Chapter 4
Anthropsophy as the Basis for Pedagogical Anthropology

Abstract In present times, the philosophical anthropology of education is a rather neglected field of inquiry. Steiner's view is that the practice of education must be based on a true understanding of the nature of the human being and of children's development. His spiritual and holistic view can be described as encompassing the physical, the physiological, the psychological and the existential or spiritual aspects of the human being. As for psychology, the functions of thinking, feeling and willing and their development during childhood are of primary importance for education. Other aspects are the classical idea of the four temperaments, and the twelve senses of the human organism. This chapter ends with considering Steiner's far-sighted view of human development, which includes the whole individual life span as well as the cultural history of humanity, and some affinities between his views and Romantic ideas in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

Keywords Educational anthropology · Developmental psychology
Aesthesiology · The Romantic view of childhood

4.1 A Neglected Field of Educational Thought

The idea that education must be based on a deep understanding of the nature of the human being can be found, at least implicitly, already in Aristotle (Reeve 2000). This question is basically a philosophical one in the sense that the essential nature of something cannot be grasped by sense-based knowledge alone. Before human nature, in terms of our mind or psyche, became an object for empirical studies—towards the end of the nineteenth century—the field of pedagogical anthropology was, therefore, exclusively a branch of philosophy. However, the rise of empirical psychology led to the question of how the soul, psyche or mind develops in children. Researchers devoting themselves to this question could not avoid drawing

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practical conclusions about education from their findings (cf. Freud, Jung, Piaget, Vygotsky a.o.). Developmental psychology, therefore, gradually became an important basis for educational thought and practice, and an essential part of teacher education.

However, while Waldorf education still holds on to the view that understanding child development is the *sine qua non* for being a teacher—using Steiner's ideas for this purpose—in mainstream education developmental psychology has lately become of less significance. There are several reasons for this. One is the critique of stage models of development, such as that of Piaget. Such models are perceived as too static or rigid. For instance, children can sometimes express abilities that are supposed to belong to a later stage, depending on how the task is presented to them. Therefore, at school children can be held back by the teacher's belief that they are not supposed to have certain abilities (cf. Ashley 2009).[1] Another reason for the partial abandonment of developmental psychology is the growing influence of social constructivism and its inherent relativism: theories of development are understood as the results of social and discursive practices, hence dependent on contingent contextual factors. Related to this is so-called postmodernism and its scepticism regarding so-called grand theories: all claims to universality of theoretical models and structures are understood as expressions of rationalistic hubris. As an alternative to psychology, the sociology of childhood has developed as an empirical field of research, in which different, socially constructed childhoods are mapped out and described. This research is of relevance for education, but it provides very little support for taking a stance in practical situations (for a further discussion of these issues, see Dahlin 2013).

To speak plainly, without a holistic vision and detailed knowledge of what constitutes a natural developmental trajectory from child to adult, we lack a solid ground for educational and pedagogical actions. And if education does not care to formulate such a 'grand theory', others will: evolutionary biologists and brain scientists seem to have no doubts about their capacity to do this. Steiner's anthroposophy can provide a powerful alternative to these more or less materialistic and/or scientistic attempts to understand human nature.

In this chapter, I will present some of the basic ideas of Steiner's view of human nature and development. These ideas go against the grain of much of present day mainstream perspectives. To assimilate them and understand them in their real intent takes time and effort. What is presented here is only so to speak a skeleton: the warm flesh and blood of living understanding can only come with experience and reflective inquiry.

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[1]From a Steiner/Waldorf point of view, this critique could be answered by saying that even if these observations are true, in the long run it is not good for children to actively engage in tasks that are beyond their developmental stage. Such activities tend to 'defuse' their potential for further development of these abilities at the appropriate age. An indication in this direction is given by some results of an evaluation of Swedish Waldorf schools (Dahlin 2010), which will be discussed in Chap. 7.

4.2 The Four-Folded Structure of the Human Being[2]

That the human being has many different aspects or dimensions, which are all integrated into one complex whole, is a fact that can hardly be disputed. The enumeration or classification of these aspects can take different forms, but there is probably a large consensus around saying that there are four basic aspects or dimensions:

(1) a physical body, consisting of physical matter, most obviously illustrated by bones, teeth, nails and hair;
(2) a physiological aspect, consisting of life processes, expressing themselves in biochemical processes, and often involving various forms of liquid matter such as blood, lymph and bile;
(3) a psychological aspect, consisting of thoughts, feelings, perceptions, desires, imaginations, hopes, dreams, etc. formerly seen as aspects of the soul;
(4) an existential[3] or spiritual aspect, consisting of awareness of being an 'I' or a self, having an identity, being a person that was born at a certain time and will eventually die, being gifted with a certain freedom and possibility to realise meaning and moral values.

There is a certain parallel between these four aspects and the fundamental structure of the human being that Steiner returns to many times in his books and lectures. This structure consists of four 'essence members' (*Wesensglieder*), which Steiner—using some traditional esoteric technical terms—calls the physical body, the etheric body, the astral body and the 'I' or the ego.[4] These 'bodies' are related to different phases of the cosmic evolution of the planet Earth, the physical body being the oldest and the 'I' the youngest member (Steiner 1989a [GA 13])[5]. However, one must remember that this is just a primary classification of the aspects or dimensions of the human being, which Steiner further differentiates and refines in his books and lectures. Of all these 'bodies', it is only the physical body that is known to science

[2]This section is a slightly revised version of a section in Dahlin (2013).

[3]I use "existential" as denoting the same kind of phenomena that traditionally was called spiritual, although the two terms obviously have different connotations as they are part of completely different conceptual frameworks. The term "existential" also has a more limited scope.

[4]Steiner's understanding of the human being is part of his spiritual science (*Geisteswissenschaft*) and rests on two basic principles: (1) there exists a spiritual world (or even worlds) that is ontologically prior to the physical/sensory world (the relationship between the two is—as Steiner (1987a [GA 9]) (English edition: Steiner 2011b; p. 107) roughly depicts it—like that of the ocean to the icebergs); (2) this spiritual world can be investigated by means of super-sensible faculties of cognition with the same exactness and objectivity as sensory reality is investigated by natural science. Steiner's description of the human being is a result of such super-sensible investigation.

