlarged. From fourteen to twenty-one the astral body is especially predominant, and at twenty-one the true I is born and becomes independent. [Thus] the life of the individual runs its course in certain periods until the birth of the human I. (Steiner, 1990b: Lecture 2)

The soul and spirit are already united before conception, and they conjoin with the developing embryonic organism within the womb. Etheric and sentient forces are gathered around the physical parental inheritance during pregnancy in the nourishing ‘ocean’ of the mother’s womb, as a pearl surrounds its earthly ‘seed’ within an ‘oyster’. This ‘pearly seed’ does not harden in the womb, and the individualising forces will refine it further after birth. The new-born infant is a pearly queen or king who is intent on taking complete possession of its physical, etheric and sentient kingdoms in due season. See Steiner, 1996b: Lecture 1 for more details.

How can we imagine these embryonic experiences, which are long forgotten? Fortunately there is a poet who has shared his memories of experience in the womb:
My Body being Dead, my Lims unknown:
   Before I skild to prize
   Those living Stars mine Eys,
Before my Tongue or Cheeks were to me shewn,
   Before I knew my hands were mine,
Or that my Sinews did my Members joyn,
   When neither Nostril, Foot, nor Ear,
As yet was seen, or felt, or did appear;
   I was within
A house I knew not, newly clothd with Skin.

Then was my Soul my only All to me,
   A Living Endless Ey,
Just bounded with the Skie
Whose Power, whose Act, whose Essence was to see.

– Thomas Traherne (1636-1674)

The incoming spiritual I-being has been attracted to the bloodlines of particular parents who have the capacity to pass on characteristic qualities that this I-being needs during this lifetime to clothe its soul and manifest its potential. The incoming I-being seeks to inherit the best fit available ‘off the shelf’ of inheritance, which will need the least amount of bespoke tailoring to become fit for adult purposes. In most cases the physical, etheric and sentient forces from the mother and father are received as generous hand-me-downs that can be adjusted and grown into.

Correctly speaking, all human feelings should function from a fundamental sense of gratitude that the cosmos has given us birth and a place within the universe. (Steiner, 2004: 54)

A close fit of body and soul is not always available, and some infants awaken in a body that they reject or ignore, which can lead to some of the spectrum of autistic configurations. The poem by Traherne, above, offers a valuable window into the overwhelming magnitude of an autistic inner life.

It is the soul’s task to learn to recognise its uniqueness. Nothing of the I-being is inherited from the parents. The processes of individualisation during childhood and youth engage the highest expressions of will described by Rudolf Steiner (1996b: Lecture 4). It is the will of the I-being to find and fashion a fitting organism for the soul, through which the soul can discover its capacities and potentials.

A teacher’s primary task is to nurture the body to be as healthy as possible. This means that we use every spiritual measure to ensure that in later life a person’s body will be the least possible hindrance to the will of one’s spirit...
Each child in every age brings something new into the world from divine regions, and it is our task as educators to remove the bodily and soul obstacles, so that the child’s spirit may enter with full freedom into life. (Steiner, 2004: 48/56)

During pregnancy the I-being has to work on the inheritance of both parents through the forces of the mother. The baby begins to express its uniqueness straight away, although the soul has hardly penetrated the bodily constitution. The I-being directs its own spiritual legacy, which are the forces of individualisation, from outside the body. The soul gradually becomes internalised within the confines of the body where it can awaken to self-awareness.

The physical body is renewed and replaced in the first developmental phase in the caring ‘womb’ of the family home. As the physical body grows during the second developmental phase the etheric body is refashioned in the ‘pupa’ of the home and schooling environment. The sentient body is
reshaped and the physical body is redefined during the third developmental phase in the ‘ecological niche’ of education and society.

Individualising an inherited member means making it fit for the I-being’s life purpose. Everything cannot be achieved at once. Individual purpose requires a body and constitution with a distinctive balance of strengths and vulnerabilities. The task of social pedagogues is to support this unique adaptive process of entry and integration into life and society. We aim to collaborate with the will of the I-being, and one of our biggest challenges is that we generally know little of the ultimate life intentions of those we are supporting. The spiritual inheritance of the I-being is the result of developmental achievement during previous lifetimes. The I-being seeks to take up the inherited ‘bed’ of the past and walk with it into the future.

*Human beings want to bring what they previously lived through in the spiritual world to the reality of the physical world. Before the change of teeth, human beings are, in a sense, focused upon the past. Human beings are still filled with the devotion developed in the spiritual world. For this reason they focus upon their surroundings by imitating people... Children live so much in the past and, in many respects, reveal, not the physical, but the prenatal, the spirit-soul past.* (Steiner, 1996b: 156/157)

The task of the social pedagogue is to support the I-being in its transforming work, trusting that it knows its highest purpose better than we do. A sense of direction within the individualising process will gradually dawn if we pay enough attention. Let us look at the processes of individualisation in more detail.

We have seen that the new-born infant is surrounded by soul and spirit that seek to penetrate and transform the bodily organism. The spiritual inheritance, the treasures and tribulations of prenatal existence, is fully prepared to transform the gifts of family inheritance, and thus achieve a distinctive capacity for self-determination. Individualisation involves the progressive integration of the soul into the bodily physiology (physical and etheric) as it is being transformed by the spiritual will of the I-being. From the beginning we can observe the predispositions of the soul in broad strokes as it absorbs and is absorbed into the physical, etheric and sentient configurations. The individual will begins to reveal itself within family and cultural inheritance, even in the earliest years of life; the powerful presence of a baby’s survival needs quickly carves out its place in family life.

At first the individualising process penetrates into the physical body through the etheric organism, particularly through the first three years. Powerful survival instincts and protective reflexes live within the physical and etheric organism, and it important that these are transformed, but not lost. The I-being then withdraws into the sentient organism during the second developmental phase, and only works indirectly into the etheric organism. In the third phase of development the I-being withdraws further and only works indirectly into the sentient etheric and physical organism, continuing the developing individualisation. In youth, the desire nature of the sentient organism becomes strong enough to overcome instinctive survival instincts, so the emotional exhilaration of risk-taking may become enticingly attractive.

The nature of the successive phases of development is governed by the forces available to the I-being from the organism or body where it is actively working. The I-being may not transform everything in its inheritance. What remains embedded of the inherited traits in the members is needed by the I-being for its meaningful purpose in life, providing the seed material for life’s greater developmental lessons. Inherited traits that the I-being cannot transform into its tools during childhood and youth become the challenges of its lifelong lessons. The outcomes of this learning will become transformative forces of individualisation in the next lifetime. Such ideas as these can enable us to recognise that so-called disabilities are not obstacles to learning, but the very embodiment of life’s lessons.
The first lesson of the newborn soul is the new-found bodily organism. The more fully the organism can be penetrated, the more complete the learning environment of the soul. At birth, the etheric and sentient configurations must be sufficiently integrated into the physical body in order for the infant to thrive and take hold of its development. Although many higher functions are not yet possible, the basic metabolic functions and reflexes are already in place. The soul’s capacity for thinking, feeling and will, has to enable and adapt the inherited organic capacities to support these three activities. Without the integration of the soul into the sentient and etheric organisations, the infant physical body cannot begin to establish adult human functions. The individualising process brings about a deeper integration of its four-fold configuration in the service of agile will, delicate feeling and creative thinking. For individualised learning to take place the I-being has to become detached, leaving room for the sense of self to mature.

It is not easy to discern the cause of variations in the process of development. What is the high purpose of individual disability? Genetic differences may give rise to a spectrum of syndromes with characteristic identifying features and a different capacity for healthy development, even if life expectancy is relatively short. Physical impairments may arise during the embryonic life before birth, which may disrupt the interpenetration of the inherited etheric and sentient configurations. Such impairments may isolate the etheric and sentient natures so that, for example, full functionality of movement or sensory awareness is not achieved, or only achieved with effort and support. Some physical impairments can be surgically repaired, for example, a hole in the heart. Others may require external support, such as corrective glasses for short sightedness. Yet the human organism can show a remarkable capacity for adaptation, such as the increased sensitivity of hearing or touch that often develops in the case of blindness. The insistence of the I-being to lead the soul into the life of the world, and participate in social life, is phenomenal. By means of compensating adaptive developments, apparently disabling physical impairments can enable other strengths to blossom and become integrated into a healthy and fulfilling life.

2.2. Boundaries and Interpenetration

The Earthly inheritance of the infant gives the I-being a golden opportunity to to shape its particular adult organism and develop its future abilities. This is even more complex than the metamorphosis of the earth-bound caterpillar, for example, which undergoes a complete change as a pupa before becoming a butterfly. The human being does not have the luxury of a protective pupa in the thorough overhaul that takes place in youth. In a way, childhood illnesses are opportunities to withdraw from life for a moment, into a special warmth condition that is needed for particular stages of development to can take place. The family can provide some protection during these periods of intense vulnerability, but difficult challenges cannot be avoided. When this is understood, families may not feel so helpless in the face of developmental work that has to be achieved through serious illness. Vulnerable periods are the rites of passage towards adulthood, which are intensely testing lessons requiring a certain amount of time to be accomplished.

The developing individuality brings a spiritual inheritance that adapts to the prevailing conditions and situation of the time, finding a way between family inheritance and societal pressures. The individual constitutional disposition may also lead to developmental disruption, even if all seems well at birth. Unfortunate external events may prevent a harmoniously integrated baby from developing complete integration within the four-fold constitution during youth. The developmental integration of individual sentient and etheric forces may encounter a range of apparently restrictive incapacities or learning difficulties. These restrictions can be considered as hurdles to be jumped, or lessons to be learned and transcended. What appears initially as vulnerability or impairment may contribute to the development of a particular strength. Difficulties from birth may be overcome through developmental achievements of childhood or youth. Every human baby has to learn the ways of the world, and confront the temptations of egocentricity on the way towards self-
determined life. Each one of us has to make our own life meaningful. There are choices to be made between social responsibility and self-care. The experiences of childhood and youth will influence the choices that give our lives direction.

The infant human organism is very vulnerable to the influence of its environment, which is why the protective nurturing influence of the family environment is so critical. The infant organism has to open up to the incoming soul. Becoming an adult involves the transformation and further development of the inherited infant organism. The basic metabolic functions are already established at birth together with instinctive reflexes and basic life-sustaining drives. The four constitutional configurations and their interrelationships develop and individualise during the phases of childhood and youth. The development of new faculties signals the progress of the underlying processes of individualisation and soul integration.

While the developmental milestones of individualisation are quite distinct, the shifting boundaries between the four constituent members of the human being are not.

\[It \text{ is not possible to say that the human being is made up of physical body, etheric body, astral [sentient] body and I as if they had definite boundaries.} \] (Steiner, 1921: 14)

In an attempt to dissolve assumptions of distinct boundaries that arise when thinking about the four constitutional members, the word ‘body’ will be avoided in what follows.

The physical, etheric and sentient configurations grow into one another throughout childhood and youth, binding themselves into a more intimately integrated adult organism within the solid, fluid and gaseous substances of the physical forms, which are permeated by a warmth organisation. The embodied sentient forces are drawn further into the organism with the embodied etheric forces at the same time as both are being transformed by the individualising influence of the I-being working primarily through the warmth organisation.

\[“This \text{ warmth organization is subject to the ego organization.”} \] (Steiner, 1997: Lecture 1)

When the process of individualising the etheric organism has been completed during the second developmental phase, the I-being releases its grip on the etheric forces of the head. It is no accident that we speak of needing a cool head in order to think. The life forces that are needed to sustain the organism remain embedded in the physical body, and a portion of the etheric forces turns towards the sentient configuration to support the development of reflective thinking. These embodied etheric forces begin to hold back the stimulating forces of the environment, so that outer forces cannot interfere so powerfully with the healthy formation of the organs. Influences from the environment are reflected back by the etheric forces of the head so that the sentient organism can present them to consciousness in the soul, enabling sense-based thinking and feeling to penetrate the environment and develop social awareness.

Much of our formative education comes through the sense organs. The effectiveness of these organs depends on their ability to resiliently respond to specific stimulating influences without imposing their individuality on those stimuli. A sense organ has to be selfless if we are to experience the world around us.

\[My \text{ body has the task to function in a way that can be compared with the action of a mirror. … Standing in front of the mirror, I perceive my body as a reflection. It is like this also with our sense perceptions, although we must, of course, be aware of the insufficiency of the analogy.} \] (Steiner, 1973: Part II, VIII)

The temperament that characterises the etheric organism can subtly distort our world experience if it is not harmoniously balanced during the second developmental phase of childhood. During this
time the sentient organism is learning to selectively filter incoming impressions so that we are not continually overwhelmed. This is an instinctive and impulsive education based on the instincts and drives for survival in the midst of challenging environmental influences. During the third developmental phase this process must become more conscious, as part of individual learning styles and frames of reference. The narrowing down of selective attention is only possible where the etheric and sentient forces are well integrated; otherwise the constant stream of sense impressions will remain as overwhelming as in early infancy.

Self-investigation can identify the existence of two boundaries in our human constitution, which are formed as a result of the integration of embodied sentient and etheric forces. These boundaries form within the etheric organism where sentient forces of sympathy, which attract and penetrate, are separated out from sentient forces of antipathy that repel and release. The etheric mirror, described above, forms a boundary to sensory stimuli, protecting the physical body during the third phase of development and adulthood. Because external influences no longer dissipate into the physical organs during adolescence, feelings are stirred up more strongly by sensory impressions. The extreme vulnerability of infancy may return in later life when the etheric forces become depleted through illness or ageing.

