

THE INVISIBLE HUMAN BEING IN US

Studies and exercises

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I. Preface

On 11 February 1923, Rudolf Steiner gave a lecture in Dornach entitled ‘The Invisible Human Being In Us’, and subtitled it ‘Pathology as basis for therapy’. Given this title one would have expected a lecture for physicians and therapists, yet it was held before lay people and published as part of the cycle *Earthly Knowledge and Heavenly Wisdom*.¹ Who amongst his audience made it possible for Rudolf Steiner to speak in such detail about this mystery? Never before, and never again did he speak on this theme. Yet if we know a little about it, we can find signs going back much earlier that Steiner was certainly already very aware of these facts.

The lecture in question (11.2.1923) is known to be extraordinarily hard to understand – not at first glance perhaps, but if we ponder it further we soon discover apparent contradictions or complications that leave us in uncertainty. People often give up with it for this reason. Yet if one is prepared to persevere patiently, to take the text literally and dwell on it, it furnishes the master key to countless other difficult passages in Rudolf Steiner’s lectures. It also offers us a foundation for understanding exercises given for the path of inner schooling, and likewise the so-called accompanying or subsidiary exercises. If we are willing to let go of certain entrenched ideas then our preoccupation with the suggestions given in this lecture can give us a tool not only for taking hold of our corporeality in a healthy way, but also for encountering our true being within it, or at least for knowing that this inner being sustains us.

While this volume has been written primarily with doctors, therapists and curative educators in mind, and likewise teachers and educationalists, insight into the invisible human being within us can be important for all who wish to understand what it really means to be human. This is true both for our daily lives, and for acting with greater understanding on Rudolf Steiner’s suggestions for the schooling path. The book presupposes a certain degree of basic familiarity with anthroposophical ideas about the

¹ GA 221

human being. To acquaint oneself with the theme, it is also a good idea to first read the lecture 'The Invisible Human Being in Us'.²

So many questions have increasingly arisen in relation to the invisible human being, and so much real, growing interest has been expressed, that my aim here is to give an account of the work done so far in a way that supports those interested in working further on this theme themselves.

² Rudolf Steiner, 11.2.1923, available as single lecture or as part of GA 221. Translated in the English edition as 'The Invisible Man in Us'.

II 'The invisible human being in us': who is he and where does he originate?

In the lecture itself, Rudolf Steiner does not speak about the origin of the invisible human being. He merely hints that he has spoken about this in other lectures. Instances of lecture cycles where he not only speaks about life after death but also specifically about life before birth, can be found in, among other places, GA 226, 218, 231, 232.

To better understand the reality of the invisible human being, let us first consider life after death. The processes involved here can best be understood if we try to grasp and accompany them inwardly and dynamically. In this way, through our feeling, we can develop an organ of perception, create a basis for sensing the activity of centrifugal and centripetal forces. In doing so we can experience that centrifugal forces radiating from within outwards, the forces directed towards the periphery, always lead to the realm of spirit; and that the centripetal forces streaming inwards to the centre from without always lead into the earthly realm and towards materiality. This fundamental aspect of centrifugal and centripetal forces is also, of course, found in the lecture on the invisible human being. Why understanding of these underlying forces is so important will be described in more detail in the chapter on 'Applying anthroposophical insights'.

If we therefore pursue what Steiner has to say about life after death, we will find his comment that the I, astral body and etheric body depart from the physical body at death. The etheric body leaves the body too, but remains intact for a further three days. We can try to envisage it in the vicinity of the person who has died, like a cloud. Then, says Steiner, the etheric body dissolves. But 'dissolves' does not mean that it evaporates into nothing. In dissolving, the etheric body expands. It becomes ever more outspread in the world ether and as it diffuses it is absorbed by this world ether. It is important to note that the experience here is of a corporeality – an ether corporeality, or earthly ether corporeality – expanding, dissolving and resolving entirely into centrifugal forces in the world ether, and thus clearing a path for the human being as soul and spirit to enter the world of spirit. At this point he finds himself in the moon sphere, which is where we experience kamaloka.

In the moon sphere period, the astral body now also dissolves. It diffuses into the universal astrality, and is as it were purified by it, transformed and endowed with new forces. In his lecture of 19 November 1922,³ Steiner describes in more detail the period when the astral body dissolves, saying that the latter makes its way through all the planetary spheres as far as Saturn.