[5]English edition: Steiner (2011a).

today. There are, however, a few exceptions in philosophy and philosophical reflections on scientific findings, where something rather like what Steiner refers to as the *etheric* body shows up.[6]

To begin with, it was implicitly realised already by Kant that if we could identify a substance that mediated between thought and physical matter, then its implications for philosophy would be very significant (Schickler 2005). German brain researcher Hüther (2005) provides a more recent example of how such a mediating substance can be understood. According to Hüther, the remarkable characteristic of living organisms is not the complexity of their life processes, but the ability to *govern and link* all these processes, so that the organism is *maintained as a whole*, although by the laws of physics and chemistry alone it should disintegrate. Therefore, living organisms must be understood as structures (*Gebilde*) that are able to use matter in accordance with an inherent inner pattern, an 'inner image' of what it shall be and become (ibid., p. 33) This agrees with one of Steiner's alternative terms for the etheric body: *Bildekräfteleib* (approx. 'body of image powers'). Thus, it is as if the etheric body mediates between physical matter and the 'idea', pattern or image that the organism manifests in physical matter.

A similar notion is found in Sheldrake's (2006) relatively well-known conceptions of morphogenetic and morphic fields. Morphogenetic fields are related to the biological world (and was suggested already in the 1920s, according to Sheldrake), whereas morphic fields have a more general extension. Like Hüther, Sheldrake points to the necessary presence of an inner organising force or agency in living organisms. For instance, if the same genes are present in all cells irrespective of which organ they belong to, how can we explain that cells develop differently in different organs? Sheldrake also refers to the mathematician René Thom, who developed mathematical models for morphogenetic fields (Thom 1983), in which the end points towards which living systems develop are called *attractors*. All morphic fields have attractors, Sheldrake claims, and he even identifies the force of these fields with 'the force of *habit*' (p. 33; my italics). One kind of morphic field is what Sheldrake calls *perceptual* fields. These fields link us to our environment and to each other and extend far beyond the brain. They explain, for instance, why we sometimes can sense someone looking at us from the back (Sheldrake 2005a, b). They also form the basis of telepathy and telecommunication between pets and their owners. (Probably also between mothers or parents and their babies, we could add.)[7] However, the concept of morphic fields does not explain how forms, patterns or habits *arise*, only how they are transferred from one organism to another.

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[6]The etheric body would roughly correspond to the physiological aspect of our total being, even though physiology in a general sense consists of visible biochemical processes; that is, it is physical, whereas the etheric is invisible and non-physical. Nevertheless, the correspondence is there, in the sense that the etheric forces regulate the physiological processes.

[7]The reason why such telepathic phenomena are relatively more common between humans and their pets is probably that the etheric forces of animals are not disturbed by influences from the 'I'. This should apply also to babies and small children.

From these admittedly sketchy accounts, we can gather that the concept of an etheric dimension to the human being is not completely out of reach to present (but more or less marginalised) academic thought. Moving on to the so-called astral body, references to this or similar conceptions are harder to find in academic literature. In its basic form, however, the idea is not so strange, because it simply refers to our inner, conscious or unconscious, psychological life: the continuous flux of mental images, memories, plans, dreams, phantasies, desires, fears, expectations, etc. Neither does it take much serious self-observation to realise that my personal inner life has a kind of topography (or topology), which is different from that of other people. In that sense, our personal mind is organised like a body. A body does not have to consist of physical matter. (Even in higher mathematics certain algebraic structures are called ‘bodies’.) However, the problem with the notion of the astral body begins when one considers the claim made in esoteric traditions, that this body is called ‘astral’ because it is related to the planets and the fixed stars. Such an idea naturally falls outside the range of any present day academic thought, philosophical or other.

Regarding the fourth aspect, the ‘I’ or the self of human beings, the idea that this ‘innermost core’ of the human person is of a purely spiritual nature is challenged on two academic front lines: that of brain science and that of (most) post-structuralist human and social science. The first reduces the self to an epiphenomenon (at the most) of purely material brain processes. The second reduces it to a social or discursive construction that varies from context to context, without any essential identity. In answer to the first, it may be said that Steiner does not deny that, *for the normal state of consciousness*, the brain is necessary for us to have a sense of ‘I’ or personal identity. Secondly, to the extent that post-structural thinking argues for the *decentred* nature of the human ‘I’, it agrees with the Romantics (Bowie 2003) and therefore, implicitly, also with Steiner (and other esoteric traditions). For Steiner, the *real* ‘I’ resides in the unconscious, beyond any discursive processes. Our normal I-sense is a mere reflection of this spiritual reality, a reflection indeed produced by the brain. *This* sense of ‘I’ is, therefore, also subject to various social and cultural processes. Thirdly, we may note that there *are* philosophers and brain researchers who argue for a basically spiritual understanding of the human person (and of the brain), for instance, Spaemann (2006), Popper and Eccles (1998) and Beauregard and O’Leary (2007).

The terms ‘etheric’ and ‘astral’ may cause some revolting feelings in people who vehemently reject all kinds of occultism or esotericism as just so much superstition or unscientific nonsense. However, these terms refer to rather simple and basic phenomena. In principle, a ‘body’ is an *organisation*. A physical body is an organisation of dead, physical matter. However, as we know from quantum physics, a physical body is not the mass of solid matter that it appears to be to our senses of sight and touch. Physical matter consists of fields of quantum particles and energy; matter is a swirl of elementary particles that, essentially, is *energy*. It may, therefore, be better to use the notion of *fields of energy*, force or power instead of bodies. As Deleuze says, ‘every relationship of forces constitutes a body—whether it is chemical, biological, social or political’ (quoted in Protevi 2001, p. 36). From this

point of view, the so-called etheric body is really a field of life forces.[8] This field has many aspects but one of its basic functions is to regulate all life processes and connect our various organs into one functioning whole: to keep our body in shape (a corpse has lost this energy and gradually disintegrates). Steiner, therefore, also talks about the etheric body as a body of *formative forces*. The astral body in turn is a field of another, more 'psychic' energy, which consists of forces of desire, imaginations, thoughts and emotions. The 'I' or ego, finally, can be understood as a purely spiritual power; a power of personal presence, awareness and attention (cf. Kühlewind 1998).

Each of these different bodies or energy fields go through particular developments, from dependence to relative independence, as the child is first born and then grows from infancy to adulthood. In the womb, the physical body of the foetus is obviously dependent on that of the mother. After birth, this body gains its independency in a physical sense, but the infant's etheric body is still strongly connected to that of the mother. The etheric energy field gains a relative independence around the age of seven, forming the basis for individual memory and conceptionalisation. At puberty, the astral energy field of desires and feelings develops more personal characteristics and becomes (relatively) independent.[9] Finally, the 'I' gains its relative autonomy around the age of twenty-one; this is also the time when the individual *will* come to the fore, because it is no longer so strongly linked to the body's organic processes (for a more extensive discussion of the four essence members and their development, see Dahlin 2013, p. 36ff).