How is this etheric and sentient boundary experienced? This boundary separates our immediate sensory awareness within the sentient soul from our memories embedded among etheric forces. This boundary is especially noticeable when we cannot remember something that we feel intensely that we know. Here we can experience how antipathy forces have pressed memories down into the etheric configuration. An act of will is required to raise memories into consciousness. More on this in Section 4.4. This same etheric mirror is responsible for the flush of emotion in response to events around us. When this boundary is infiltrated by events, the response is a physical rosy flush of embarrassment and shame, or the pallor of fear. These are both due to a physical redirection of the blood flow that is experienced as an increase of warmth and self-consciousness, or a decrease in warmth with an increase in anxious vigilance. Embarrassment can be seen as a momentary fever that motivates us to change ourselves. Cold fear motivates us to withdraw to a safe refuge in more comfortable circumstances. Both of these sensations prompt us to bring our warmth organisation into balance.

The second distinct boundary conceals the physical nature of the stimuli to which our sense organs respond, so that our conscious awareness is presented with a mental impression that has been shaped by the embodied etheric and sentient forces. We do not experience sensory stimuli directly, but the boundary that sets a limit to our sensory experience can be discovered by rigorous self-investigation. Sensory stimuli create mental impressions that are more useful to us than their underlying stimuli. These mental impressions enable us to learn from experience and find purpose in life. Rather than the experience of rapidly changing vibrations of air pressure, we experience sound. Rather than experiencing how the chemical composition of our body changes, we experience hunger, thirst, pain and fatigue. We cannot see the light that enters our eyes, but we see the objects that the light has touched.

The boundaries described here involve physical, etheric and sentient forces, so they are not separating boundaries between these configurations, but a reflective interface established by the spiritual forces of individualisation in their task of ‘seating’ the soul within a functioning sentient organism. In order to better understand the ordering of the three phases of development, we shall look at this in more detail.
2.3. The Guiding Forces of Individual Development

The incoming I-being is the architect of the processes of integration and the development of self-awareness throughout the seven-year phases of child and youth development.

*The “I,” as the real master-worker, labours at all the other members.* (Steiner, 1990a: Lecture 2)

How does the I-being achieve this? Three integral systems bind the human constitution together so that the four-fold bodily organism becomes an effective instrument and mediator of self-determining human consciousness: the life of the soul. These three bodily systems are usually called

- the neurosensory system (NSS) of brain and nerves,
- the rhythmical system (RS) centred in the circulating pulse and respiration of heat and lungs,
- the system of metabolic processes and limbs or metabolic-limb system (MLS) of digestive assimilation and physical activity.

These three support our senses and thinking (NSS), our feeling and experience (RS), and the expression of our will (MLS).

*The soul life that manifests in thinking, feeling and willing ... has its seat in the organisation of the body.* (Steiner, 1998: Lecture 1)

Rudolf Steiner’s lectures to the prospective teachers of the world’s first Waldorf School in Stuttgart, published as *The Foundations of Human Experience* (Steiner, 1996b), offer the most comprehensive descriptions of his insights into the healthy development of human will, feeling and thinking. The capacity to direct the will, to feel and to think involves the development of the sentient organism, and becomes conscious in the soul. Our psychological faculties do not arise from our physical formations, but are progressively integrated into our physiology, developing increasingly effective functionality: practice perfects. The bodily members become more able to work together in the service of the soul. The effective expression of will, feeling and thinking reveals the effective integration of these three faculties of the soul into the sentient, etheric and physical organism.

*We must start in our present investigation from the manifestations of the life of soul, from thinking, feeling and willing, and trace our way back until we can “behold” the real condition.* (Steiner, 1998: Lecture 2)

Human development involves progressive awakenings. At the same time, with every new awakening what has previously been in the foreground of our attention moves into the background of unconsciousness; for example, after infancy the need for nourishment no longer wakes us up from sleep unless the urgency is extreme. Our attention is stimulated by new sensations and thoughts so that we can respond consciously, while familiar stimuli sink down into semi-conscious habits and cliché responses that barely rise into awareness. The repetition of responses to experiences in early life conditions our future responses, becoming ingrained habits that are hard to change. Habits can be as disabling as they are enabling if we do not examine our conditioned responses in later life. We can become trapped in assuming ‘the same old thing again’, which effectively sends us to sleep.

On the other hand, we could not possibly take conscious account of every stimulus in our environment all day. The individualising capacity to filter out the breadth of sensory stimulation enables us to focus our attention at will. If this habitual capacity to filter sensation does not develop, we will be overwhelmed and unable to make sense of the constant barrage of impressions. This process of individualisation is supported by the familiarisation of repetitive bodily impressions until we can ‘forget’ it and focus on our environment. As the child’s awareness of its organism dims
down into the comforting sense of wellbeing or life, feeling the good, the sense of balance establishes a small fulcrum of stillness. This focal point of silence within the body, suffused with wellbeing, awakens the emancipating awareness of self.

When this singular anchoring point of self-consciousness has been established within the physical organism, the manifold confusion of sensations and impressions can be integrated into one coherent image of the world around self. This enables the child to find and orientate self in the world, and seeds the sense of belonging. The body is not forgotten in active use, as pain and change demand that the body image is adjusted at irregular intervals for the duration of life. A body whose movement brings joy rather than anxiety, and a fairly reliable ‘same old thing again’ self-imitating repetition, encourages us to explore the world.

Establishing a safe anchorage within the body has far-reaching implications, as a personal example will illustrate. At the age of ten, we had to write short adventure stories in primary school. A girl in my class with some learning difficulties, who came from a so-called ‘difficult’ family, would always conclude her stories with the cliché, “Then they went home and had their tea”. Her writing was laborious and uneven, and a scary story of a wild storm at sea had the same ‘happy ending’, which made us laugh. It has taken many long years for the realisation to dawn that this girl needed a safe place of return in herself and her world. Teatime at home, before her father returned from working ‘down the mine’, was the most reliable haven she knew.

Our primary attachment is normally to the body, and the foundation of bodily experience requires the unifying integration of the bodily senses. Attachments express the deep need of the soul to belong, which brings a powerful and lifelong momentum to the will. The fulfilment of the need to belong will only come when the will awakens to the experience of belonging to the I-being. The will is the first of the three soul activities to develop, and is the one that remains least conscious throughout adult life. Thinking develops last and is most awake, giving us the capacity to direct and reflect on the motions of our sleeping will. It is the task of the I-being to achieve the effective development and adaptation of physical, etheric and sentient configurations for the use of the soul, thereby preparing the conditions for the soul’s further development in adulthood.

Steiner’s insights into mental impairment stand on his observation that they are generally impairments of the will, rather than the capacity to think.

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At birth we inherit a physical, etheric and sentient organism (Steiner, 1998: Lecture 1). During the first developmental phase, the individualising etheric forces are pressed into service by the surrounding youthful forces of the sentient soul and spiritual I-being as the physical organism grows and the etheric forces penetrate the inherited body ever more deeply, systematically absorbing and being absorbed by the Earthly gifts of inheritance and upbringing. The emancipation of independent thinking is the healthy outcome of the second seven-year developmental process of integrating the sentient organism with individualised etheric forces. At puberty the individual soul integrates itself and is partially absorbed by the inherited sentient organisation. During this period of emotional
vulnerability the relationship between child and parents often becomes increasingly dissonant. A new capacity of processing the learning of the day during sleep is developed (Steiner, 1981: Lecture 1) that does not depend on the bodily organism.

A man becomes a finished product in his twenties; he is then no longer dependent upon [the wisdom of] his physical organism. ... Only indirectly does the human being experience something of his ego; namely, when he comes into relation with other people and his karma comes into play. (Steiner, 1984: Lecture 3)

The human soul requires thinking, feeling and willpower in order to engage with the world and participate in human society. Throughout childhood and youthful development, the activities of thinking feeling and will progressively draw the soul into the sentient configuration, which, in turn, reorganises and individualises the bodily organs and systems. In the same way that manual dexterity develops by using our hands, the I-being’s individualising forces work through the sentient forces in the purposeful use of will, feeling and thinking. As the successive stages of integration are achieved, new capacities for self-development arise. As youthful activity becomes more meaningful, the integration of the soul becomes more satisfying.

The human being can be victorious over pathological pre-dispositions when he can envelop bodily weakness, bodily [malformation] with the light of a healthy willing, a healthy feeling and a self-disciplined thinking. ... in the spirit, if we truly strengthen it, we continue to have the best remedy for everything which can affect us in life. (Steiner, 1983: Lecture 7)

So, how does the spiritual architect of human development achieve individualisation? The forces of spiritual will shape the organs of Earthly will. The forces of spiritual feeling shape the organs of Earthly feeling. The forces of spiritual thinking shape the organs of Earthly thinking. Individualisation is achieved through the purposeful integration of the soul faculties of will, feeling and thinking. It is the I-being that inculcates individual meaningful purpose into the soul: why we came here in the first place.

Just as the physical body falls into decay if the etheric body does not keep it together, and as the etheric body sinks into unconsciousness if not illuminated by the astral body, so the astral body would necessarily allow the past to be lost in oblivion unless the ego rescued the past by carrying it over into the present. What death is to the physical body and sleep to the etheric, the power of forgetting is to the astral body. We may put this in another way, and say that life is the special characteristic of the etheric body, consciousness that of the astral body, and memory that of the ego. (Steiner, 1979: 46)
3. Significant Indicators of Developmental Integration

*If children grew up according to early indications, we should have nothing but geniuses.*

– Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

There are relatively distinct phases of transition as bodily development becomes able to support increasingly complex psychological functioning. Some of these signposts are mentioned in previous chapters. A selection of distinctive constitutional configurations will be briefly characterised here. Points of Observation in Section 6 offer some useful lines of inquiry.

3.1. Physical and Etheric Configuration

The substances of the physical organism are in a continual process of replacement and renewal. We are perpetually casting off the material content of our physical body, and replacing it with fresh substance.

*With the change of teeth the human being really renews his whole physical body. This must be taken as a fundamental fact. That the human being gets second teeth is really only the most external symptom of all, merely, a fragment of what is going on. Just as the so-called milk teeth are replaced, so is the whole human organism replaced.* (Steiner, 1997: Lecture I (Easter Course))

The physical substance of the body is discarded throughout life; the rate of renewal varies with different organs. For example our gustatory organs of taste on the tongue are completely renewed every few weeks. This is due to the ‘centrifugal impulse’ of the etheric organism.

*The body changes with each year that passes. We are perpetually thrusting something out from our body; a streaming outwards, a centrifugal impulse is at work all the time, pushing the body out. The consequence is that the body of man is completely renewed every seven or eight years. This renewal is, however, particularly significant about the time of the change of teeth, about the seventh year.* (Steiner, 1998: Lecture 1)

Physical formation, development and recuperation of the physical body reveal how thoroughly the etheric forces penetrate into the physical formations. The physical body is moulded during infancy in a manner that is not possible later on. During the second phase of development the I-being works into the etheric forces through the sentient organism, no longer working directly into physical forces, but indirectly on the physical and etheric physiology. Steiner also referred to this centrifugal impulse as a catabolic process: a metabolic process of breaking apart.

Etheric forces have no capacity to create anything new in the bodily organism; they can only build up and sustain what is already there. Do we have to consider the role of sentient forces in this centrifugal impulse? Without catabolic forces breaking down our nourishment, there could be no growing or constructive processes so there needs to be a balance of catabolism and anabolism. Life-long tendencies towards illness are rooted in the physical and etheric forces. Health and development depend on the interpenetration of all four configurations during the day, for our soul and spiritual life depends on the catabolic forces.

*Physical processes in the human physical body can only be healthful when the ego and astral [sentient] organization are down in the physical body, as is the normal condition during waking life. It is constantly interrupted by the sleep condition. Normally, however, even during sleep the catabolic process is still always going on in the physical body; it must be there so that the soul-life and spiritual life as a whole can really unfold. For the spiritual life is not connected with anabolic processes, only with catabolic processes. During sleep, therefore, there must be just as much of the catabolic processes as a person needs for*
waking life to unfold the next morning. If too many catabolic processes are there because of some unhealthy sleep condition, a residue of these processes piles up in the human organism, and then we have the inner cause for an illness. ... On one side, in the sleep condition of the human physical and etheric bodies we find the basis for spiritual development; on the other side, in the very same processes we find the basis for illnesses. Thereby illness is brought into direct connection with human spiritual development. Thus if we study what is active during sleep in the human physical and etheric bodies, we find the fundamental causes of illness.