But now there are occlusions in our astral body which, through sundering, through loss of I activity, are so alien that they cannot pass into the universal astrality or be absorbed by it. Rudolf Steiner calls such occlusions ‘karma packages’, saying that they are left behind in the moon sphere. We will come back to this later and discover what happens with these karma packages when we approach a new incarnation.

From the moon sphere the spirit soul enters the further planetary spheres. In some lectures Steiner speaks only of the moon and sun sphere. In others, however, he specifies the various planetary spheres through which the spirit soul passes after the moon sphere: from moon through Mercury to Venus and thence to the sun sphere. This passage through the planetary spheres is not something we should imagine in spatial or sequential terms. The ‘passage through the planetary spheres’ means, rather, that we ‘wake into’ these spheres and become able to absorb the corresponding planetary dynamics of each. And these dynamics are very active. In this initial transit already, qualities or effects of our past life are not only processed but also transformed, and new potential and dispositions are created for our future physical existence on earth.

During this whole period, taking us from the moment of death through all planetary spheres through to Saturn, this spirit soul always has its past life before it: the life tableau with its mistakes and omissions, which nothing can now alter.

In passing through the planetary spheres, our head’s pattern of forces has gradually dissolved. Rudolf Steiner speaks most specifically about this process in his lecture of 24 November 1923.⁴ Here he described how the I assumes a spirit form as it leaves the body, which is similar to this body. Study of this theme suggests that this is in fact the physical organisation of the invisible human being. The head gradually dissolves during the passage through the planetary spheres, and our remainder becomes the so-

³ GA 213

⁴ GA 232, lecture 2

called spirit globe. This happens in the sun sphere. There the body's form is reworked so that the human metabolic-limb system becomes the head system. The spirit soul lives as spirit globe in the sun sphere – as a globe which receives and reflects its whole surroundings. What was formerly interior life has become external world. The surroundings work from without and are reflected, so that the whole cosmos is mirrored on us.

Via Mars and Jupiter the spirit soul reaches the Saturn sphere, where it leaves the planetary world and enters the realm of the fixed stars, the world of pure spirit. Here it merges entirely with the dynamic spiritual hierarchies creatively at work there. The I also dissolves, expanding into the cosmos of the hierarchies, and at the same time losing its life tableau. Consciousness, self-awareness is no longer sustained by sight of the life tableau but fades and is lost in vision of the hierarchies. Here, in the highest sphere of spirit, work the spirits of the first hierarchy. And what does their work consist of? We now find the greatest surprise for our mundane thinking: in this highest spiritual sphere, the so-called universal body of humanity is being woven and worked on. Here we are surrounded by the organ landscapes described in *Occult Science*. Here we weave and work together with the spirits of the first hierarchy, in vision of these high spirits, on the all-embracing universal body of humanity: on our physical organisation which is now enlarged to immeasurably huge dimensions. Rudolf Steiner calls this the 'giant spirit germ'. In it and through it we weave and stream the giant spirit germs of all other people. Just as the etheric body dissolves in the world ether and the astral body in the world astrality, so the spirit form of the physical body enlarges and expands.

The length of time our passage takes through the various planetary spheres will depend on what we bring with us from our past life – what affinities, capacities of perception, dispositions and soul qualities we bear with us. Steiner calls this period we spend in the sphere of the fixed stars the 'world midnight'. The past has concluded, we lose sight of our past life on earth, but the new has not yet begun. The spirit soul dissolves into highest existence, into the epitome of the present, into timelessness. The length of time we dwell in the world midnight sphere will depend on the will of the spirits of the first hierarchy .

This condition ends when the hierarchies decide to withdraw so that we no longer experience them in our immediate vision, as spirit among spirits, but instead experience them as their manifestation. Now the spirit soul is thrown back upon itself – and I consciousness returns. This is a very first step away from the expanding, centrifugally active forces into a more centripetal concentration: from the wide periphery back to our awareness of I. Now the image of our past life also resurfaces, with all our errors and omissions – but no longer in its inalterability. Opportunities for correcting and compensating for these errors in a future life dawn on us; and from the new experience of this life tableau grows the impetus in the spirit soul which can be expressed as: ‘I want to become a human being again.’ Elsewhere⁵ Steiner speaks further about this moment when the impulse to return to earth arises. He says that the dawning of I consciousness, the fact that we no longer merge entirely with beings of spirit but now stand facing them and experience them only as manifestation, gives rise to a desire for earthly existence. Our spirit germ, the spiritual predisposition of our future physical body – the spiritual form of our physical organisation – separates itself in the power of this I consciousness and this desire from the general weft of the giant spirit germs upon which the spirit beings are weaving and working. This desire for a new earthly existence already directs our gaze towards the generations leading to the parents through whom we will incarnate.