It must be emphasised that this short description of Steiner's understanding of human nature is a simplification. For instance, each of the four essence members can be differentiated into further aspects or dimensions. This fourfold scheme, therefore, only works as a preliminary scaffold for further investigations needed to deepen our understanding and make it more living and concrete. It may also be pointed out that Steiner's conceptual scheme has certain parallels in classical Aristotelianism and in other spiritual traditions.[10]

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[8]According to Steiner, the etheric body is not to be confused with Bergson's élan *vital*, which Steiner rejected as a "pure phantasy" (Steiner 1987b [GA 73], p. 250).

[9]This is of course related to changes in the neurophysiology of the brain, cf. Siegel (2015).

[10]Aristotle identified nutrition, perception and mind as aspects of the human soul (Shields, Christopher, "Aristotle's Psychology", The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Spring 2016 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2016/entries/aristotle-psychology/); nutrition being a parallel to the etheric and perception and mind to the astral, roughly. In the early Christian (Paulinian) distinction between body, soul and spirit, the soul would encompass the etheric and the astral bodies, and the spirit would correspond to the 'I'. In the ancient tradition of yoga or Vedanta, there is a parallel between the so-called pranic sheath (*pranamaya kosha*) and the etheric body (*prana* being equal to breath and life energy). The other "sheaths" of the *Atman* (the self), such as *manomaya*, *vijnanamaya* and *anandamaya kosha* can be taken as further differentiations of the astral body (cf. Guénon 1981). In the various physical disciplines derived from ancient Taoism, the notion of *chi* (Chinese) or *ki* (Japanese) corresponds to *prana* and to the etheric forces. Regarding *ki*, Hisayama (2014) presents an interesting phenomenological study of its many different aspects and suggests a kinship to the old Greek concept

4.3 The Three Soul Functions: Thinking, Feeling and Will, and Their Bodily Correspondences

Steiner adhered closely to the Paulinian distinction between body, soul and spirit. However, the difference between soul and spirit has largely been lost in the Christian tradition of the West, which can cause some difficulties in understanding Steiner's ideas. One often finds thinkers that use the term 'soul' to denote what Steiner would call spirit, and vice versa. One example is Emerson, who describes the soul as that which animates all the organs of the human being and uses abilities such as intellect and memory as its organs. For Emerson, the soul is a kind of infinity that cannot be grasped (cf. Geldard 1993, p. 174). However, from Steiner's point of view, this would be a good description of the *spirit*, not the soul.

In Steiner's way of speaking, 'body' means the physical body; 'soul' roughly equals the etheric and the astral bodies described above, and 'spirit' refers to the 'I' or the self (there are also spiritual beings above the level of the 'I'). Child education is about helping the spirit to 'incarnate', that is, to take full possession of its different bodies and turn them—as far as possible—into faithful servants of the spirit. One aspect of this process is helping the 'I' to master the different functions of the soul. Steiner divides these functions into *thinking*, *feeling* and *will,* corresponding roughly to the classical division of the mind into the cognitive, affective and conative faculties (for the history of this idea, see Hilgard 1980). Of these, thinking and feeling are well-known aspects of our inner life, but not so the will. The life of will, as Steiner uses the term, proceeds in the depths of the unconscious. This may be surprising, since we all experience what we want, desire and intend to do as just as conscious as anything else that we are aware of. But knowing what we want is actually a thought, an idea, a conception. The will is not involved until we *do* something to realise our desire. The will is that which is *at work* in our physical actions (including speech). Whenever we carry out a physical action, we are not conscious of all the interactive processes that take place between our brain and nervous system on the one hand, and our muscles, joints and bones on the other. The physical body carries out these things without our awareness of *how* it is done. If we were to become conscious of these processes, it would only disturb them, like the well-known example of the centipede, who would not be able to walk if it started to think of all its feet. It is the unconscious activity of the will that works in our limbs when we act (but of course we can be aware *that* something is being done).

In this regard, the holistic character of Steiner's understanding of human being and development comes to the fore, because the three soul functions are explicitly related to three aspects of the physical body. Thinking is related to the brain and the nervous system; feeling is related to the heart and the lungs (the rhythmic system); and will to the limbs and the digestive system. These different systems are not

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of *pneuma.* Nagatomo (2009) relates *ki* to the "intentional arc" of the lived body in Merleau-Ponty; this could be further related to Sheldrake's morphic perceptual fields mentioned above.

isolated from each other, they interact in various ways. The nervous system is not absent from the stomach and the limbs, and there are metabolic processes in the brain. Oxygen from the lungs and blood from the heart permeates the whole body. But even though everything is connected to everything else, we can see a relative dominance of the nervous system in the head (the brain); a relative dominance of the rhythmic system in the breast (the heart); and a relative dominance of the metabolic system in the limbs and the lower part of the torso (stomach, hands and feet). Similarly, we tend to *experience* thinking as going on in our head, and feelings and emotions in our breast ('it breaks my heart'). Careful self-observation also reveals a connection between feeling and the rhythm of our breath. As for will, it may take some time to get used to the idea that it lives in our limbs and is connected to our digestion. However, one may note that stomach problems often weaken our energy and our desire to do things.

Aristotle is famous for his idea of the soul as the form of the body. Steiner's explanation of the soul-body correlations may illustrate this idea. For Steiner, childhood is the phase of life in which the Aristotelian oneness between soul and body is most accurately true. In childhood, whatever affects the body also affects the soul, and vice versa. This fact is the basis for the salutogenic aspect of education and pedagogy, about which Steiner was deeply concerned (cf. Sobo 2014, 2015; Zdrazil 2000, 2010).[11]

In terms of child development, the will/digestion/limbs play the main roles in infancy and early childhood (approx. 0–7 years old); the feelings/heart/lungs come to the fore in primary and lower secondary school (approx. 7–14 years old); and the thinking/brain/nervous system in the upper secondary school and later (14–21 years old). The infant learns through *imitation*, which is primarily an expression of the life of will. Steiner describes the small child as if 'religiously devoted' (German *religiös hingegeben*) to the surrounding human world (1986a [GA 308], p. 75). It is as if, for the child, the world is basically *good*, and imitation is the way in which the child takes part of this goodness. Its devotional attitude makes it want to imitate what it sees people do. The impressions made by the actions, gestures and tone of voice of the adults around are absorbed by the child's senses and penetrate deep into the organism. Depending on their character, these impressions contribute in a positive or negative way even to the child's organic development.

Later, between age 7–14, the feeling life becomes more dominant and learning is more 'aesthetic' in the sense that the child picks up a lot through the sense qualities and the atmosphere that adults create, not least the teachers. Due to the liberation of (some) etheric forces, the child is then able to form inner images and mental representations (*Vorstellungen*) based on its experiences, which it can also

[11]Zdrazil (2000) compared about a thousand German Waldorf students with around 2500 mainstream students (both groups were in their middle to late teens). Waldorf students reported significantly less problems such as headaches, nervousness, dizziness, stomach problems, nausea and strong heartbeats. It is, however, hard to prove that such differences are caused by Waldorf pedagogy alone, as Zdrazil himself points out (see further, Chap. 7).

remember. Therefore, *feeling* and *remembering* are key words for teaching and learning at this age.