(Steiner, 2003: p120)

What is the nature of the soul and spiritual development that Steiner mentions? An important clue is that the physical formation has a restraining influence on individual consciousness.

\[ I \ have \ recently \ emphasized \ how \ the \ organizing \ principle \ in \ the \ physical \ body \ emerges \ with \ the \ change \ of \ teeth, \ frees \ itself \ during \ this \ time, \ and \ shapes \ primarily \ the \ intelligence. \]

(Steiner, 1982a: p43)

This restraint is released during sleep when consciousness is reduced when the soul and I-being are lifted away from the sentient organism. These indications suggest that childhood health is intimately bound up with intellectual development. The individualising process of the soul’s integration into the organism depends on the health of the bodily constitution. The formation and functioning of the organs assert an influence on soul development during the third phase of development. An example of physiological development influencing the character of psychological development was given earlier in the individualising of focussed attention. This influence does not continue into adulthood.

\[ But \ if, \ after \ the \ human \ being \ has \ passed \ his \ twenty-first \ year, \ an \ abnormality \ appears \ in \ the \ liver \ or \ in \ some \ other \ organ, \ this \ organ \ is \ by \ then \ so \ much \ “on \ its \ own” \ and \ so \ detached, \ that \ the \ will — \ in \ its \ inner \ “soul” \ aspect — \ can \ keep \ itself \ independent \ of \ it. \ This \ is \ less \ and \ less \ possible \ the \ further \ one \ goes \ back \ into \ the \ years \ of \ childhood. \ But \ in \ a \ grown \ person \ the \ soul-life \ has \ become \ relatively \ independent; \ the \ organs \ already \ have \ a \ definite \ direction, \ and \ the \ oncoming \ of \ illness \ in \ an \ organ \ will \ not \ work \ so \ strongly \ upon \ the \ soul-life, \ and \ can \ therefore \ be \ treated \ simply \ as \ a \ disease \ in \ that \ organ. \ In \ the \ very \ young \ child, \ however, \ everything \ is \ still \ working \ together; \ a \ diseased \ organ \ still \ works \ into \ the \ life \ of \ soul — \ and \ very \ actively. \ (Steiner, \ 1998: \ Lecture \ 1) \]

Learning depends on the flexibility of the etheric organism that mediates between the physical form and the soul that grips and releases it in the alternation of waking and sleeping. At the conclusion of the second phase of development the etheric forces of the head are released to serve the soul’s capacity to think. The capacity for lifelong learning can be a sign of how effectively the etheric forces were able to let go at puberty.

\[ An \ etheric \ body \ that \ is \ less \ firmly \ knit \ to \ the \ physical \ body \ can \ always \ absorb \ new \ ideas, \ because \ it \ is \ elastic; \ an \ etheric \ body \ that \ is \ firmly \ knit \ to \ the \ physical \ body \ absorbs \ a \ certain \ number \ of \ concepts, \ and \ definite \ forms \ that \ have \ thus \ been \ imprinted \ in \ the \ physical \ body \ which \ it, \ in \ turn, \ forces \ upon \ the \ etheric \ body. \ (Steiner, \ 1911) \]

One source of organic abnormalities is particularly important. Physical anomalies may indicate non-typical genetic configurations, with characteristic identifying features and developmental constraints. Genetic syndromes raise questions about the individualising soul and spiritual forces. The I-being draws its capacity to take hold of the family and genetic inheritance from a previous lifetime.
The existence of defective forces of heredity means that before conception there was a lack of knowledge of the human organisation. Before a human being comes down to Earth, he must have an exact knowledge of the human organism; otherwise he cannot enter into this organism in the right way during the first seven years, neither can he transform it rightly. (Steiner, 1998: Lecture 1)

These considerations suggest that we cannot ignore the sentient organism when we investigate physical and etheric development. This will become even more obvious as we continue.

3.2. Etheric and Sentient Configuration

Robust good health and complete recovery after illness indicate a strong integration of etheric forces into the physical body. Mobility of the physical body requires the effective integration of the sentient organisation. For example, “Human breathing, for instance, in its physical manifestation, is a function of the astral [sentient] body”. (Steiner, 1997: Lecture 1) Steiner explains that the forces of the sentient configuration tend to impede and reduce the recuperative capacity of the etheric forces.

The etheric impulses are opposed by the activity of the astral [sentient] body which dampens down the etheric activity all the time. If there were only etheric activity, budding and sprouting life in your organism, you would never have a life of soul, you would never unfold consciousness and would have to vegetate in a plant existence. No consciousness unfolds in a process that is simply one of growing, budding, sprouting. For consciousness to develop, the etheric, budding and sprouting life must be dampened down. Therefore in any organ where the etheric life is dampened down or lamed, we have, even in normal human life, the perpetual beginning of illness. There can be no development of consciousness without this perpetual tendency to illness. If you wanted just to be healthy—well, that is possible—but then you would have to lead a vegetative existence. If you want to unfold a life of soul, if you want to have consciousness, the vegetative process must be present, but it must be dampened down. … The astral organism must continually dampen down what is brought about by the etheric organism. In reality, therefore, what the astral organism does, day by day in the life of man, amounts to a tendency to illness. (Steiner, 1997: Lecture 2)

We are not trying to intrude into the domain that properly belongs to medical professionals, but social pedagogues do need to understand how tendencies towards illness can appear within a developing constitution and contribute to the individualising process. Whether the tendency to illness is revealed within the embodied etheric forces or the sentient forces, the origin lies in the spirit and soul that is working on the inherited organism. Tendencies in the etheric forces arise from the I-being, and will tend to appear in the later years of the first developmental phase. Those in the sentient forces are implanted by the soul as it becomes more deeply integrated, and will tend to appear during the third developmental phase. In both cases, development may take an unexpected turn after initial signs of healthy development.

The life of feeling lies in the realm of the soul. A continual equalization or balancing takes place between the etheric and sentient forces. When this balancing is disturbed by overwhelming sentient forces, the life of feeling strikes down into the physical organism. Those who can restrain personal feelings within the realm of soul remain healthy. If they cannot do this, such as in situations of chronic stress, then feeling invades the bodily organs and illness may arise. A growing number of studies suggest that illness is fundamentally stress-related, categorising the most common ailments as Psychophysiologic Disorders. Steiner puts it like this:
Think of this astral [sentient] organism with its perpetual tendency to make an organ, or the whole man, ill. Genuine observation will show you that this is so. For no feeling could arise in you if this astral [sentient] organism were not present. (Steiner, 1997: Lecture 2)

Some youngsters are hyper-vigilant, and live in a constant state of stress. This is commonly diagnosed as Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). Hyper-vigilance puts stress on the whole system of nerves and senses, which draws sentient forces too early into the detailed mental processing of sensory stimuli when the soul is still only finding its way into the bodily organisation. Premature psychological development can cut short the work of the individualising etheric forces in the physical organism, which may result in vulnerability to illnesses in later life. See also Section 4.3.

The seven life processes are also part of the interweaving activity of sentient and etheric forces. There is no space to explore life processes here in detail, but it should be noted that distortions of these processes can influence psychological as well as physiological development.

When vulnerability to infections is combined with slow healing and recovery, we have to consider the age when this tendency developed. The sentient forces may steal vital etheric forces away from the physical formative processes. This is why intellectual overstimulation before puberty is to be avoided. In the early years the opposite should happen, or else the inherited body cannot be adequately transformed during the second phase of development. The hyper-vigilant constitution may develop as a result of childhood trauma. It should not be confused with that of the hyperactive and restless constitution, which also consumes a lot of energy, but for very different reasons. Such children may always be on the run, and can draw forces from those who are with them. See Steiner, 1998, Lecture 5 for more on the restless constitution.

When the etheric forces are overwhelmed by the sentient hyper-vigilance it may be difficult to digest food effectively, so the child does not thrive. The individual may need protection from sensory overload in order to thrive. It may happen that the sentient forces invade the digestive system so that the progress of food through the gut is experienced. This indicates a restless but not active constitution. Such sensitivity to bodily functions is usually lost in infancy when the Sense of Life or Wellbeing covers over this awareness with less detailed sensations of comfort or discomfort.

Over-awareness of the internal digestive system, while the head sleeps, has given rise to the notion of an inversion of the sentient configuration. The quality of alertness that is usually associated with the head and its outward-facing senses has turned inwards. Instead of the usual unaware nature of the metabolic system, the pulsating digestive processes are accompanied with an attentive awareness. This internal distraction reduces awareness of the surroundings. Teenagers who live strongly in the environment of their digestive processes can find comfort in the presence of a favourite adult, or ‘local hero’, with whom they are often willing to do activities that, in other circumstances, are beyond their ability. The comforting sense of wellbeing that usually rises up from efficient digestion is apparently found externally within a reliable and enduring one-to-one relationship.

Unusually quick healing and the general absence of illness may indicate that the sentient configuration is not being drawn into the etheric organism. This does not necessarily imply that the sentient forces are weak. It is more likely to be an indication that the soul is not being drawn down into the bodily organisation. This can be a feature of some autistic constitutions. This constitutional configuration may also be accompanied by some sensory hypo-sensitivity, often with inhibiting hyper-sensitivity in one of the senses and a lack of motivation beyond food and favoured people.

In both of these situations the development of the MLS is inhibited; this influences the psychological development of the will, which in turn inhibits the expression of feeling and thinking. See Steiner, 1998, Lecture 5 for more detail on the above constitutions.
The challenges for the individualizing etheric and sentient configurations to penetrate the inherited body make themselves known in childhood diseases such as scarlet fever and measles (Steiner, 1997: Lecture I). After recuperating from these diseases, we often find that children have been enabled to make a substantial step forward in their development. The I-being, working through the embodied warmth organisation, is able to take advantage of a period of raised temperature to penetrate more deeply into the organism through the etheric and sentient forces.

Steiner told medical students that developmental delay can be caused by the insufficient penetration of the etheric and physical organism by the sentient forces and I-being (Steiner, 1997: Lecture I). This leads us to consider the epileptic constitution. Epilepsy is a condition that raises questions about the relationship of the etheric organism to the sentient configuration and directed soul capacities. The physical body of the epileptic constitution is often rather dense where it lacks sufficient penetration of the sentient forces that bring airiness and levity. Specific features of a constitution that is subject to epileptic seizures can enable an anthroposophic diagnosis of a specific organ that is too dense to allow the complete integration of the spirit and soul forces. As the pressure of the forces that want to penetrate and transform the organ(s) builds up to a critical point, a seizure erupts that releases the pressure. Steiner, 1998, Lectures 3 and 4 explain this in more detail. During a seizure, there may be a loss or reduction in consciousness as the sentient soul and even part of the sentient configuration separates temporarily from the etheric organism. Brief absences of consciousness may hardly be noticed. A major seizure can threaten the vital functions, and breathing may stop. Anxiety and emotional tension are at their most intense just before a seizure, and once the pressure has been released, a period of relaxation or sleep often follows.

Medication can offer some respite, even complete freedom, from seizures by alleviating stressful pressure on the organs. This often comes at the price of alertness, as the sentient organism may become sluggish as a result of decreasing the porosity of the organism. Some of these medications may promote weight-gain, particularly during the third developmental phase, as the individualising forces working through the sentient organism can no longer impress and embellish the bodily forms, allowing the etheric forces of growth to work more strongly.

The development of movement coordination and control belongs in this section. Useful work has been developed by movement therapists drawing on the concept of brain plasticity, or neuroplasticity, which comes from research investigating how the brain develops and adapts. Neurological research suggests that substantial changes and adaptations are possible at any age. This happens naturally in childhood through playful and apparently random movements that are all good learning for later controlled coordination. The key is to engage attention on the movements, which involves the soul more closely with the sentient forces that are already woven into the etheric and physical NSS.

Yet it is important to note that movement alone, done automatically, without attention, does not provide the brain with any new information. On the contrary, such movement will tend to groove already existing brain patterns more deeply. ...The moment we bring attention to our movement, any movement, research shows that the brain resumes growing new connections and creating new [neural] pathways and possibilities for us. And that is when we feel most vital. (Baniel, 2009: 25)

Steiner is emphatic about the role of the I-being (ego) in directing the growth and adaptation of the brain. The ego is the most important spiritual factor in the development of the three sheaths of the child: astral [sentient] body, etheric body, physical body. The physical sheath of the brain is constantly re-moulded and there the ego is continually at work. It cannot become conscious because it has a quite different task to fulfil: it has first to shape the instrument of
consciousness. That of which we later become conscious works, to begin with, upon our physical brain during the first years of life. The task devolving upon the ego changes; that is all. It works first upon us, then within us. (Steiner, 1911)

When movements are given attention through the sentient organism, the physical limbs come under the control of the individual; patterns of movement, habitual actions and routine behaviours, such as walking, brushing teeth, or opening a canned drink, are established through repetition, often through experimental play, and by imitation.

*The things we have to learn before we can do them, we learn by doing them.* —Aristotle

This is also evident in Sensory Integration work (e.g. Caldwell and Horwood, 2008). Repeating movements with attention to the experience is not just aimless repetition, but a form of learning through self-imitation. The development of sensory integration is a study in itself. König, 2008, and Schoorel, 2004, are useful sources for an anthroposophical perspective.

Another noticeable indicator of etheric and sentient bodily integration is the quality and modulation of voice. Here, the difference between imitation, clichéd patterns and purposefully modulated expression is evident. The progressive penetration of sentient individualisation is very obvious when the voice breaks in young men, as are the physical signs of puberty in both sexes.