Naturally one could say a great deal more about this life after death, and also of the subsequent pre-birth path back into earthly existence. But this is not our task here. Instead I want to convey an experience of the dynamic implicit in this journey between death and a new birth: firstly, the expansion of our spiritual members into the cosmos, leading to a purely spiritual existence among beings of spirit; and then this contracting of the spirit germ, condensing from the spiritual cosmos and growing smaller – as the beginning of our return into earthly life. In tracing this path we find the pre-birth condition with I organisation and physical organisation. Let us keep this fact clearly in mind. In the highest regions of the world of spirit, in the spiritual dynamic of the zodiac, work is accomplished upon our physical organisation, and from this arises the spiritual predisposition for our earthly physical organisation.

⁵ GA 218, 14 October 1922

Thus the spirit soul embarks on its return journey towards the earth, passing through the outer planetary spheres and the sun region, and via Venus and Mercury to the moon sphere. During this period a sense of self is strengthened, and the spirit soul is increasingly subject to the action of the centripetal forces. Under their influence form the I organisation and the physical organisation. From an existence as spirit among spirits these members gain distinct existence and become individualised as the sheaths of the pre-birth human being. In passing through the planetary spheres, the sense of self also exerts a contracting effect on the astral organisation, which likewise in turn re-condenses out of the universal astrality and is individualised as sheath of the pre-birth human being. At this point the spirit soul, the pre-birth human being, becomes receptive once more for the moon sphere. In its astral body it also takes up its karma package again – the occlusions in astral and etheric body which could not be dissolved and therefore could not be given over to the spirit beings in the planetary spheres.

This enhancement of the sense of self is also what causes the I to lose its spirit germ, its physical organisation, since this unites with the fertilised egg at the moment of conception. This moment of real grandeur – the transition from spiritual to physical existence - occurs when the physical organisation or spirit germ incarnates into the fertilised ovum. Yet the spirit germ's consciousness is unaware of this decisive moment. In this loss of the spirit germ, the I must relinquish a very great deal. This powerful sense of relinquishment in turn triggers a contracting effect: the etheric body contracts and is individualised out of the universal ether by this feeling. We now therefore have the four-membered, pre-birth human being with I organisation, astral organisation and etheric organisation in the moon sphere, and with the physical organisation in earthly existence incarnated into the fertilised ovum.

At the outset we already saw that the centrifugally working forces always lead into the realm of spirit, while the centripetal forces lead us into earthly existence and matter. Later we will look more precisely at what this means and how soul-spiritual forces not bound to the body can have a contracting effect through the centripetal forces. We have also seen how the feeling of desire shrinks the cosmic giant spirit germ to the individual organisation of the spirit soul. In the same way the astral organisation draws itself together out of world astrality through enhancement of the sense of self, and the

etheric body likewise condenses from the world ether through a sense of relinquishment. If we accompany these phenomena in inner movement, expanding with the centrifugal forces and contracting with the forces working from without inwards, the centripetal forces, we will have an instrument that helps us more tangibly experience Rudolf Steiner's lecture on the invisible human being.

But let us now return to the processes unfolding as a human being incarnates. At fertilisation the spirit soul unites with the now chaotic state of the ovum. The spiritual can never work directly into the physical however. If it does work directly then it always does so from without, and the physical - matter as such - plays no part. For a spiritual element to incarnate into the physical realm, it must resemble the body, and the physical must come to resemble spirit. We can say that the physical organisation of a human being in the pre-birth state resembles the body, although it is also at the same time a spiritual formation of forces. It has a different quality from our I organisation, the bearer of the spirit being, of the I. The physical organisation has within it the forces from former earthly lives and will become the bearer of the physical body. In other words, of all the supersensible members it is most closely related to the physical body.