At puberty, cognition and logical thinking awakens to more conscious levels and learning starts to happen mainly 'through the head'. This is related to the liberation of certain astral forces, which up until then works on the formation of the reproductive organs. The teenager starts to question things in a more analytical way, asking for causes and reasons, not taking things for granted in the same way as before. This is the time when *personal judgment* can start to develop. If children are asked to form judgments before this age, their thinking life as adults will be lopsided, Steiner claims. If children are asked for their personal judgements too early in life, they will form the habit to judge things on the basis of their physical body (Steiner 1991 [GA 301], pp. 169–170). That is, their judgements as adults will not be based on impartiality and objective observation, but on other factors related to the physical body, for instance, the temperament (see Sect. 4.4).

The general movement from will to thinking over the years from 0 to 21 can also be seen on a larger scale, from childhood and youth to old age. The child usually has a lot of energy in arms and legs and often runs off to do things without much reflection. The old person, on the other hand, is slow in movement and often spends time thinking, reflecting and considering what to do next, or wondering and questioning things. In general, in relation to each other, the child is more sanguine, and the old person is more melancholic or phlegmatic.

Finally, it must be pointed out that even though thinking, feeling and will are clearly distinguishable from an analytic point of view, they are nevertheless not separate and watertight compartments of the soul. They continuously interact and flow into each other. There is unconscious will in thinking, and vice versa, even though their organic counterparts (nerve cells and blood vessels) are physically distinct. This is the general nature of the realms of soul and spirit: 'things' are not as separate in time and space as they are in the physical world.

Table 4.1 sums up the relations between age periods and various aspects of development.

Table 4.1 Relations between age periods, soul functions, essence members (*Wesensglieder*) and body/soul/spirit

Age period	Liberated soul function	Independent essence member
0–7 years	Sense-perception	The physical organism
7–14 years	Memory/conceptionalisation	The etheric body
14–21	Feeling	The astral body
21–	Will	The 'I'

4.4 The Four Temperaments

Another basic idea, that is part of Steiner's anthropology, is that of the four temperaments: the choleric, sanguine, melancholic and phlegmatic (Steiner 1976, 1984 [GA 57], pp. 281ff). These he took from the ancient Greeks and developed in his own ways. Steiner sees the temperament as a mediator between the specific qualities of the individual spirit—the 'eternal' aspect of the human being—and those qualities which derive from heredity and the physical body—the temporal aspect. The temperament balances these two realms. There are also certain correlations between the four essence members described above, and the four temperaments. However, these correlations are different in children than in adults. In the adult, the choleric is ruled strongly by the I-forces; the sanguine by the astral forces; the phlegmatic by the etheric; and the melancholic by the physical forces. In the child, the I-forces correlate with the melancholic temperament; the astral with the choleric; the etheric with the sanguine; and the physical body with the phlegmatic temperament. The logic behind these correlations would lead too far to be fully explained here. Let it just stand as one example of how Steiner's conceptual schemes relate to one another, forming very complex wholes with high degrees of inner differentiation.

Since the soul and the body are very strongly connected in childhood, the notion of the temperament is especially relevant for the pedagogy of the primary school years. Steiner describes the choleric person as having a strong will and urge to action. This temperament manifests in childhood as, for instance, taking the lead in all plays and games. The melancholic is withdrawn and occupied with his own thoughts. A melancholic child may be very reluctant to share his toys with others, keeping things to himself as it were. The phlegmatic tends to be lazy and dreamy and has little interest in the external world. The sanguine, in contrast, is easily engaged and interested, but the interest tends to fade and soon turns towards something else.

It is important not to take the temperaments (as Steiner understands them) as mutually exclusive; most people have traits from more than one of them. Neither are they to be seen as static properties which will remain with us from birth to old age. Although the different qualities of the temperaments are most easily observable in childhood, they are not rigid and unchanging behaviours that we are stuck with all our life. They can change and develop.

Each temperament manifests a certain one-sidedness of the soul-body organism. However, this one-sidedness may be counteracted and rounded off in school, Steiner claims. This can be done simply by placing children of the same temperament close to one another in the classroom. This counter-intuitive advice (it may seem more logical to put opposite temperaments close to each other) is explained by the fact that meeting someone with the same temperament as myself evokes a reaction of opposition in me. For instance, I can easily get bored by seeing the same laziness in the other person as in myself, and this awakens the desire to get active and do something. Of course, this mostly happens subconsciously, especially in

childhood. Naturally, each temperament also has positive aspects, for instance, the strong will of the choleric, the deep thinking of the melancholic, the calmness and carefulness of the phlegmatic and the enthusiasm of the sanguine. By having an eye for the qualities of the temperaments, the teacher can draw upon the different positive sides of the children, as well as helping them overcome the less positive ones.

However, to categorise the children in one's class in terms of their temperament is not an easy task. It takes careful observations over a long period, and many Waldorf teachers nowadays shy away from this task. In addition, in Western culture, theories and models that categorise or classify human beings into a limited number of types have been viewed with much scepticism since WWII. A less cumbersome approach to the idea of the temperaments is to use it for planning classroom activities: ideally, these should include something pleasing for each of the temperaments, so that all children can feel stimulated by the forms of teaching. Using it this way, the children themselves need not be put into one or another 'temperament box'.

The idea of the four temperaments has been the subject of much scorn from the critics of Waldorf education, because it seems to lack all scientific grounds and to be completely outdated by modern psychology. However, as has been aptly demonstrated by Rittelmeyer (2010), the psychological qualities that define the different temperaments can be clearly detected as *implicit* in the so-called EAS theory of temperament, developed by Buss (1991). Buss's theory belongs to the strand of modern psychology that links up with evolutionary biology and is thus oriented towards expressive behaviours of the bodily organism. The model is based on the three variables emotionality (E), activity (A) and sociability (S). Emotionality varies from having a strong and intensive emotion to having a more cool and calm emotional life. Activity varies from liking to do things, displaying a lot of energy in one's actions and behaviour, to not being particularly energetic and preferring to take it easy and stay still. Sociability, finally, varies from being open to others and liking to be together with other people, to being withdrawn and not minding being alone. These psychological traits are also essential aspects of the four temperaments. Thus, the choleric type has strong emotions (E+), strong energetic behaviour (A+), but is not very social (S−). The emotional life of the sanguine is not particularly intense (E−), but the sanguine is very active and social (A+ and S+). The phlegmatic tends to sociability (S+) but is neither energetic nor intensely emotional (A− and E−). Finally, the melancholic is neither social nor active (S− and A−), but rather intensely emotional (E+). Thus, the EAS scales of Buss's model can be understood as a transformation of the four ideal types that constitute the classical idea of the four temperaments. As already noted, it is important to see the *ideal* character of each temperament: hardly any person is totally one or the other, but a mix of two or more, even though one temperament may be more basic. Similarly, in Buss's model, few people are positioned on the extreme values of the EAS scales.