### 3.3. **Sentient Configuration and I-being**

The development of modulated speech evidences the development of higher order sensory and brain functions involving the individual expression of the soul, which also depend on effective etheric and sentient developmental learning and integration into the physical body. The development of finer sensing through repeated use, and refined control through increasing sensitivity, are inextricably intertwined. This can be observed in *phoneme* (the sounds of speech) pronunciation, for example, in cultures where the language does not distinguish between the English “w” (as in ‘walk’) and “v” (as in ‘vault’), or between the “l” (as in ‘fallow’) and the “r” (as in ‘farrow’). Many people struggle to speak these sounds clearly if they only learned to speak English after the age of seven. Children who grow up in a multilingual environment learn to speak these sounds accent-free through imitation at a phase when the I-being is working directly through the habit-forming etheric organism. After the first developmental phase, considerable attention is needed to distinguish and pronounce unfamiliar phonemes; we can see that the ability to imitate phonemes is dependent on the ability to hear their nuances, which involves the Sense of Word. Our ability to hear spoken language depends on the development of this sense.

Brain researchers have discovered that new neural connections can be established and re-established in the physical brain (brain plasticity). We can recognise that these new connections also signify sentient and etheric individualisation in the development of fine motor skills and coordination, voice modulation and speech, as well as the discernment of the spoken word. The developmental learning of intentional will, in turn, influences the fluency of the sentient organism’s participation in thinking and feeling. This is not so much an incremental construction as a qualitative refinement, characteristic of the development of the etheric organism under the influence of sentient forces.

Such development is influenced by individual learning from experience, initially through repeated imitation. It is clear that the presence of attentive human beings is vital to early development. The I-being has to develop its own organism before it can turn fully to the world. However the presence of a human individuality is highly influential on its family from birth; this influence comes from the demanding forces of the I-being which work through the living physical organism. Although the I-being is already able to exert powerful forces on arrival, the soul will have to integrate itself into the
sentient organism in order to interact with the world and its inhabitants. In order to be able to
direct the body and learn from it, the working together of sentient configuration and I-being is
critical for the integration of the soul. In order to reorganise the brain, the sentient organism needs
to flexibly direct and redirect the embodied etheric forces. So the integration of these etheric forces
with individualising forces in the sentient configuration has to be achieved in order for experiential
learning to guide developmental adaptation.

It may be that the I-being and soul develop little affinity for the physical and etheric configuration. In this configuration, the young body may appear to shine with a surrounding aura of light. The bodily organism remains relatively unpenetrated by the soul, which can lead to the inherited etheric and sentient configuration remaining relatively untransformed. Such a configuration may account for a range of autistic features. Even if speech begins to develop in the inherited organism in the early years, regression into inarticulate vocalisation may occur later. If the soul is not pressed fully into the sentient, etheric and physical organs of speech by the I-being when the instinctive imitation of speech develops into self-expression, then the inherited capacity to speak may remain rudimentary or even disappear. This is because the motivating will of the soul does not reach into the inherited sentient forces. The soul may remain quite separate from the sentient organism. I have experienced that individuals with such a constitution may manage to whisper or speak a few words in a moment of heightened emotion, but the inner shock they can experience as a result means that it rarely happens. It takes great self-control to avoid showing an emotional response when such a child suddenly speaks.

In the teenage years, the surrounding light aura diminishes and vanishes into the organism as the inherited organism no longer reflects back the centripetal forces of the soul. At the same time, the untransformed bodily organism can become heavy, dense and clumsy in comparison to the earlier sprightly hopping about on tiptoes; the previously abundant energy of youthfulness may dissipate into lethargy because the forces of the soul are not sufficiently integrated into the sentient organism to raise it into meaningful activity. The onset of unfamiliar emotional responses in the teens may precipitate a tempestuous period of intense crisis if the ability to take hold of emotions with thinking has not developed. How shall these emotions be comprehended? An enduring love is required to support such a confusing process.

It surprises many who work with teenagers to discover that, once the I-being releases its pressure on the other members and turns its forces towards the world, the twenties can bring a developmental maturing and equanimity in the wake of untameable emotional storms of youth.

3.4. The I-being and the Environment

The environment plays an important part in child and youth development. The I-being can only
protect the bodily organism by withdrawing its transformative forces at the completion of the
developmental tasks. We can characterise the individualising forces as the will of the I-being. At
best the I-being can mediate environmental challenges, and its capacity to do this depends on the
wisdom of its own previous development: the capacity for resilient adaptation that it brings to this
lifetime. Until the developmental work on each of the bodily members is complete, they are highly
vulnerable to environmental impact. This realisation enables us to understand the deep significance
of the searching attitude in the developing child and youth, which Steiner often mentions: the world
is initially assumed to be good, then beautiful and then true (e.g. Steiner, 1996a). This is good news
for social pedagogues who wish to support healthy developmental processes, and this
understanding highlights the moral imperative for the highest level of responsibility and empathic
sensitivity. In this context the Pedagogical Law is a crucial contribution to our work (Steiner, 1998:
Lecture 2). See Section 5.1 for more on this. If the child encounters conditions that not supportive or
good, there is a risk of a traumatic response that may inhibit development. See Section 4.4 for some
considerations of resilience.
The infant depends on the goodness of the parents, and the world in general, to survive, and that instinctive trust has to be nurtured by the family if resilience is not to be undermined. This understanding forms the basis of attachment theory. In cases of childhood deprivation and trauma, we may see the disruption of healthy development. The stage of development attained when severely challenging circumstances occurred, is a critical factor in assessing their influence. For example, babies fail to thrive physically when they are not regularly held and sensitively and playfully stimulated.

The joy of children in and with their environment must therefore be counted among the forces that build and shape the physical organs. ...love that streams, as it were, with warmth through the physical environment of the children may be said to literally “hatch” the forms of the physical organs. (Steiner, 1996a: 22)

Deprivation during later childhood may hinder the development of emotional expression. In most cases the ability to enter into positive relationships will be adversely affected. The nature of the attachments that are built up in the child’s memory will influence the attachments of later life, and this includes attachments to possessions – belongings – as well as people. Traumatic memories become embedded in the etheric forces without reference to time or place, so they will tend to induce conditioned reflexes, as protective strategies or undirected panic attacks, which take little account of new circumstances. See Section 4.2 for an account of the development of memory, and Section 4.3 for a discussion of trauma.

During the first phase of development the I-being, and environmental stimuli, work directly into the physical formations through the mediation of etheric and sentient configurations. This can be observed in how the rhythmic system responds and synchronises itself to music, singing and external rhythms.

It is important to realize the value of children’s songs, for example, as a means of education in early childhood. They must make pretty and rhythmical impressions on the senses; the beauty of sound is of greater value than the meaning. The more alive the impression on eye and ear the better. Dancing movements in musical rhythm have a powerful influence in building up the physical organs, and this should also not be undervalued. (Steiner, 1996a: 23)

After the change of teeth, the I-being can only work into physical formation indirectly through the etheric forces. At this point the work of imitating and individualising the forms of the inherited model (Steiner, 1998: Lecture 1) body is completed, and the I-being progresses to the transformation of the etheric organism through the sentient forces. Much of what happens in the environment bypasses the child’s awareness unless it affects the daily routines, desires and expectations. Disruptions become traumatic when they break through the bubble of the beautiful life.

Between the seventh and fourteenth years every human being passes through a process of growth and development which expresses, as strongly as in his case is possible, the individuality he has brought down with him. In this period of his life the child is thus comparatively shut off from the external world; and we teachers have opportunity to watch during these years the wonderful unfolding of the forces of the individuality. (Steiner, 1998: Lecture 1)

At puberty the I-being withdraws from its transformative work in the etheric organism, and some of the etheric forces of imitation are redirected into developing the organs of reproduction. The etheric forces of the head and sensory organs become the servants of thinking. The capacity to mirror and imitate is transformed into new faculties of reflective reasoning. The soul is sufficiently
integrated into the sentient forces after the second phase of development for emotional sensitivity to develop. Previously unconscious influences from the environment are no longer passed through the etheric organism, but are reflected back into the soul. A new interest in social experiences begins to stimulate a more powerful feeling life.

The human being, then, reaches earthly maturity. He begins to take again into himself what is outside and foreign to him; he acquires the faculty of being sensitive and not indifferent to his environment. (Steiner, 1998: Lecture 1)

The environment is always full of opportunities to learn. The following table summarises how the environmental influence changes throughout the progressive withdrawal of the I-being from the other members.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>First developmental phase:</th>
<th>The I-being works directly into the sentient and etheric configuration; the learning environment works formatively into physical development through sentient and etheric organism.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Second developmental phase:</td>
<td>The I-being works directly into the sentient configuration, which in turn works into the etheric and physical organism; the learning environment works formatively into etheric development through the sentient configuration.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Third developmental phase:</td>
<td>The I-being works directly into soul, which in turn works into the sentient, etheric and physical organism; the learning environment works formatively and consciously into sentient development.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adulthood</td>
<td>The I-being turns its transformative capacities towards the world; sentient, etheric and physical organism becomes the soul’s instruments of responsive participation in the learning environment and creative initiative.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These developmental phases often run their course in less than seven years as individual development is urged towards adulthood by so many cultural and societal influences. As the individualising forces of the I-being work directly into the sentient organism during the teens, social pressures are forced acutely into the soul. The sentient configuration is closer to the I-being and so, as the soul becomes integrated, it responds more strongly to the environment than the etheric organism. As the fashion-conscious teenager tries out different clothes and styles, so also is the soul adjusting and squeezing into its bodily working clothes.

Some of the most profound changes take place in the organism during the teenage years. The healthy teenage soul consciously reacts against influences that are experienced as unpleasantly oppressive. The brain undergoes a major internal reorganisation in the mid-teens as the sentient organisation imprints individualised learning into the structural organism. During this time the ability to ‘read’ the inner experiences of others is impaired, as the previously instinctual faculties of mental processing require more conscious attention while the NSS is restructured. Young people can become feverishly uncertain about social signals until they have redeveloped their ability to digest the environment and assimilate experiences coolly through reflective thought.

Through all the organising in thought and reorganisation of the physical brain during the teenage years, the I-being relies on the physical organs for sensory input. The sentient organism needs the assistance of etheric forces to receive the impressions and organise that are reflected from the sensory organs, so periods of stimulating hyper-vigilance will require periods of withdrawal and introspection. As the soul penetrates into the sentient organism, a vital filter of sensations below the threshold of consciousness develops instinctively. This filter narrows down conscious attention before significant sensory experiences come to awareness in the soul, so youngsters tend to notice what interests them, while much else may pass them by. This is the foundation of specialisation,
and unless the education of youth encourages a broad as well as deep interest, some impressionable souls run the risk of developing the tunnel vision of a narrow range of consuming interests. This is sometimes countered by an irresistible attraction to intoxication as a means of escaping inhibitions, in which the thriving forces of youthfulness can give the dangerous illusion of invulnerability.

The unconscious filtering of sensory stimuli is responsible for an individualised sense of danger, which alerts us when a situation shows signs of risk. Our awareness of risk is based on previous experience, including the stern warnings of authority figures in the early years. If we are unable to distinguish circumstances when we are at risk from safe situations, we may become hyper-vigilant all the time. Trust in the goodness or truth of adult advice may diminish or be dismissed. A natural desire to test out risky activities grows strong in many adolescents, and a lack of trust can mean that everything needs to be tested at all costs.

Early childhood experiences of constant unpredictability will lead to a stressful alertness, always anxiously scanning for signs of danger. Youngsters from such a background may be reluctant to sleep and temporarily let go of this attentive scanning of the environment. So it becomes evident that the development of a relatively secure sense of self in the soul is a key to resilience, and the capacity to find life meaningful.

3.5. Development in Early Adulthood

Some brief notes on development after the first three phases is in order. Individualisation is challenged in many subtle ways nowadays, with conformity and normalisation being seen as virtues that contribute to a harmonious society. Mundane existence is alleviated by the effervescent fashions of the season and sensationalism in the media. News that is presented with urgency today has been forgotten tomorrow.

How does the modern young adult find a way to retain integrity and dignity within such persuasive attractions? Anxious youth may flock to ‘birds of a feather’, and the imitation of a shared trademark of an oppositional micro-culture, clique or gang may become a social tyranny within its own ranks. However, individualisation still finds creative ways of revealing itself stylistically, even in the unique ways in which uniforms are worn. Young people need sufficient opportunity and latitude to find their way to a resilient sense of purpose and resolution, which Steiner places highest of the seven levels of will (1996b, Lecture 4).

Development in adulthood is a continuation of the individual soul-life, which has struggled to establish its characteristic manner and style throughout childhood and youth. The aim is no longer to adapt the bodily organism, but to explore and participate in the world. In addition, the I-being that brought the individual soul-spirit to birth (Steiner, 1996b: Lecture 1) fertilises the gestation of a new I-being in the ‘womb’ of life experience. This new I-being is only born at death, and it carries forces of will that can only flower at the end of a lifetime (Steiner, 1996b: Lecture 4).

In situations of developmental delay the emotional maturing progress, usually associated with adolescence, may appear during the early twenties. It is possible for a substantial personality change to take place in these years. At the completion of the third developmental phase, the pressure of the I-being’s individualising forces on the body is released. This respite may allow the psychological-physiological constitution to finally establish its own equilibrium. In adulthood, the forces of the I-being rely on a well-developed physical and etheric and sentient bodily integration to be able to think and experience sufficiently well to be able to lead the will into meaningful activity. The boat has been fashioned as best it can be, and now it must prove its seaworthiness over many voyages. These voyages will shape the continuing individualising of the soul; the bodily constitution will only adjust very slowly in imitation of the changing soul.
3.6. Development in Old Age

Old age is not just a time to be spent quietly reminiscing in safe harbour, there is also developmental learning to be gained from previously uncharted waters. The older person is often confronted with the decline in vitality and profound changes when the bodily organism, as the vehicle of consciousness and expression, succumbs to increasing confinement. If we cannot learn to adapt we will suffer intense frustration. The resilience for old age needs a lifetime of preparation. It is the I-being that is of paramount importance in providing a revitalising source of motivation in the soul life (Steiner, 1996b: Lecture 4) that can keep the bodily integration healthy. A continuing interest and participation in the wider world can be a great help.