Into what kind of matter can the spirit most easily incarnate? What properties must it have? The spirit germ finds this substance which it needs in the fertilised ovum – a very vital, wholly undifferentiated human substance. The cell cores of sperm and ovum have merged and dissolved into one another, giving rise to something with a high-energy charge. Apart from its intact external form, everything within it has dissolved into dynamic process. It is into this quality of process that the spirit germ can incarnate, preparing the inherited substance in such a way that it will later be able to take up the rest of the human entelechy into it. How does this occur?

If we examine images from the earliest stages of the embryo, we find a particular dynamic which shows clearly when the other members of the human being incarnate. First the ovum divides in 2-4-8-16-32 cell stages, without any increase in size. Over time it does enlarge a little but the inner gesture is always that of forces working and dividing from within the egg outwards – in a centrifugal direction in other words. First these

forces divide the cells from each other, then they divide a denser cellular region from a zone containing more fluid.

[pic]

And now something magnificent occurs: the zone with a denser accumulation of cells can be experienced as one where the contracting or centripetal forces predominate. It is in this layer that the embryo will form. In the looser cellular layer containing more fluid, we can discover a predominance, in contrast, of centrifugal forces working from within outwards. This is also the layer from which the egg integuments will form: amnion, allantois (rudimentary in the human being) and chorion (embryonal part of the placenta). It is this layer of cells which will absorb the higher members from the 17th to the 21st day. Steiner even specifies the precise tissues into which each member incarnates: the physical organisation into the yolk sac, the etheric organisation into the amnion, the astral organisation into the allantois and the I organisation into the chorion.

In medical lectures, ⁶ we learn that the physical organisation is connected with nutrition. And even if the human yolk sac does not have the same vital importance as is assigned to it in the animal, it is still connected with nutrition. The chorion bears the signature of the I organisation, both in its pronounced circulation and the fact that it opens to its surroundings via the placenta. The allantois, only vestigial in us, but highly developed in the animal, becomes the bearer of the astral organisation. The amnion, filled with water, from which plastic forces model the embryo, can be seen as the bearer of the etheric organisation. Rudolf Steiner states precisely when the higher members incarnate: between the 17th and 21st day. If we check what is happening in the embryo's development during this period, we will find the following dynamic:

The initially flat embryonic disc arches and curves as in the previous drawing. Then, between the 17th and 21st day, a kind of protuberance occurs.

[pic]

⁶ For instance the Young Doctors' course, GA 316

The embryo raises itself upright from the embryonic disc, acquires a front and back, and right and left. Like a plant pushed out of the ground which is woven into cosmic forces, and further formed by them from the periphery, the higher members work out of the periphery, out of the embryonic sheaths, upon the embryo. In the weaving of these forces the human germ forms and grows.

If we now reflect on the moment of birth we can ask what happens to the invisible human being when the embryonic sheaths fall away. After all, this entelechy was incarnated into them for nine months, and now they die when the placenta has fulfilled its purpose. Where can it now incarnate? The newborn baby is already too solidly formed and differentiated, and the pre-birth human being can therefore not incarnate there.

Rudolf Steiner describes how the pre-birth, invisible human being works within us in the so-called 'Little boxes' lecture entitled 'The invisible human being in us – the pathology underlying therapy.' (It is called the 'Little boxes lecture' because Steiner speaks about the members or sheaths of the human being and then draws them on the board as various rectangles.) Here he describes what happens with the pre-birth human being and how he works into us. Steiner calls him the invisible human being within us in contrast to the fourfold, visible human being who stands before us visibly with a physical body penetrated by I, astral body and etheric body. The pre-birth human being does not incarnate into this visible human being but will work into him throughout life. This is why Steiner calls him the invisible human being within us.

In a subsequent chapter we will examine the text of this lecture in greater detail. First let us examine in general how the invisible human being works in us.

III

‘The invisible human being in us’: How does he work in earthly life?

In these observations I would like keep a clear focus on the dynamic of the phenomena. If, in speaking of centrifugally and centripetally active streams, we manage to move inwardly with them, it will be easier for us subsequently to find our way in the text of Steiner’s lecture, and to better understand the efficacy of the exercises in the chapter ‘Applying anthroposophical insights’.