4.5 Steiner's Aesthesiology (*Sinneslehre*)

Another important part of Steiner's educational anthropology is the aesthesiology (*Sinneslehre*), that is, his theory of the human senses. Steiner regarded knowledge of the senses as important for education, but, from his standpoint, the psychology of his time did not sufficiently understand human sense-perception. In line with the general 'abstractionism' of materialistic science, there was not enough insight into the qualitatively different ways in which the senses work, and the aspects of the world that they transmit to our consciousness. For Steiner, understanding the senses means understanding how the human being is interwoven with the world and actively participates in the world processes; an essential aspect of his participatory theory of knowledge (see Chap. 3).

Steiner's view of the human senses went through a certain development. In 1909–1910, when working with his philosophy of knowledge, he distinguished ten different senses (Leber 2002, p. 172). Seven years later, 1916, in a lecture for members of the AS, he presented his view that there are twelve senses (Steiner 1998 [GA 169], pp. 55ff). This view then became part of the introductory course for teachers in the first Waldorf school (Steiner 1992a [GA 293], pp. 146ff, 2004). Traditionally, of course, we have for a long time taken it for granted that human beings have only five senses—sight, hearing, taste, smell and touch—disregarding here the notion of a *sensus communis*, which has played a certain role in some philosophers' conception of the mind (for inst. Aristotle). It was only during the last century that neurologists began to conceive of other sense faculties and now there seems to be a well-established consensus that we have at least eight senses. The additional three are the sense of temperature, the sense of balance and the sense of movement (kinaesthetic sense). However, the number of potential candidates for being a human sense faculty has grown considerably in recent times.[12] The issue is of course partly related to the question of how to define a sense organ.

In addition to the traditional five, Steiner also recognised the three senses of temperature, balance and movement. But his list encompasses four additional ones. There is the *life sense*, which in present terminology would be an interoceptive sense, directed towards the inner state of the body and its organs. The life sense tells us whether we are alert and energetic, or sleepy and worn out. The remaining three senses are what Steiner calls the *language* sense, the *thought* sense, and the I-sense. The latter senses the presence of *another* person, *another* 'I', not one's own. Similarly, the thought sense captures the thoughts expressed by another person, not one's own.

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[12]See Wikipedia, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sense (accessed 2016-09-22). I am aware that this article lacks some verifying references to research but I have been unable to find any other easily accessible source on the subject. But science nowadays admits that we have more senses than the traditional five; for a discussion of different suggestions in relation to Steiner's view, see Rittelmeyer (2002, p. 62ff).

The language sense is related to the hearing of another person's speech. It does not grasp the meaning of what is said, but it distinguishes between what is language and what is irrelevant noise. Even if I do not know a word of Chinese, I can still *sense* that two Chinese people are *talking* to each other; that is, the language sense in operation. The language sense perceives a word as a 'sound form'; it can be seen as a transformation, or a 'turning inside out' (*Umstülpung*), of the movement sense, because a word is a movement between different sounds that have to be synthesised into a whole (Leber 2002, p. 208).[13] The thought sense is related to the language sense in that it grasps the *meaning* of what is said by the other person, the thoughts behind the words—which does not mean that we always fully and completely understand each other. All senses can be more or less sharp and accurate.

As for the I-sense, the epistemological problem of how we know that another human being is conscious like ourselves—the so-called problem of other minds—has been part of philosophy since Descartes. It seems to have arisen out of the Cartesian distinction between that which we can have direct access to, i.e. our own consciousness, and that which we can only access indirectly. As Scheler pointed out about a hundred years ago (1913), the solutions to the problem can be put in two categories: those based on deduction by analogy and those based on empathy (*Einfühlung*). But neither of these are satisfactory, Scheler argues, because they do not do justice to our experience: the presence of another *person* is felt *immediately*, it is directly given. We do not have to perform any deductions or have any particular feelings in order to know that we have another 'I' in front of us. After Scheler, Heidegger—and later Merleau-Ponty—dismissed the problem as an illusion, since human existence is given primarily as a *we*, not as an isolated ego. To this, Steiner would probably add that whatever sensation or impression that is *given* in our experience is based on a sense organ. If it be asked where an organ for the perception of another 'I' is located, it must be remembered that not all senses have as clear physical delimitations as the eyes or the ears. Steiner indicates that the I-sense is spread out over the whole body (like touch and temperature) but has a kind of gravity centre in the head. Certain areas of the brain may be involved: the clinical case described by Sacks (1998) about a man 'who mistook his wife for a hat' is perhaps an illustration of what can happen when the I-sense is not functioning properly.

Steiner relates the twelve senses to the three soul functions of thinking, feeling and will, as well as to the spirit, the soul and the body. These relations are presented in Table 4.2.

The spiritual senses are closely related to thinking and have a cognitive character, in a way they are the most cognitive senses, but—like all senses—their cognition is of a prereflective nature. The bodily senses work to a large extent subconsciously, like the will, as Steiner understands it (cf. above). Their 'knowing' is very rudimentary and purely potential, unless their sensations are intentionally

[13]From this point of view, it is interesting that the language centre of the brain—Brocash's organ—is situated on the opposite side of the preferred hands' movement centre (Leber 2002, p. 208).

Table 4.2 Correlation between the twelve senses, the three soul functions and body, soul and spirit (adapted from Leber 2002, p. 222)

Spiritual senses	Soul senses	Bodily senses
Related to thinking	Related to feeling	Related to will
I-sense	Temperature	Balance
Thought sense	Sight	Movement
Language sense	Taste	Life sense
Hearing	Smell	Touch

brought to awareness and reflected upon. The soul senses are in between these two poles; their ‘knowing’ is clearer than that of the bodily senses but not as clear as that of the spiritual ones.

None of the senses function alone, but interact with *at least* one of the other senses. This interaction takes place on a subconscious level. In each perception, one sense dominates consciousness and the others work more in the background. Synaesthesia is, therefore, the rule, not the exception; one can find a similar view in Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenology of perception (1992, pp. 228f). Thus, Steiner says the eye would not be able to see the shape of a thing without interacting with the sense of movement. Modern research also clearly shows that the eyes always move rapidly when presented with a visual object, following its basic spatial outline. In a way, every visual form is, therefore, a ‘frozen movement’, both from a physical and from a perceptual point of view. Given a long enough time span, the shape of every physical object changes; its present form is, therefore, a momentary picture of a shape-changing process. In their interaction with the kinaesthetic sense, the eyes in a way construct their own version of this frozen movement.