It is never too early to help someone prepare for a ripe old age, especially during the teens.

_We can see in the appearance of senile dementia towards the end of life the disharmony between inner and outer human being, brought about because the human being did not live in such a manner that harmony could exist between inner and outer man in the period between puberty and the time when the astral [sentient] body was fully developed._ (Steiner, 1983)

In old age we can experience some loosening of the four-fold clasp of bodily control. From adolescence onwards, the emancipated etheric forces, sentient organism and soul turn towards the world quite naturally and engage with life experience. In old age these forces release their hold on both body and world. Freed of the pressure to conform, a rich wisdom born of thoughtful experience will flower in those who do not retire from a compassionate interest in life. The older person can develop penetrating spiritual insight into other people. If the ageing individual turns in towards themselves, then the dismay of increasing incapacity may lead to a depressing malaise of crushing helplessness. This can be a painful journey to accompany. Profound empathic discernment of the process can help to restore dignity in the gathering dusk.

In old age the sentient organisation and soul find that their instrument of expression is no longer what it once was, and the sense of boundless vitality in childhood is a memory that offers a pleasant escape from the pervading sense of inadequacy. Early memories that were formed with all the energy of youth can be more vividly recalled than recent ones, which tend to fade rapidly. The tendency to compare current experience with the ‘good old days’ will not offer consolation. The loosening of the sentient forces in old age can give birth to the ability to read people like an open book. The personal world view may shrink into the quality of today’s teatime cakes; yet, even the best of cakes, served with a grin, will not conceal from such sharp sensitivity the absence of real concern.
4. The Integration of Self

*The little man is still a man.* -- Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

What Steiner sometimes refers to as ‘egohood’ or ‘selfhood’ we usually call a ‘sense of self’. In this section the development of sensory perception, memory and resilience will be explored. These three, together, weave a sense of self.

4.1. A Sense of Self, Identity and Trauma

Steiner spoke of sensory perception as being based on physical organs.

“[The physical] body is that through which the things in the environment of a human being reveal themselves to him.” (Steiner: 1994b)

*...because there is a certain connection between the twelve sense-zones and our I, it is possible for our I to live in the consciousness sustained by these sense-zones.*

(Steiner, 1990a: Lecture 8)

By observing sensory experience of an individual we can discover how effectively the I-being is integrated into the functioning of the physical organs. Karl König built on Steiner’s insights into sensory perception by developing the 12-fold assessment of sensory perception (see König, 2008). The self-conscious individual is the witness of sensations in the form of mental impressions that appear in the sentient soul. Until the I-being has established a seat of focussed consciousness in the body, in which it is dimly mirrored to the soul, self-awareness, or self-identification, remains diffuse and in search of a reliable anchor point. In healthy development, a consistent reference point is established within the tactile boundaries of the physical body as a result of the sensory integration of the overarching sensation of wellbeing in a sustainable, yet dynamic, equilibrium afforded by the sense of balance that enables us to remain upright while in motion. This singular internalised reference point of self-identity enables us to bear the sense of self wherever the body goes. If we cannot take our sense of self with us, how can we be sure if the experience of self at the bus stop is the same self who walked out of the house moments earlier? We would constantly need to re-establish who we are. As soon as we enter the bus, we have to go through the same routine to find ourselves once more. This plight engenders repetitive and ritual behaviours that offer an island of consistency in a sea of change.

From a secure anchoring point of self-identification, where we experience and say I to ourselves, comes freedom to reach out into the world. Within this central resting place of consciousness the seeds of self-worth and self-esteem can grow. The achievement of singular sensory integration and dextrous bodily coordination enables social sensory development: the ability to perceive the other human being as a spiritual individual. In one of his late notebooks Steiner dubbed this the Sense of You. The development of a keen sensory ‘sense of you’ stands on the non-sensory ‘sense of self’ that depends on the wholesome integration of the bodily senses. If I cannot sense who I am, I will struggle to recognise who you are, and the manifold sense-zones may find no clearly defining common point of orientating synthesis.

A great deal has to happen within the four-fold organism for social sensory discernment to arise. The I-being establishes a conscious relation to the physical sense organs through the three-fold soul. Where there are sensory impairments, such as diffuse or fragmentary sensations, we may find key indicators that some issue has arisen in the four-fold integration, but we will need to look deeply in order to ascertain the nature of the issue.

From a consistent inner experience of self that I can take with me as I move, I can reach out to the environment, and to other people, and integrate my sensory impressions into the experience of one
world with many facets. In the absence of a consistent place where I can meaningfully experience myself and recognise the presence of “I”, I will resort to repetitive activities that I can carry with me wherever I go, or I will have to periodically stop and go through a familiar pattern of motions that confirm my identity. A consistently repeatable sensation becomes an anchoring point of identity and relative security. I may require a ‘security blanket’ or familiar toy to hold self onto in order to move from one environment to the next. Otherwise I will not know who this is in the next environment. I need a point of reference to cling to in order to cope with such a complete change. The precise identification of such anchoring sensations in repetitive behaviour can answer the question: Who am I? The answer may be “crunchy sound” because I recognise that sound as the same sound I can make in my hand in another place that becomes a generalised ‘every place’. This recognition can become the seed of successful Intensive Interaction (e.g. Caldwell and Horwood, 2008) that can enter the solitary world of ambiguous identity and develop relationship. Without such a sense of self and ‘you-as-self’ there is no truly social experience.

In autistic constitutions where a repetitive activity substitutes for an embodied sense of self, my reference point is not my hand, because I do not identify myself with a hand; it is the sound itself sensed through my ear or the tactile sensation sensed with my hand. I identify with the sensation, not the body that created the sensation, so self-harming behaviours are merely experienced as repeatable sensations to identify self. Humming a constant note will also suffice. Here it is important to understand Steiner’s discovery that listening takes us away from the sense organ so that we inhabit the sounds we hear, and not the ears.

The soul that inhabits the bodily organism, develops it into a mirror for the self.

_The I is not in the body but outside it._ (Steiner, 2011: 29)

The body is only able to mirror the I-being, which always works from the outside. The sense of self has no physical sense organ so self has to be learned and intuited. The spiritual reality of the I-being is in the surrounding environment so, although the strategy of carrying the means to recreate a consistent sensation is relatively successful, it is difficult for us to comprehend. Nevertheless, empathy is possible.

_We learn to express our “I” at a definite moment in childhood. We gain a relationship to this “I” at the point [from] which we have memories in later life. We know from the most varied spiritual scientific considerations that until this point in time the “I” itself was active in forming and structuring us. This remains the case until the point at which we begin to have a relationship, a conscious relationship, to our “I.” In the child, this “I” is there also, but it works within, its first task is to form our body. To begin with it creates the supersensible forces in the spiritual world. When we have gone through conception and birth it still works creatively on our body for a period of time that lasts a few years, until we have our body as a tool so that we can consciously comprehend our self as an “I”. _ (Steiner, 1986)

The study of resilience in childhood (salutogenesis) suggests that, even in the early years, a sense of meaning in life, and ultimate goodness behind even troubling events, strongly contributes to a resilient sense of self. The moment a child is able to recognise and say “I” to self is a significant landmark, and there can be many reasons why this achievement is delayed, or does not happen. An understanding of the development of memory and the sense of self is critical to the unravelling of attachment issues, and the consequences of early trauma. Memory will be considered next.
4.2. The Development of Memory

We do not remember the experiences of babyhood in later life. The growing infant revels in oft repeated impressions and thereby builds up a feeling of familiarity and recognition of the primary carers. The faculty of memory is therefore also significant when observing four-fold integration.

There is by no means the same relationship between etheric body and astral body and ego in early childhood as there is in the later years of a man’s life. In considering the development of the individual himself, account must be taken of the fact that the relationship between the members of his constitution changes. An especially important period in the course of an individual human life is the one that comprises approximately the first three years. In that period, every individual is fundamentally a different being from the being he is later on. We know that these first three years are sharply demarcated from later life by two facts. — One is that it is only after this first period that the human being learns to say “I”, to grasp and understand his egohood [sense of self]. The other is that when, in later years, a man is looking back over his life, he can at most remember only as far back as this point of time — the point at which this three-year period is separated from the later life. (Steiner, 1911)

In the first three or four years of life, memories are not organised or sequenced within the etheric organism; they are absorbed directly and timelessly into the body’s instinctive reflexes. Experiences are subconsciously translated into conditioned reflexes that know neither time nor place that we can remember. So these early experiences are not able to contribute to our conscious identification of self because they are forgotten.

…the ego must maintain itself, it must hold its own. It cannot carry one single impression for hours on end; if it did, it would have to identify itself with the impression. No, it is down below that the impressions are preserved; and they have to make their way up again, for us to “remember” them. (Steiner, 1998)

In the absence of a ‘red thread’ of remembered self, some youngsters expend huge amounts of effort trying to sustain the impression or sensation of their sense of self in consciousness awareness. Any change in their activity or environment is a distracting, and anxiety provoking, attack on the effort to hold onto self as described in the previous section.

The developing brain is gradually organised and reorganised in response to the stimulation it receives. During the early years, the child identifies with its impressions and experiences. The child’s organism treats all learning as informative, or good, when learning how to handle experience. Sounds, words and movements can be repeated endlessly. This playful activity works into the organism, and impresses familiar sensations into an organic foundation for supportive reference points that will eventually become a platform for identity and habitual responses. Satisfying repetitive play becomes the mirror of carefree existence. During this learning the brain develops wrinkles. (Steiner, 2011) Constitutions that resist the development of an integrated centre of internalised consciousness often turn to favoured sensations that can be repeated, and these form a fragile anchor of identification that substitute for an embodied sense of self. These repetitions or self-imitating sensations become a straw to clutch when drowning in life. As described earlier, this repetitive activity is far from carefree.

Traumatic experiences can break through to the physical and etheric organism long after the first few years of life. The emotional turmoil of such an experience becomes embedded in the etheric organism as a conditioned reflex. For example, the smell of aftershave may precipitate a panic attack years after an abusive attack by someone who smelled strongly of aftershave. Such reflexes are carried persistently into life, and become imprinted into the sense of self. So it is empathically
understandable that children feel responsible for their traumatic experiences, because they identify with them.

Memory is connected to metabolic functions, and therefore an activity involving the will.

Many a person struggles at some moment of his life to try and remember something that he cannot remember. This wanting to remember but not being able to remember entirely, arises through the fact that the force in our souls with which we remember is the same force that transforms the food we eat into the sort of substances of which our body can make use. If you eat a piece of bread and this bread is transformed inside your body into the sort of substance that serves life, this is apparently a physical process. This physical process, however, is governed by supersensible forces. These supersensible forces are the same forces you use when you remember. (Steiner, 1982b)

This implies that the ability to digest food is connected with the development of memory. The broadening of the infant’s diet into solid food goes hand in hand with the developing ability to digest and organise experiences in memory. Memory and will are intimately connected to the developing sense of self. As the months after birth unfold, the child learns two significant skills: to stand upright and to walk. Until this point the human aptitude for walking upright had not fully impressed itself into the bodily functions. It was only present as potential in the bodily forms during the crawling phase. The achievement of this instinctive learning, where function inhabits and elevates the form to further functional skills, attests to the progress of four-fold integration. This self-education in uprightness encourages talking and the breakthrough of saying ‘I’ to self. The key to this development is the integration of the sense of balance with the other body senses.

Sensory learning in the early years is very much an example of ‘use it or lose it’. Until uprightness is practiced, and repeatedly achieved, the sense of balance sleeps. A baby turns its head appropriately towards out-of-sight sounds, but it is only when uprightness and walking are part of regular life that balance comes into its own. As a result, the child comes to itself and experiences its individuality and separateness. This experience of emancipation from the environment leads to the intuitive experience of a separate “I”. Walking forwards enables the child to begin to subconsciously leave the past behind. This subtly develops into the experience of being an “I” with a past. The birth of a sense of self with a history signifies that the I-being has penetrated sufficiently into the physiology, and individualised it to the extent that it has become a mirrored image of the source of its individualising forces. So a sense of self is born as an echo of the I-being from the physical body. Matter and spirit begin to resonate. The physical body has become a diamond in the rough imitation of the spiritual I-being.

Imitation belongs to the time when the physical body is developing... All learning associated with speech in these years should be especially through imitation. Children will best learn to speak through hearing; no rules or artificial instruction of any kind can be good for this. (Steiner, 1996a: 22)

For details of constitutions with a too strong and too weak memory, see Steiner, 1998: lecture 5. These will not be described here.
4.3. **Traumatic Memories**

Walking impresses rhythm and sequence into the bodily organism as the repeated movements become a habitual sequence that can be effortlessly remembered. Simple aspects of cause and effect can now be grasped. Repeated connections are absorbed as invariable truths in the early years: there is no lightning without thunder, no smoke without fire. Repetition is a persuasive teacher, and the assumptions about life that are absorbed during the early years will only be questioned much later, if at all. As mentioned earlier in Section 3.1, conditioned or habitual responses are invaluable in negotiating our way through daily life. However, the characteristic behaviours of attachment issues and trauma responses all relate to conditioned responses.