We described how, with the loss of the embryonic sheaths, the pre-birth human being also loses the physical substance into which he was able to incarnate. He will no longer incarnate but will instead work into the visible human being – and will do so where the body is in a condition that he can stream through from within. This is where there is no form or differentiation in us, where only processes dynamically unfold – of warmth, synthesis, nutrition, growth and reproduction. The pre-birth, invisible human being within us works into us in these conditions. From within outwards he works in an anabolic or upbuilding way into the regions where pure will prevails, which are removed from our conscious awareness. The invisible human being works in the sphere of metabolism throughout life, from the lower pole up into the periphery, right up to the head, and into the metabolic processes of the neuro-sensory realm. With his four members he works out of the world of spirit into this upbuilding dynamic, streaming from within outwards in the blood, the metabolic forces and the upbuilding processes.

Running counter to this anabolic or upbuilding stream – which Rudolf Steiner calls the lower I stream because it permeates us entirely from the metabolism – comes a catabolic or ‘breaking down’ I stream from above, via the neuro-sensory system. This has the effect of killing life. The effect is catabolic because the whole four-membered entelechy of the invisible human being is not working in here; but instead the spirit, the I, works in directly via the senses. With every sense perception the I enters directly into earthly physical existence from the spiritual realm. The I streams from above downwards

along the nerves, right through into the metabolism, wherever neural activity still occurs. This I stream is called the upper I stream, and works centripetally from without inwards. And it always remains outside, not immersing itself in physical existence but working from without upon it.

Thus we have a lower, upbuilding I stream in which the spirit, the I, does not work directly, but where the pre-birth human being, the invisible human being within us, is ensheathed in astral, etheric and physical organisation. This lower, upbuilding stream works centrifugally, or in other words with an expanding, dissolving dynamic. And then we have an upper, catabolic I stream in which the spirit works in directly from the I organisation of the pre-birth human being via the neural paths of the senses. This upper, catabolic stream works from without inwards – in other words centripetally, breaking down substance, precipitating salts and minerals and forming matter. If we now experience these two directions, both the centrifugal and the centripetal, we can imagine that they cannot directly encounter or engage with one another. Wherever we have such polarities a mediating element is always required for them to work together. This mediating aspect is now described as the third and fourth I streams.

The third I stream is called the *weakened* or attenuated catabolic stream because the I no longer works directly into the physical but passes first through the invisible human being's astral organisation. From there, ensheathed by it, it enters us via breathing, permeating us entirely from above downwards. Let us therefore pause here to sum up: the second and third I stream, together called the upper I stream or catabolic stream, is purely soul and spirit in nature. It never immerses itself in corporeality but remains free spirit and soul working from without upon the body. It is this that enables us to have conscious awareness. The I reflects itself in the brain and nerves, and awareness arises as a result. The I and astral organisation of the invisible human being enter and leave us via the lungs – and by this means waking consciousness unfolds.

But in order for us not only to have consciousness of what is around us through this outward-directed reflective activity, but also inner experience and I consciousness, the upper stream needs to encounter and engage with the lower stream. The fourth stream makes this possible: this passes through the I, astral and etheric organisation of the invisible human being and from there works into us via the blood circulation, from below

upwards. Steiner refers to this stream as the *weakened* upbuilding stream because the I does not reach as far as the physical organisation of the invisible human being before working into the visible human being. This I stream only flows as far as the invisible human being's etheric organisation, and from there works into the life of the body via the blood circulation. It is with great surprise that we realise that the first I stream, which reaches as far as the physical organisation and from there works into the metabolic realm, is more vital and upbuilding than this fourth, weakened, upbuilding stream. The physical organisation woven in the highest regions of the spiritual world thus bears within it the most vital upbuilding powers.

Here, therefore, we discover the bridging principle. The weakened upper or catabolic stream encounters the weakened lower upbuilding stream via the breathing and blood circulation at work in our rhythmic system. It is Creation's stroke of genius to induce the two polar forces – centrifugal and centripetal – to interact with each other via a dynamic rhythm. Rhythm makes it possible for the upper stream and the lower stream to be internalised and form interior space. Where forces work from without (centripetal), pointed forms and edges arise. But where they interplay within us with the centrifugal forces, they have a rounding and delimiting effect. The forces working centrifugally cannot form interior space on their own, for their effect is to dissolve. Nor can the forces working centripetally create interior space alone, since they always work from without, precipitating salts and minerals. In the interplay of the two dynamics, where the upper stream can immerse itself and work together with the centrifugal forces by relinquishing its centripetal direction, interior space arises. The rounding comes from the internally active centripetal forces of the upper stream, through the forces of the head.