The point of bringing this theory of the senses into the context of educational anthropology is the importance of the exercise and cultivation of all the twelve sense-perceptual abilities in school activities. This is what makes Steiner education *aesthetic* in the basic and original sense of the word. The old Greek *aesthesis* can best be translated as *sense-perceptual awareness*. This root meaning of the word is still evident in the term ‘anaesthesia’, which—as is well known—means losing the sense of a certain part of the body, or even of all sense-perception, i.e. falling asleep. In this respect, aesthetics has little to do with art and beauty. But art is, on the other hand, a cultural practice in which our senses can be intentionally cultivated and refined. All the various forms of art, therefore, play a significant role in Waldorf education. Steiner seems to have been concerned with the tendency of modern culture and social life to undermine the life of the senses so that they are in danger to atrophy. This threat has been further emphasised by some of his followers (e.g. Glas 1994), but it has also been noted by other social researchers (Kamper and Wulf 1984). Many people in the present ‘information society’ suffer from a cognitive overload; what we take in of the world around us tends to bypass the senses, or, more exactly, it is of such a character that we do not need to dwell on sensual qualities but can ‘get the message’ directly. Dwelling on the quality and deeper meaning of our sense experience is time consuming, but time—despite (or rather because of) all our time saving inventions—is always short.

4.6 The Far-Sighted View: The Lifespan Development of the Individual and the Evolution of Humanity

In contrast to most development psychologists, Steiner's view of human development encompasses the whole lifespan from childhood to old age. Steiner considered it vital for spiritual development that we continue to inquire and learn new things throughout life and not regard ourselves as fully developed at the age of 25 or so. If we do not overcome this view, we will not be able to establish good conditions in society and cultural life (Steiner 1990 [GA 186], pp. 166–167). Thus, Steiner had his own vision of lifelong learning decades before it became a political idea in the Western world, with a rather different agenda behind it. An interesting presentation and extension of Steiner's view of adult development is given by Lievegoed (1997). Lievegoed was a Dutch psychiatrist who founded the Netherlands Pedagogical Institute (NPI), which helps organisations and individuals to realise their social, cultural and economic goals. At the NPI, Livegoed and his colleagues developed *Theory U*, a now rather famous management concept (cf. Senge et al. 2004). Unfortunately, within the frameworks of this book we cannot go deeper into Steiner's and Lievegoed's ideas about adult learning and development.

As is well known, Piaget's theory of child development ends with the stage of formal operations, which matures after puberty. Even though this stage can become more refined and sophisticated, Piaget recognises no deep qualitative shift after it, because his main interest was the development of the intellect (cf. Dahlin 2001). Recently, however, the notion of a post-formal development stage has come to the fore among some researchers; for an overview, see Gidley (2016; Chap. 5). In lieu with Steiner's views, Gidley also relates the discussion of individual development to the general development of human consciousness from the ancient past to the distant future by drawing not only upon Steiner, but also on Ken Wilber and Jean Gebser (ibid. Chap. 2).

Some scholars (Prange 2000; Ullrich 2012) have seen a strong similarity between the so-called recapitulation theory—that 'ontogeny recapitulates phylogeny' as Ernst Haeckel famously expressed it—and Steiner's ideas for the content of the curriculum in different school years. Haeckel's idea is nowadays considered disproved in biology, but it was rather influential at the end of the nineteenth century, and was transferred also to psychology and theories of cognitive development. Both Freud and Piaget seem to have been influenced by it, and Herbert Spencer said that education is—or ought to be—a repetition of the history of civilisation on a smaller scale (1884). It was, however, Tuiskon Ziller, a follower of Johann F. Herbart, that constructed a model of cultural stages (*Kulturstufenplan*) in which each cultural stage of development was correlated with a certain age of the child. Based on this correlation, the content of the curriculum for each school year was prescribed. Steiner also uses the term *Kulturstufen* in relation to the development of specific human abilities and cultural achievements, and there are *partial* agreements between his suggestions for curriculum content in different school years and the *Kulturstufenplan* of Herbart/Ziller. However, Steiner himself denied that his

educational ideas were based on Herbartianism and the recapitulation theory, and there are obvious differences between his views and those of the Herbartians. This has been clearly demonstrated by Wiehl (2015, pp. 122ff), who also points out the shallow character of Prange's (2000) and Zander's (2007) work in this respect. Steiner called the idea that the child repeats the developmental history of all humanity a mere phantasy (Wiehl, p. 146), and he regarded Herbart's psychology—which informed the educational methods of Herbartianism—as abstract and estranged from real life, since it reduced soul life to a kind mechanics of conceptions (*Vorstellungen*), and lacked real insight into the essential nature of the human being.

By looking both at the lifespan development of the individual and the cultural evolution of humanity in the past and the future, Steiner's view of learning, development and education can be called far-sighted indeed. Regarding individual development, he claimed that what a child experiences in the early years of life has consequences much later, in adulthood. In a lecture in 1912, Steiner says we can understand many human beings regarding their health and state of mind in their 30s, 40s or 50s if we know what they experienced in childhood of their parents and the surrounding world, and what at that time entered their subconscious soul life in terms of joys and sorrows (Steiner 1994a [GA 143], p. 80). Childhood experiences affect not only the soul, as in the psychoanalytical view, but also the body—again pointing to the importance of education as a salutogenic factor. Actually, at any point in life we have to do with the whole lifespan of the individual, not only the present condition. The human being is a *time organism* just as much as she is a spatial one (this is connected to the etheric body, which is also a 'time body').

Steiner would probably have agreed with Novalis, who said that 'the longer the human being remains a child, the older she will become' (quoted in Geppert 1977, p. 242; my transl.) This rather remarkable statement has recently been at least partially corroborated by empirical research. Thus, Kern and Friedman (2009) report on a longitudinal study which found that early school entry was associated with *less* educational attainment, *worse* midlife adjustment and even *increased mortality risk*. They also found that 'early reading was associated with early academic success, but less lifelong educational attainment and worse midlife adjustment' (p. 419). Steiner, on his part, warned that if children were required to memorise a lot of facts in the early school years, it would have negative consequences on their health later in life.[14] It may be interesting to note that already Aristotle claimed that starting formal education too early can have negative health effects (Reeve 2000).

[14]This does not contradict the fact that learning in the early school years is based on feeling and remembering, as noted above. The key point is not to *demand* memorisation and to *overload* the memory.