Traumatic and abusive experiences in childhood can powerfully distort the individualising process. Some children in a challenging family situation take in the repeated message that there is no kindness without a painful cost. In such circumstances, this is not unreasonable. Even if these painful learning experiences are banished from memory later, they can grow into a timeless assumption that kindness is dangerous. Such learning becomes transformed in the organism into trauma responses, which are embedded into conditioned reflexes that are re-echoed whenever some sensation is experienced that resembles the original events. A natural and healthy process of developmental learning in an infant is wounding if it leads to ambiguous attachment. Events that may be banished from conscious memory are still remembered in the reflexes of the etheric organism. The unlearning of trauma responses is an arduous task that demands the support of enduring patience.

By 5 years of age, the memory has usually begun to organise experiences in sequence, and the child finds some measure of orientation in the ever-changing stream of time. Recent events are experienced as being closer than previous experiences. The embodied ethereal forces, which are never at rest, are now able to reflect back the sequential events of the individual biography. Past events are pushed behind more immediate memories, which stand ‘in front’ of earlier ones. It is seldom possible to reflect on the past with such young children, and attempts to ‘go over’ difficult experiences can be frustrating for parents, even immediately afterwards with the aim of changing behaviour. The forcefulness that is sometimes used by parents and family to alter unacceptable behaviour can even become traumatising for the child.

The earliest memories that can be recalled in later life usually begin from the time when the sense of self was established, and are relatively few before the sequential ordering of memories commenced (Steiner, 1911, quoted in 4.2.). In the absence of the capacity to remember events in sequential order, anxiety about future events arises from temporal disorientation. A youngster will seek for repeated reassurances that what is remembered about the near future remains current. “Will the taxi come at 4.00 to take me home?” Distracting anxiety can resurface even a few moments after receiving a positive answer, and the question is repeated as earnestly as before. The memory of the answer is not substantial enough to hold onto as it offers no tactile sensation, and cannot be sequenced in the uncertain changeability of life. The required answer will be persistently clutched at for self-assurance if I cannot identify myself with it. The temporal concepts of ‘later’ or ‘in 10 minutes’ are beyond my comprehension.

The young child thrives on repetition when it brings comforting reassurance in the experience of ever-changing circumstances. However, conditioned reactions to perceived threat, where there is none, repeatedly distort sensory impressions and discourage new learning and trust in life. There is little foundation for resilience when earlier memories or subconscious reflexes are an ever present source of stressful anxiety. Such anxieties become self-fulfilling assumptions that can only meet new experiences with familiar behavioural response patterns. The older child who has not developed a consistently reliable sense of self in the non-stop river of time experiences very little, other than anxiety, on which to anchor any reassurance or resilience to unexpected changes. Anxiety and
behavioural tantrums can even establish themselves as the most identifiable norm. A lack of trust in life evokes a lack of trust in self. A ‘ritual’ tantrum may become the familiar sensation that an anxious child identifies as self. However, resilience in the face of challenging disorientation is not only dependent on memory.

4.4. Resilience and Moral Development

What does not kill me makes me stronger. – Friedrich Nietzsche

Chaotic conditions in the early years can contribute to a self-fulfilling semi-conscious assumption of ever-present threat where identity is pinned to familiar cycles of confusion and ‘predictable’ consequences. Traumatising memories that resound though future life as irrational fears and anxiety will inhibit social behaviour, and may test close relationships to destruction. If I do not experience the comforting reassurance of wellbeing in my body I will remain suspiciously sceptical of changes around me, even in the face of consistent positive experiences of a caring and supportive environment.

Timeless memories may become the source of conditioned reflexes: behavioural first responses to new situations. Such conditioned reflexes have the similar nature to trauma-induced response. Familiar strategies will be relied on in the future, even when they are no longer appropriate. While we are thinking about different kinds of problems, it is worth repeating that learning from the early years of life also has many beneficial outcomes. Positive early learning forms as strong a range of conditioned reflexes as traumatic learning. A sensitive and caring upbringing can engender a protective sense of danger alongside a generous trust in relationships. Discernment comes later when thoughtful reflection develops in adolescence. Difficult or abusive family experiences during the early formative years will engender confusion in the future exploration of relationships, and possibly blinding distrust. Anxious youngsters need a long period of warmth and reassurance in order to develop trust. Ambiguous behaviour patterns in the family will be as tirelessly imitated as reliable ones, until a careful and patient re-education becomes possible later. However, consistently reassuring experiences will engender conditioned reflexes and emotional fortitude that contribute to resilience in the face of challenging circumstances.

It can be unbearable for a child to feel that their parents are not the best possible parents. Some children project their longing for goodness onto their abusive parents. Such parents are the best kind of ‘good’ that these children experience so, when everything always goes wrong in their lives, that is what they feel they deserve, which is ‘as good as it gets’. If children feel that there is no better quality of goodness in the world than the example set by their family, then how can they hope to ever be, or do, any better themselves? Such children experience fear, dislike and anger towards those they love. This powerful ambiguity produces confusion and desperation as the etheric and sentient forces become locked into a self-perpetuating cycle with no apparent escape.

Some children who grow up in a challenging environment learn to trust themselves and distrust everyone else. They are self-reliant and resilient survivors. They will test everyone who tries to relate to them to prove that their distrust is justified. These youngsters have accepted the challenge of their world; such a meaningful purpose gives momentum to the integration of etheric and sentient forces to develop ‘street-wise’ alertness and quick reactions. This also generates a self-perpetuating behavioural cycle, because there is a measure of conscious control and creative responsiveness. Problem solving skills are constantly being honed.

A young person will soon ‘smell out’ any attempt at deception or duplicity in adults. Steiner points to the sense of smell as our first moral educator. In adolescence this education is taken over by the intellect, which scrutinises the actions of others for fairness and trustworthiness. Only the sentient forces can transform the habits and learning of the etheric organism. Only the resilient spirit of an
adult can reassure the anxiety of a distrustful teenage soul. The self-development of resilience, based on trust in the Pedagogical Law that is founded on experience, is essential for a social pedagogue who works with such children. Each of us has to test the Pedagogical Law (Steiner, 1998: Lecture 2) at least as far as we are tested to our limits by a young person. We may need to draw on support and supervision if we are not to get lost in the ‘consistently uncertain’ world of a youngster who is determined to test us to our core. When they finally realise that we are certainly ‘for real’, our relationship will begin to change.

Some children grow stronger and more mature through extremely difficult experiences, while others fall to pieces. Why is this? Studies of resilience have found that the children who recover well after difficult experiences have an inborn sense that life is meaningful, and that challenges are an opportunity for tough learning. This is part of their spiritual inheritance and demonstrates that consciousness informs forces that penetrate into behaviour, health and life itself. Such inner strength becomes anchored in the individualising sense of self, and can be nurtured. When the health and strength of the individualised organism is in harmony with the I-being, it is able to overcome circumstances with the same forces that transformed the inherited organism. The realisation that I can transform what life gives me penetrates to what individualisation is all about. Social pedagogues also have to learn this in respect of their educational and therapeutic relationships. The harmonisation of the will, feeling and thinking within the physical, etheric and sentient organism establishes an indomitable resilience. Spiritual and soul development in adulthood needs to be aligned with the guiding I-being that is responsible for the individualising processes of childhood and youth.

During the first developmental phase, the etheric forces, the sentient forces and the I-being are all turned in on the physical body, reshaping the inherited forms into more individualised features. The etheric organism is reshaped during the second phase of development, and a confident resilience may flourish from an underlying trust in the goodness and beauty of the world. At puberty the etheric forces of the head are released, and their attention turns outwards. Now these etheric forces can begin to organise experiences of the world with as much detailed attention as they formerly paid to individualising the physical body. This individual attentiveness reaches into the environment through the sense organs in search of truth and relationships. As feelings blossom, resilience has to be developed all over again in the midst of a new social vulnerability.

It is critical to know at what point traumatic disruptions have occurred in the developmental process. Extremely challenging experiences in the early years can distract the etheric forces from the work on the physical body and turn prematurely towards intellectual development. The transformative forces of the etheric organism can be wrenched away in order to process difficult experiences through reflective thinking. Such a premature birth of intellect appears as a sparkling precociousness that is often admired, and even encouraged. Such children can appear to have achieved the wisdom of adults, but it is often an encapsulating and sceptical wisdom. Yet if the unfinished work of the etheric forces leaves the physical body vulnerable, there will be consequences in later life when inherited youthful forces give way to the self-reliance of adulthood. Subtle but chronic health issues in adult life will slowly undermine the fortitude of early maturity.

An intellectual child may become prematurely tall, while an over-imaginative child will tend to grow more slowly. Both of these tendencies can bring disharmony into the individualising process. If the practicalities of real life are disregarded in favour of a richly imaginative fantasy world, the etheric forces become distracted from bodily growth because they are preoccupied with embellishing and sustaining a creative inner life. Creative imagination needs to be directed into useful and meaningful activity. The development of clarity in the will can be encouraged through craft activities that develop certainty of hand-eye coordination. This is a transformative training in pragmatism that will enhance creativity and resilience in the face of life’s challenges.
The elegant harmoniousness of the etheric organism conveys the beauty of the world to the growing child in the second developmental phase. This fluency appears as increasingly graceful physical movement and imaginative play. When harmoniousness and imagination are suppressed by precocious intellectuality in a child, we are being given clear signals that creative imagination is being starved of etheric forces. This is a situation where imaginative artistic and craft activity can encourage the etheric forces towards the all-important task of filling out the bodily organs.

We must be very clear about what works on the etheric body from the outside. The formation and growth of the etheric body means the shaping and developing of inclinations and habits, of the conscience, character, memory, and temperament. The etheric body is worked on through pictures and examples—that is, through a child’s carefully guided imagination. (Steiner, 1996b: 23)

Music and movement can also work wonders.

...there is the cultivation of a sense of beauty and the awakening of the artistic feeling. The musical element must bring to the etheric body the rhythm that will then enable it to sense in everything the rhythm [that is] otherwise concealed. (Steiner, 1996b: 34)

‘Doing it right’ brings a sense of achievement that feels better than ‘being right’ during the second developmental phase. Productive activities contribute to the training of moral sensibility. The individual’s demand for the rightness of things in the search for the reassurance of wellbeing can expand unduly into ‘everything around me must be right’ and “you must do what I want”. This shows that the sense of life or wellbeing has not taken hold of the bodily organic processes, but is attempting to take control of the environment: a well-nigh impossible task. The consistency and reliability of a controlled environment is a helpful measure in such a situation, where any shifts or changes are directly experienced as painful. The capacity to relax into the inner silence of wellbeing is central to the creation of a home in the body for the sense of self where resilience can take root. Any anxiety can become an excuse to attempt to take control of a situation. This is as true for social pedagogues as for children. It seems unlikely that a battle of two wills for ultimate control will engender a trusting relationship, but respect can grow within the firmness of integrity while negotiating clear behavioural boundaries.

When control and predictability of the environment is critical to the child’s sense of life and wellbeing, we can ask how much the young person is identifying with the body: is the soul living within the body, or perceiving the body only from outside? The essential question that concerns us here is, ‘Where exactly are you finding yourself now?’ A moving first-hand account of the soul outside the body is given by Donna Williams (1998). The respectful approach of Intensive Interaction is useful in this situation. We may find that the soul is only experiencing the body as an absentminded daydream. In such situations, the path to resilience requires generous, warm, empathic engagement with the radically different world of the young person. This encounter will bring us the realisation that the young person finds satisfaction in repetitive sensations or their precious objects that we find irritating or worthless. We should not be hasty in trying to remove or change these miniature lockets of security because they are the fragile havens of identity outside the body. Our task is to gain entrance into their world and be recognised as a person. Without this realisation, there is no real relationship. The resulting transformation can be a small miracle; we may be the first person that this lonely and isolated individuality has met, I to I.

Self-doubt is a force to be reckoned with in the third developmental phase. There may be a need to resolve powerful feelings of shame that have become part of the youthful sense of identity. Few of us are completely free of this conditioning, so any such work needs to begin with ourselves. It may be an illusion that any one of us is inferior, but any disabling conditioning by timeless memories can
lead to the belief that ‘failure is my middle name’, which powerfully inhibits the development of resilience.

During the teenage period the emergence of the individual voice through the sentient organism may be discerned. The need for a longer sleep rhythm shows that the sentient forces are working strenuously into the etheric and physical organism. The inner reorganisation during the third developmental phase may slow down the capacity to digest the complex experiences of the day. This capacity is also hindered if the bodily constitution is not dense enough to hold the sentient forces, which flow through it and radiate out into the surroundings. This may be observed when questions arise, or a delayed reaction occurs, after an event three days or a week ago. See Steiner, 1998, Lecture 4 for details of such constitutions.

The new-born sensitivity of feeling in youth can recognise beauty in the world, which engenders joy. The way that childhood’s sensory experience relates to the inner life of feeling shapes, and is shaped by, those sentient forces that enable the soul to think effectively in the third developmental phase, and develop aesthetic judgement. The brain undergoes a complex physical reorganisation during the mid-teens, and previous clarity regarding social skills will temporarily be reduced. This shows that the inherited sentient configuration has given way to the accumulating influence of life experience. Rapid spurts of growth, with changes in body shape and proportions, force a revision of the mental body image, so periods of ungainly clumsiness may bring unexpected embarrassment. Despite these passing difficulties, the capacity to learn and generalise from learning takes a leap forward during this time of physiological and psychological reorganisation. This internal rationalisation needs to be left, unhindered, to find its own resolution. Young adults become able to make up their own mind about what they encounter in life, and to make informed choices for themselves.

At the age of puberty the astral [sentient] body is first born. Henceforth the astral body in its development is open to the outside world. Therefore, now we can approach the child only from the outside, with everything that opens up the world of abstract ideas, the faculty of judgment, and independent thought. It has already been pointed out how, until this time, these faculties of soul should be developing free from outer influence within the environment provided by the education that is proper to the earlier years, even as the eyes and ears develop free from outer influence within the organism of the mother. With puberty the time has arrived when human beings are ripe for the formation of their own judgments about what they have already learned. (Steiner, 1996b: 37)

During the third developmental phase a new need for ‘time out’ emerges, and an insular space for digesting experiences, for recovering from sensory and emotional indigestion. One of the fascinations of computer games is the amount of control that is possible within clear and uncompromising rules. The rules of play are congruent with the player’s experience, and this mirrors the ideal that morality is reflected in life. A well programmed computer game has no uncertain boundaries, whereas real life is not ideal, but full of uncertainty, especially in social relationships. So computer games are an attractive escape, with the option to replay scenes that did not go well.

Abstract moral maxims …can only begin to have a beneficial influence when, at the age of puberty, the astral [sentient] body liberates itself from its astral mother-envelope. (Steiner, 1996b: 25)

The ability to make sense of feelings will develop if the etheric configuration is well integrated with the sentient configuration. Personal desires will create almost unbearable tensions with moral principles. There will be periods of intense emotional stress during adolescence, even break-down. These are the teenage equivalent of childhood illnesses, and take place in the etheric and sentient bodily configuration. The scene of development has shifted from physiological health to
psychological health, although physiological symptoms, such as a lack of physical energy, may accompany disorientating loss of motivation. Ethereal forces can be depleted by the confusion of sentient forces that are ‘driven to distraction’. With protective support, and patience, the young adult may emerge from such a period of crisis as a much more integrated individual. The bodily changes and the emotional storms will hopefully give way to more peaceful periods of equanimity as the years go by. Adolescents are gradually becoming ripe for the responsibilities of adulthood as the soul achieves its deepest penetration and integration into the organism.

There is a great deal to be done in order to give back to a healthy physiology what has been taken from it through the correlations incorrectly established between the physical organism and the functions of the soul. Something physical is indeed present for every function of the soul during the course of man’s life on earth, but, on the other hand, nothing is used for the soul which has not a much greater importance for the bodily organization in its reciprocal action with the other organs. Nothing which is used for the soul is used merely as an organ of the soul. Our entire soul and spiritual make-up is wrested from the bodily nature, is taken out of the bodily. We may not permit ourselves to indicate certain organs as belonging to the soul. We could only say that the soul-functions are such that they are disengaged from the organic functions and are particularly adapted to the activity of the soul. Only when we become earnest about what is at work in the human organism, when we no longer proceed in so outward a fashion, that we picture the whole nervous system as an insertion serving the life of the soul can we hope to perceive the human organization as it is. (Steiner, 2009a: Lecture 8)

During the late teens, the dominating influence of the surroundings is progressively challenged by individual tendencies and critical thinking. Sensitive adolescent constitutions become less susceptible to suggestion once the natural rebelliousness of youth asserts its own identity. This can feel like a battleground, and indeed, it is a fight for authentic individuality in a rainstorm of self-doubt while being buffeted by the winds of desire between the pillars of idealism.

In the years of early youth an urgent demand often arises for fairness. Fairness is a beautiful ideal in life. In adulthood, some of us may retrospectively discern that our personal destiny has ultimately been fair. But profound karmic resolution is seldom what the youngster is consciously looking for; this will only come later. Initially, most of us expect that our fellows will share our own view on fairness. Inequalities may be suffered deeply, and can breed resentment. Unconsciously, the resilient sense that ‘life is meaningful’ can lead to a subtle awareness that ‘life is fair’ beneath the choppy surface of soul pain. But consciously there is often an impatience for fairness to be transparently here and now. If trust is to be engendered in youthful social relationships, our commitment to the ideals of social justice has to become visible in how compassionately we work through the daily injustices.

The dreamy awareness that individual wellbeing demands goodness in life can become transformed into a hardened and intractable rebellious idealism in adolescence, in the face of an apparently unfair world. This can engender an inflexible, even desperate expectation that unfairness will be treated fairly by others. There may also be a profound spiritual quality in this. The gentle voice of a powerful healing ethic sounds through the shouting for radical solutions to deeply complex social problems. When the sentient organism has completed the I-being’s work on the ‘body beautiful’ it turns to make sense of the world, and the youngster is ready to face the world with penetrating questions. These emancipated forces will enable a more sophisticated emotional response in social interactions. An oppressive experience of disenchantment in adolescence tends to turn the sentient forces inward, when they should be reaching out to the world. If these forces start to eat up the soul, instead of consuming the world, the scars from this wound can live on as sullen resignation in adulthood. Young people need to be taken seriously!
4.5. Early Sensory and Motor Development

When we welcome a new-born into the world, we hold a delicate living seed. As yet the baby is hardly penetrated by the soul-spirit individuality; the spiritual I-being, with its soul potential for thinking feeling and will, surrounds us both in a glow of promise for the future. This already germinating seed of humanity has entrusted itself to us all. As eyes open, the first tendrils of recognisable individuality begin to search us out. We hold a vulnerable social being in our arms who has a long way to go to fully embody its individuality. The presence of the child immediately begins foretell its future development, which demands our cooperation. The new-born will remain in the womb of its own I-being for up to twenty one years. A baby is quite unfitted for earthly life; it only embodies the basic human life-preserving instincts and reflexes in the inherited forms of its physical organism. Even when awake, a baby is partly asleep; more of heaven than of Earth. The sentient forces need to concentrate on the essential metabolic functions. These functions are shared in common with all human beings. The awareness of self and the ability to consciously process the flood of formative impressions are not yet established. The individualisation process has hardly begun, but circumstances surrounding the birth have already begun to impress their influence into the newly formed organism.

Children need a great deal of sleep because they are like a whole sense organ; they would otherwise be unable to endure the dazzle and noise of the outer world. Just as the eye must close to the dazzling sunlight, likewise this sense organ — the child — must shut itself off against the world. Because children are like an entire sense organ, they must sleep a great deal. (Steiner, 2004: 7)

We have to blink our eyes regularly. Each blink is a brief cat-nap for the mind, and we do not even notice the brief gap in visual awareness. The sensory organs make use of electro-chemical processes, which are not individualised. This enables science to study the electro-chemical processes in great detail. However science is so far unable to account for the appearance of sensory impressions in the mind. It is possible to trace the physical activity, but this does not reflect the qualitative detail of consciousness. This gap in natural scientific understanding is stuffed with conjecture about the body-mind connection. Even if we are untrained in anthroposophical spiritual inquiry, the phenomena of body-mind interaction can be observed in ourselves and in others. The process of forming mental impressions involves etheric and sentient forces embedded both in the soul and physical body. So a primary field of observation of four-fold integration is the sensory functioning of the developing individual.

The sensory organisation instinctively stimulates awakening, but, as yet, there is little defined perception of self or surroundings, although, through our own sense of you, we may recognise a reflection of spiritual individuality shining out of a baby’s eyes. The more we look at one another, the more we see. The more the child uses its senses, the more they reveal and take hold of the Earthly world.

As adults, the more we think we know what we are looking for, the less we notice new sights. The method of finding something we cannot perceive is, quite simply, to look for it among what we can observe, and to keep looking with an open mind, rather than guessing. Familiarity breeds inattention, and this is a blessing, because otherwise the multitude of sensory impressions would flood us beyond our ability to concentrate on anything. On the other hand, the belief that we know what we are going to find, before we look, makes the mind’s eye blink shut at the very moment we might discover something unexpected. So as we awaken to adulthood, we also go to sleep. Our mind’s eye opens to what is fresh and new, and closes to what is old and stale. As the doors of the social senses open, curtains are softly drawn over the windows of bodily sense awareness, until something out of the ordinary opens them up again, like a gust of wind, and draws our attention back to the body. We have no awareness of the eye’s looking or the ear’s listening; our sense organs

96
need to be selflessly opened to their niche of the world. The intention of the I-being and soul is to interact with the world, so physiological awareness is reduced to the level that is needed to keep control. Anyone who learns to drive a car can notice how our attention to all the distracting details of controlling the car diminishes as we get the ‘feel’ of what is essential, enabling us to concentrate on where we want to go, and maintain a sensitive alertness to changes in traffic and road conditions.

As discerning observers, we need to be alert to the individual development of our own sensory perception if we are not to inadvertently bring a distorting personal bias to the mind’s field of view. The sense organs bind our I-being and soul to the physical body. This significant relationship led Rudolf Steiner to a specific definition of the body in his book, *Theosophy*:

> By body is meant the means by which the things in our environment... reveal themselves to us. (Steiner, 1994b: 24)

Based on his studies of Steiner’s model of 12 sensory fields of experience, Karl König realised that the observation of sensory function could reveal the characteristic integration of self-awareness in the body, which mirrors the I-being (König, 2008). The perceptivity of the senses is self-taught by means of an increasingly penetrating intentionality as the soul enters into sensory harness. At the beginning of life, sounds and sights are a kaleidoscope of disconnected fragments that pour into the mind. The development of the ability to focus and direct attention correlates with the development of sensory integration. The chaotic kaleidoscope of sensation is assembled into a coherent image. The manifoldness of sensory impressions only comes together as a multi-dimensional mental impression of one world through the development of single-mindedness: the integration of the individual I-being in the world through the embodied soul that is experienced as the sense of self. This is how we have all learned hand-eye coordination. The screw-top bottle top teaches our hands how to hold it tightly enough in order to open the bottle successfully. The individualising process proceeds through self-education according to how we take up the learning opportunities that life offers, and discover that ‘I can do it’. The precision with which knowing imbues these words tells us about our own individualisation, and relates to the practice of Right Effort on the Eightfold Path (see Steiner, 1994a: 114). The key to will development is that repeated attentive practice develops capacity for practice, as the wisdom of young children demonstrates to all who will learn from them.

Early difficulties with motor skills may signal an insufficient penetration of the organism by the soul. Reflexes bear the instincts of the inherited etheric configuration embedded in the physical formation of the limbs, and if the soul does not penetrate into the organism, infantile reflexes will be retained. A little learning will require repeated effort and support. The poet Wordsworth wrote, “The child is father of the man”. Standing on Wordsworth’s shoulders, we could say that the inherited physical, etheric and sentient organism is the ‘father’ of the individualised physical, etheric and sentient organism. Steiner calls the inherited physical body the ‘model body’ (1998: Lecture 1). The model body will become individualised and increasingly differentiated from inherited characteristic traits of the family to the extent that it becomes a tool of learning through imitation and playful experiment. The thumb becomes an imitation and substitute of mother’s nipple. This can only happen if the body is clearly perceived by its own senses.

Some non-typical genetic configurations bring a severe challenge to the penetration of the individualising process. The implications of such a constitution can often be observed to the extent that infant reflexes are retained, or transformed.

Mental impressions and imaginations arise in the interplay of etheric and sentient forces within the soul, inspired by life experiences, including images from the media. One reason that young children are given dolls, with almost no facial features, is to discourage the development of fixed mental images in the soul too early. Once impressed into childhood memory, especially before the experience and expression of “I”, fixed images and ideas will bounce back like conditioned reflexes.
without time or place, as described in Section 4.2. This is not a healthy education for the small child, as flexibility of images and ideas in the imagination will prepare a richer and more creative soul life in the future.

The capacity to make use of the physical body is outwardly expressed through movement, in all kinds of activity and behaviour. Yet the sentient forces are not able to penetrate into the organism more deeply than the individualising etheric organism. The inability to assert dexterous control of the limbs indicates that the sentient organism is somewhat ‘detached’ from the individual will of the soul. The extreme situation is paralysis.

Symptoms of paralysis are of course in essence an abnormal functioning of the astral [sentient] body, which does not engage itself in the etheric and physical organisation. (Steiner, 2009b: Lecture 8)

I have heard it said that ‘the limbs are unpenetrated’ when a youngster struggled with hand-eye coordination and fine motor skills. Perhaps we can understand this more clearly. Integration of the sensory organisation may be achieved during the second developmental phase, enabling the etheric organism to adapt to physical challenges thereafter, with a more resilient capacity to adapt to outer conditions and circumstances.