The haste with which some people today want children to start learning sometimes takes absurd expressions: there are even attempts at making the foetus learn in the womb.[15] Steiner would never have agreed to actions of this kind. The child's prenatal development is very much dependent on the state of the mother, not only physically but also mentally. If the mother strives to bring truth and goodness to expression in her soul, then something of that quality will pass over to child. Apart from that, the less we think about influencing the child before birth, the better (Steiner 1992a [GA 293], p. 21f).

However, Steiner was not advocating the approach that only that for which the child can develop a conceptual understanding should be brought up in teaching. This seems to have been a common idea at his time, but also later, as a consequence of Piaget's theory of the stages of intellectual development. Thus, in religious education, Goldman (1965) claimed that the stories of the Bible should not be taught to children because they lack the conceptual resources to understand their symbolic nature. In contrast, Steiner gives the example of how someone in his 40s could suddenly realise the significance of something that a teacher very dear to him once talked about in a lesson, but which he did not understand at the time. Such experiences in adult life can have a deeply vitalising effect, Steiner claims. In the East, this approach to child education has a long tradition, based on traditional stories and fairy tales. Such narratives often have a deeper meaning, which is not grasped by the child but which can emerge later in life, when conditions arise that makes the penny drop. Steiner hints at the same thing when he talks about the importance of telling fairy tales to children (Steiner 1988 [GA 62], pp. 321ff).

According to Steiner, the start of the change of teeth at around the age of seven marks the readiness for school. This fact, Steiner says, was well known to the ancient Greeks. It was also known in the Orient and belonged to the Eastern wisdom traditions (Steiner 1986b [GA 307])[16]. The growth of a new set of teeth indicates, Steiner explains, that certain energies of the etheric body are set free from their work on the physical organism and can, therefore, be used by the psychological faculties of creating conceptions and remembering them. This is the reason why starting school learning before this age can have negative health effects. The etheric forces needed for organic development would then be led into other channels and prevented to do their work on the organs.

4.6.1 The Nine-Year Crisis

In addition to the seven-year period of development related to the four essence members described above, there are more subtle changes happening within these periods. One of these occurs within the second seven-year period, when the child is

[15]See for instance http://www.internationalparentingassociation.org/Early_Learning/womb.html.

[16]English edition: Steiner (1989b).

around nine years old. At this age, Steiner claims, children begin to experience themselves as more separate from the environment. Up to this age, they experience themselves as a natural part of their surroundings, and they do not distinguish themselves so sharply from the world around them. But around the age of nine, there is an inner awakening to a deeper self-awareness. From a region below the soul, from language as it were, the words 'I am an I' can emerge in a clearer and less dreamlike manner than before, Steiner says (1986c [GA302], p. 134f) (this may have some affinity with Jacques Lacan's view of the relation between language, the subconscious and self-identity, but it would lead too far to pursue this possibility here). Children begin to see that they have an inner soul life which is separate from that of other people. Consequently, they can more easily understand talk about psychological issues. To talk about psychological things with children before this age is really talking above their head.

Hermann Koepke, a Swiss Waldorf teacher, researched some biographies in order to corroborate Steiner's view of the significance of the ninth year (Koepke 1989). One of them is the autobiography of Bruno Walter, a German composer, who describes a strong experience of standing one early morning in the empty school yard and suddenly waking up to his own self, to the feeling of being an 'I' and having an individual soul; a soul which was somehow 'called upon' from somewhere, by something unknown but powerful. Another example (not taken up by Koepke) is the autobiography of the Irish author Christy Brown (1992).[17] Brown was born with a brain damage which made him unable to move anything but his left foot. In his early childhood, he was drawn around in a simple carriage or carried on the shoulders by his brothers but he never felt odd or special about this. Although people often stopped and stared at him, he did not understand why. But this all changed during his ninth year. Life went sour, and the bottom fell out of his world. He looked in the mirror and was disgusted (he had looked in it before but never reflected on what he saw). With the only limb available to him, he managed to unhook the mirror from the wall so that it fell to the floor and was shattered to pieces. Regarding the significance of mirrors, Steiner (1986c [GA 302], p. 131f) notes that a monkey looking in a mirror will certainly become curious about what it sees and will perhaps run away with the mirror to investigate it. But this experience will not make a lasting impression on the monkey; it will not change its character or behaviour. It can be very different for a nine-year-old child.

The nine-year crisis can of course be more or less dramatic, depending on the surrounding world and the child's own character. But it is the beginning of a three-year period of soul transformation, which ends around the age of twelve and constitutes 'a point of no return'. It entails a loss of the 'innocence' of childhood. In Waldorf parlance, this period is, therefore, called the first (nine-year old) and the second (12-year old) Rubicon (Rubicon being the river that Caesar crossed with the famous words 'the die is cast', thereby inevitably starting a civil war). The dream of

[17]This book, *My left foot*, was first published in 1954. It was later (1989) turned into an Oscar-awarded film.

childhood—in which the soul lives primarily in the hands and the feet, the arms and the legs—is over. The limbs become more 'sleepy' but the head wakes up: cognitive abilities start to develop more intensely.

The Rubicon period is of special importance for children with handicaps of various sorts, because the increased self-awareness entails a stronger disposition to compare oneself with others. Some Swedish researchers in special education have noted that this age is special (Lagerheim 1988; Goldinger 2000). The statistics of children going to the school nurse with various ailments, such as stomach pains or headaches, shows an increase of such visits around the ninth year. Other studies show an increase in bodily and psychological symptoms in this age (Lagerheim 1988). If the child passes through this period without resolving the psychological issues it entails, it may as an adult suffer from a certain lack of self-confidence that is not experienced consciously but manifests in their temperament, their character or even in their physical health (1986b [GA 307], p. 137). In this period, teachers have an important task in showing each child a special care and love; so that they feel seen and appreciated as individual persons.

4.6.2 Steiner's Cultural Psychology

In parallel with individual development, human history is also characterised by certain phases of development, certain cultural epochs, in which different soul qualities and faculties come to the fore. This may seem an outdated idea based on the 'cultural imperialism' of the West, placing itself at the pinnacle of historical development, thereby giving itself the legitimate right to intervene in the development of other cultures and nations. But Steiner never supported such imperialistic policies, which are anyway more based on greed for power and natural resources than on a genuine wish to help. Furthermore, Steiner's idea of development, whether that of the individual or that of history, is not based on hierarchical stages in an absolute sense. Later stages are not in all respects 'higher' or better, because something intrinsically valuable is always *lost* in the passage from one stage to the next (cf. Dahlin 2013).