It is not abstract concepts that work in the right way on the growing etheric body, but rather what is seen and perceived—indeed, not with external senses, but with the mind’s eye. Such seeing and perceiving is the proper means of education for these years [7-14]. (Steiner, 1996a: 23)

During the third developmental phase the sentient organism, which is closer to the individual I-being, conveys individualising forces with greater clarity than etheric forces could achieve. These forces may be diverted from harmonising bodily development during the teens, giving rise to a predisposition to senile dementia, as mentioned earlier in Section 3.6. Amidst the development of finer motor control, the sovereign need of the I-being to achieve equilibrium and uprightness in life can be discerned in moral development. The earlier appearance of shame, which can suddenly flood out from beneath the protecting sense of life or wellbeing, is an instinctive reflex enshrined in the biblical account of Adam caught hiding by Godfather. Shame will be transformed into a sensitivity towards error and untruth if the soul is able to take firm hold of the sentient forces as the inner voice of conscience becomes more articulate.

Our memories and our sensory perceptions both form mental impressions in our mind’s eye. We usually have no difficulty distinguishing between today’s rain and yesterday’s sunshine, so we dress appropriately. Today’s learning should be impressed into memory, upon the etheric organism, rather than into the physical organs. The sensory organisation forms a mirror image of the outside world in memory as the child becomes a more conscious being, and imitation is more strongly individualised as role models are seized upon. This is not a process that takes place only in the head, as is often imagined; the sentient forces guide the learning process.

We owe our memory to the fact that all the impressions we receive from the external world have their reflections, their mirror-pictures, in the metabolism-and-limbs organisation. (Steiner, 1998: Lecture 5)

The etheric organism, which initially rebuilds the inherited body in imitation of the spiritual ancestry of the I-being, now begins to reflect the world around it by reflecting its own imitation of the sensory impressions it receives through the presence of the I-being.

When I see a colour, when I hear a sound, I experience the colour and the sound not as a result of my body, but I am connected with the colour, with the sound, as a self-conscious
ego, outside my body. My body has the task to function in a way that can be compared with the action of a mirror. (Steiner, 2009b: Chapter 8)

The child who has not been able to achieve this mirroring has not found its point of rest within the sense of balance, where sensory impressions can be focussed, and self-consciousness can find its place. This was described in Section 4.1. It is only possible to reflect on self in the world when self-consciousness is securely located within the physical body. The sensory impressions that are reflected from the body become clearly focussed in this central point of rest. Many people experience that they look out into the world from the mid-point between the two organs of balance, behind the eyes where the pineal gland is located.

5. Making a Difference

_In today already walks tomorrow._ – Samuel Taylor Coleridge

We can learn to survey and assess the developmental results of the past; it is more difficult to assess an individual’s potential for future development. For this reason we need to be very careful not to impose our own expectations of eventual achievement, or lack of progress, upon another human being.

_We are called to do more than observe bodily nature; whereas we must never neglect the body, we are asked to observe the way spirit is at work in bodily nature._ (Steiner, 2004: 5)

5.1. The Pedagogical Law and Self-Development

_If you treat an individual... as if he were what he ought to be and could be, he will become what he ought to be and could be._ -- Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

The I-being is the spiritual architect of individual development, and raw foundations of this development are given by the parents through inheritance. The architect can only achieve its work through the active cooperation of other spiritual and human beings. Human beings are not able to develop fully in isolation, as studies of feral children have shown. The family, carers, teachers, peers and everyone who influences a person’s life contribute to how the course of their development proceeds. Some influences are supportive and some are challenging. The qualities of life experience may enhance or diminish the equilibrium of self-confidence and self-determination. This is no less true for us than for those we wish to support. Part of our responsibility to others is to keep our own house in order.

The understanding of distinctive developmental differences, and therefore significant factors in four-fold integration, requires a reconciliation of our observations from the outside with our empathic sense of the inner experience of the individual in question. An important key to this is our reflexivity (awareness of the influences of self) and critical thinking. This is a field of inquiry that demands a disciplined ethos. In our social pedagogical work, we cultivate a relationship with the other person, and become involved. It is vital that our involvement does not become a barrier to our clarity of observation or to the development of the other. For this reason, a prerequisite for our inquiry is an understanding of our own four-fold constitution and integration, and a sincere commitment to work on ourselves for the benefit of others. We engage in self-development for the sake of one another. Our strategies for dealing with life may need to be adapted more than those of an individual with whom we are working.
Early survival and coping strategies based on instinctive responses to repeated experiences of social encounters often prove ineffective in later life, so one of the tasks of social pedagogy is to assist the individual to adapt earlier behaviour patterns and develop more effective and socially acceptable ones. One of the most useful insights for our work is the Pedagogical Law (Steiner, 1998: Lecture 2). Steiner describes how the higher members of the adult influence the lower members of the developing individual. The family cultural ethos and behavioural mannerisms are inherited after birth, through imitation and the natural working of the Pedagogical Law.

It is ethically very sensitive to cooperate in the work upon an impressionable developing constitution by its I-being. We must be aware of the influence we are having on the other person, and on one another. It is never our task to distort the individualising forces of another person, so we have an ethical obligation to ensure that, as far as possible, our influences are always of a liberating and health-giving nature. The task is always to encourage and promote the individual’s own individualising process. This is most effectively done through inclusive teamwork, harnessing soul-spiritual forces rooted in a mutuality of collegial spirit-self (see Steiner, 1994b, for an explanation of spirit-self). The effort to achieve consensus in collaborative teamwork and organisational strategy reflects in the clarity of virtue that imbues and informs the co-working.

The developing individual’s constitution also influences family and carers, even before the soul has fully worked through the inherited organism. This can be experienced in the impact that a child can have on the family’s inner development. We are all susceptible to one another’s constitutional imbalances as much as to the empowering forces of resilience. While these imbalances may sometimes have a positive influence, inhibiting tendencies may be induced in those who care for a child. I suggest that the so-called ‘use of self’ in social pedagogy needs to be consciously supervised by fellow co-workers, not only self. This is a wake-up call to take control of one’s own inner forces of individuality in order to counteract the unnoticed development of one-sided reactions, habits and prejudicial attitudes.

The management of antisocial behaviour, and the possible risk of self-harm, require sensitive guidance and redirection. Our ultimate goal is individual and social wellbeing. As adults, we bear responsibility for the continuing development and individualisation of the four members of our constitution, and the consequences of their influence on others. This responsibility suggests that an enduring commitment to daily practice of inner exercises to strengthen our resilience and self-understanding is an ethical imperative: at the very least, ongoing critically reflective practice in a collaborative framework of support and supervision. It is essential to allow the individual forces of development in others to work in their own way, and not to impose our will on healthy and diverse developmental processes of four-fold integration. Otherwise we unwittingly imprint our untransformed characteristics upon one another. Only thus can tendencies to institutionalisation and normalising enculturation be weeded out of us.

5.2. Individual Integration: a Path to Social Integration

It is in the shelter of other people that people live. -- Irish Proverb

I have not attempted to cover all the possible constitutional combinations here, only to offer examples of possible avenues of inquiry towards the deeper insights that can only be unveiled by looking at, and comprehending, each individual from a four-fold perspective. Each one of us has to develop our own sensitivity, our own instrument of observation, and to learn how to regard one another clearly: to clarify in the mind’s eye what is truly presented to us. It is not our task to analytically vitiate others, to dismember, disempower and make one another vulnerable, but to ‘make straight the way’ for the unique contribution of our fellow human beings to penetrate society. The path to social inclusion is navigated through the individual integration of body, soul and spirit.
The more I can belong to myself, and achieve integrity of spirit soul and body, the more effectively I can contribute to society at large.

As mentioned earlier, Wordsworth wrote that “The child is father of the man”. The work of social pedagogy demonstrates that the relationships of childhood and youth can be a collective ‘mother’ of the young adult. Does society not have the responsibility to become a nurturing mother: calling all for one and one for all (Alexandre Dumas, *The Three Musketeers*)? Our own integrity stands on our ability to discern our own I-being. Our primary ethical task as social pedagogues, or simply as human beings of goodwill, is to clean up our own act by purifying and defragmenting our vision of ourselves, the world and each other. The path of human development is a path towards individual and social integrity: that is the aim of individualisation in adulthood. The cultivation of social integrity, through respectful discernment, reveals a greater spiritual dignity than the sum of the parts of a human relationship. A deepening recognition of the dignified individual developmental integration into the body, into the world, into society, can enable us to intuitively discern the I-being who is here to make its mark in the world, on us, and to receive the imprint of the world and society.

The ways and means to support the spirit of another human being will open up to anyone who makes the effort to walk generously and attentively alongside them on their life journey. It is over to you, the reader, to take the initiative and give purpose to your own journey.

5.3. **Sustainable growth for all, or sustainable development of all?**

With adult life come the responsibilities of self-regulation. Unrestrained growth can be even more devastating than stagnation. Maturity is a phase of sustainable equilibrium, and, hopefully, of continuing inner development. With the transition into adulthood and some measure of sustainable equilibrium, the human I-being transforms the forces of sustainable self-growth into forces that make possible sustainable self-development that can contribute to world development. The birth into adulthood can be painful. The motivation for continuing self-development may not be fostered by society. If the people who surround us represent a society that is stagnant or risk-averse, the lack of outer incentive can bring a sense of hopelessness that can effectively squash creative initiative. It is the task of the social pedagogue to offer opportunities and appreciation for significant individual contributions, no matter how large or small. When this sense of social responsibility imbues our work, the ideal of social inclusion can be realised locally. An evolutionary transformation of society begins in local communities where responsibility for the individual transformation of self becomes a mutual concern, and there are signs that such seeds of change are emerging here and there. There are also many signs of developmental impairment and illness in society, and resources are scarce where it matters most. The Pedagogical Law acts between groups, and it is our individual responsibility to ensure that our local influence is generally beneficial to other groups.

Society becomes good as long as goodwill lives in our work with others. In this way our society becomes resilient, and the rhythmical succession of generations opens the way for young giants to reach higher from the shoulders of old giants. (The ‘shoulders of giants’ image, used by Isaac Newton in a letter of 1676, first appeared in 1159, when John of Salisbury quoted Bernard of Chartres, and so it goes on.) Giving way to the up and coming generation asks us to trust and empower their succession. Our organisations become vulnerable if we over-identify with our work and positions. The whole social organism suffers if it depends exclusively on an ageing and apparently indispensable individual. As the body renews its substance every seven years, so an organisation needs to renew its membership rhythmically. We can begin to see that what we have learned about healthy four-fold integration and individual development can help us learn about healthy social integration and organisational development. The issues of individual and society confront the issues of cultural coherence and diversity. The evolution of society is an
individualisation process of a higher order in which we all participate. Empathy, as a faculty of insight, reveals the way forward.
### 6. Points of Observation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Integration of the Four</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Physical development:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retains resemblance to parents?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Individualised appearance?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sensory integration:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limited – partial – inconsistent – healthy – savant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Retained reflexes/Uncontrolled gestures?</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Rhythmical movements:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>arrhythmal – jerky or sporadic – some fluency – fluently rhythmical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ability to imitate:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>undeveloped – parroting – limited – inconsistent – playful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Stereotypical behaviour patterns?</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Resilience:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>general health?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>healing of cuts, bruises, etc.?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>recovery from stress?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Saying “I” to self?</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>YES – Sometimes – NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Self-esteem and Self-reliance?</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Anxiety or Trauma?</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Attachment issues?</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Emotional development?</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Confusion of own/other’s emotions?</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>apparently lacking – encapsulating (tuned out) – rigid – playful – creative – hallucinatory (unable to distinguish real life from fantasy)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Imaginative capacity:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Interest in others?</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Interest in environment?</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coherent– fluctuates – fragmented – dislocated from bodily senses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Influence on others:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>challenging – inhibiting – depleting – enriching – enlightening – transforming</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ability to learn:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>specific areas?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Awareness of danger:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>none – limited – appropriate – over aware – hyper-vigilant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Remembering and forgetting?</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ability to ask relevant questions?</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Self-directed initiative?</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>What self-selected learning and behavioural strategies promote developmental progress?</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>What self-selected learning and behavioural strategies discourage developmental progress?</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Challenges in biography:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>generally inhibiting – no distinct pattern – generally overcome</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Her/his characteristic effect on you, the observer:

Your characteristic attitude to her/him:

These points of observation are by no means a complete list. They are intended to open up some useful avenues of inquiry. The last two questions lead the attention towards phenomena within the observer. Sensitive discernment is required to observe and understand an individual four-fold constitution. No matter how observant we may be, we are rarely fully informed. A thorough investigation is always necessary before making any evaluation or assessment of a person, which should be reviewed frequently. I highly recommend that such subtle and detailed ongoing observation is undertaken cautiously with experienced colleagues. The discipline of a research team is required.

A developing young person will present themselves differently as their biography unfolds. The timing and sequence of developmental features reveal some of the intricacy of unseen processes, so it is vital to look and look again at how the embodied processes of integration reveal themselves. However often we may find similarities in one another, each human being harbours their own unique mystery.

*People are forever wanting prescriptions: Do this in this way, do that in that way! But the fact is, anyone who sets out to educate [atypical] children will never have finished learning. Each single child will be for him a new problem, a new riddle. And the only way he can succeed in finding what he must do in the individual case, is to let himself be guided by the being in the child. It is not easy, but it is the only real way to work. And this is the reason why it is of such paramount importance that, as teachers, we should take in hand our own self-education. (Steiner, 1998: Lecture 4)*

7. Bibliography