In their empirical psychological research among illiterate peasants in the south of the Soviet Union in the 1920s, Vygotsky and Luria (1976) came to conclusions which have a certain affinity with Steiner's perspective. Vygotsky and Luria studied the ways of thinking and verbal reasoning among these peasants and concluded that there is a general shift from context-bound and functional modes of thought to more abstract and conceptual ones, which seems to correlate with learning to read and write (cf. Cole and Gajdamaschko 2007). Similarly, Steiner says that people in ancient cultures did not have words for abstract concepts and categories. For instance, they could speak of trout or salmon, but they had no concept of the general category *fish*. Generally, abstract concepts have entered human thinking and culture through evolution, he claims (1992b [GA 146], p. 33). Present scholars in linguistics, however, seem to reject the view that human *language* in general has

evolved from the concrete to the abstract (cf. Cole and Gajdamaschko 2007, p. 209). Be that as it may, Steiner strongly affirms that human consciousness is not the same today as it was one thousand, two thousand or 5000 years ago (and Vygotsky and Luria would agree, but for different reasons). This comes to expression in the way we organise society and cultural life, as well as in general ideas and attitudes towards life and the world. Hence, there is a certain inner correlation between cultural life forms on the one hand and consciousness and cognition on the other. Furthermore, even our 'hard-wired' biology has changed and continues to change in subtle ways throughout history, Steiner claims. This contrasts with what present day evolutionary biologists often say about humans that we are basically the same now as on the steppes of Africa many thousands of years ago.

It would lead too far to present the whole of Steiner's scheme of the cultural epochs and their characteristics here. Suffice it to say that Steiner claims the present cultural epoch began around the early Renaissance, and his descriptions of these particular changes agree to a large extent with the views of mainstream historical research, especially the notion of the 'scientific revolution'—a notion which has naturally been questioned since this 'revolution' took a long time to be completed and was much more like a gradual development. In some lectures, Steiner also points out that humanity always lives in changing times, because no historical changes take place from one day to the next; they are always gradual. Still, it can hardly be denied that many significant things happened in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, having to do with the emergence of a new world view and new ways of thinking, based largely on a new idea of science. For Steiner, this denotes the beginning of the epoch of the 'consciousness soul', characterised by—among other things—increased self-awareness and self-reflection on the part of each individual. Each cultural epoch lasts about 2500 years, so we are still only in the beginning of this historical phase.

4.6.3 The Educational Spiral: A Romantic Idea Implicit in Steiner's Educational Thinking?

Steiner often pointed to the impulse of Romanticism as of great significance for Western cultural history; an impulse that slowly died out during the nineteenth century, being smouldered by new scientific, technological and economic developments. For example, he recommended teachers to always carry with them a copy of Friedrich Schiller's *Letters on the aesthetic education of man* and study its significance for their work. Steiner's view that learning and development can and must continue throughout human life is also an important aspect of Romantic thought. A basic tenet of many Romantic thinkers was that a further *spiritual* development was possible as an adult, and even necessary for the fulfilment of human culture and society.

Like Steiner, the Romantics had a deep appreciation of the spiritual qualities of childhood. Novalis, for instance, envisions the child as a 'spiritual seer'; to a child everything appears as spirit, and the freshness of their insight exceeds those of the Prophets (cf. Kennedy 2000, p. 519). For Novalis, 'the *merely* grown up person' ('dem *bloßen* erwachsenen Menschen'; quoted in Geppert 1977, p. 247; italics in original)—someone who has matured only in a biological sense—lives in a 'desert of rationality' (ibid.), cut-off from the creative spiritual sources of life that are available to children. For Schiller, the child represents not only the beginning of personal development, but also the end; because the goal of life is the *re-appropriation* of childlike spiritual qualities, which are lost on the way to adulthood:

> They [children] are what we were; they are what we should become once more. We were nature like them, and our culture should lead us along the path of reason and freedom back to nature. (Schiller 1993, p. 180)

A very similar appreciation of childhood can be found among the British Romantics, such as Wordsworth, Coleridge and Shelley; see Rowhanimanesh (2011). Steiner, for his part, says that the wisest of us can learn a lot from a child, because the spiritual world can speak through children, but we are mostly unaware of it. It is the child's 'angel' that sometimes speaks out of the child (1989c [GA 127], p. 64). This appreciation of the spiritual qualities of childhood forms the basis for a spiral view of human development: we may come back to childhood in old age, but on a 'higher' level, retaining also such capacities as self-awareness and logical reasoning. Hanegraaff (1998) calls this 'the educational spiral' and identifies it as an aspect of the Romantic idea of evolution; an idea that also belongs to the Western esoteric tradition.

Thus, for the Romantics, the direction of inner development in adult life is geared towards recapturing the spiritual openness of childhood experience. It does not mean that adult rational understanding is abolished but that it is developed further into a trans-rational realm. We can, therefore, describe the educational spiral as going from the prerational (in a non-derogative sense), via normal rationality—a kind of socialisation of cognition—to trans-rational wisdom or higher knowledge.

But the question then arises: if the child's voice reaches us from beyond the borders of adult discourse and rational social life, *how do we hear it* (cf. Kennedy 2000)? The answer may have to do with whether we have become stuck in a 'rational desert' or whether we are prepared to take further steps of inner development towards spiritual wisdom. It may be that cultural conditions today open our ears and hearts to children more than in earlier times. The child as a symbol for potential human development and the idea of maturity as a second childhood has gained some influence in present Western culture through the attention paid in psychotherapeutic circles to 'the inner child'.[18] So although children are increasingly marginalised in present technocratic, instrumentalist society, the positive values that they represent for the adult mind seem to have increased significantly.

[18]A search on http://www.amazon.com reveals countless books related to this theme.

This has been labelled the 'emotionalisation' of childhood in present empirical childhood sociology (for a critical review of this research, see Göppel 1997).

The idea of the educational spiral points, however, to another question, which may be an implicit but nevertheless important element in Steiner's educational thought: how do we educate so that the stages from infancy to adulthood become as good a preparation as possible for *further* inner development of the adult towards self-transcendence and wisdom? I believe that Steiner considered his educational ideas and suggestions as an answer to this question (in addition to many others). Steiner praised the ancient Greek education because it understood how to maintain the spiritual forces of childhood throughout life. But at that time, only a limited section of the population was allowed such an education, viz. the sons of the free (male) citizens. This was one of the conditions that made this kind of education possible, Steiner claims (1986b [GA 307], pp. 47ff). In our time, we must find other ways to achieve the same thing, and it is obvious that Steiner wanted Waldorf education to be an answer to this need. Steiner, therefore, seems to imply precisely this, that child education must be a preparation for a fruitful and continuous spiritual development in adult years. He was also concerned that the spiritual qualities and potentials of children born in our time encounter great obstacles for their manifestation and realisation, not least because of the form of education they must go through (1994b [GA 235], p. 203). Since his time, these obstacles may have become even worse because of social, cultural, ecological and nutritional conditions.

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