It is worth gaining a clear idea of these interrelationships and reflecting on them, since they give us a valuable tool for practice. We will return to this aspect in the chapter on 'Applying anthroposophical insights'.

Let us summarise all we have described so far:

When the child is born, a range of various sense stimuli immediately impact on him simultaneously: light, 'cold' (in the womb 37 degrees, now 25 at most), touch,

smells, noises, sounds, speech. The upper I stream thus enters from without via these stimuli; the child draws his first breath and cries – as inner response to these external stimuli.

We also feel the pulse – the heartbeat – and bodywarmth as an expression of the lower stream.

Thus, from the invisible human being, the I as pure soul-spiritual element works into us from without via the senses and then along the neural pathways: always from without inwards and thus centripetally, as upper I stream and so-called catabolic stream to which we owe our conscious awareness. From the other direction the I works anabolically as four-membered lower I stream into metabolic processes from within outwards, and thus centrifugally. In the blood it streams through the whole human being as far as the nervous system and into the senses.

We can recognise various different qualities of the two I streams, which we can summarise and contrast with each other. If we familiarise ourselves with these qualities we will find them to be aids for making detailed diagnoses. We will also learn how, through consciously relating to these qualities, we can work more consciously with our I streams and thereby invoke a healthy interplay of both streams. We will discuss this further in the chapter ‘Applying anthroposophical insights’.

Let us first look at the lower I stream. This always works from within outwards – in other words within our physical body. It works in upbuilding processes – in growth, nutrition, reproduction, and in warmth processes – in the will processes within us. This lower I stream enters at our lower pole, in the metabolism, and from there works from below upwards, right into the head. It works from below and from behind. If we experience it like this – ‘coming from behind in me’ – we can touch into our invisible human being. The artist also draws from this backspace – the eurythmist, speech artist, musician and pictorial artist – and likewise the doctor and educator.

The upper stream lives more in the foreground. Foreground is a quality of the upper I stream. As we have seen, this works from without inwards, always remaining outside and acting centripetally along the neural pathways. It always remains a spiritual-soul quality reflected by matter, by the nerves. These do not stream but remain at rest, thus giving rise to reflection and conscious awareness – at the cost of movement, warmth

and life. Thus to the upper I stream belong the qualities of calm, cold, centripetal action, outside, soul and spirit (rather than corporeality). Above, from above downwards and forwards: if we live in this way we live outside, experience ourselves from without. But we normally do not notice this since we are in the centripetal forces and can therefore only have an egocentric perspective. In extreme instances we do not experience the world outside but only ourselves as centre of the world, and we experience ourselves only in the head, in waking consciousness. As a result of the centripetal forces we experience ourselves only as a point – and perhaps even less than this.

We could ascertain other polar qualities corresponding to the two I streams – for example hardness / softness, in correspondence with the degree of inner movement. And what about angular / round? Where the upper stream works alone and from without, pure corporeality arises which also lives in the centripetal forces of gravity – and edges and corners arise. Where the lower stream is active, the etheric body is always also involved, and this acts in an expanding, rounding, filling way. Expansion and contraction, fullness and emptiness are the polar qualities of our two I streams.

Finally let us recall that the upper I stream can mean, equally, I organisation as catabolic stream, or I and astral organisation as weakened catabolic stream. The lower stream can mean the I organisation clothed with astral, etheric and physical organisation as upbuilding stream; but it can also refer to this four-membered I stream together with the weakened upbuilding stream - which is three-membered, reaches only as far as the etheric organisation of the invisible human being, and from there enters us via the blood circulation (fourth I stream).

At this point we have compiled the material we need to see how the interplay of these two streams develops through the course of our life.

IV

The interplay of the I streams in the course of life

With the first sensory stimulus and the first breath at birth, the upper and lower I streams begin to work into us. The upper I stream's effect is still very delicate however, and does not yet have the importance it comes to assume in the second seven-year period.

When we look into the eyes of a newborn baby we can see how his gaze still rests entirely upon infinity. We can experience here how the centrifugal forces predominate and as it were flood the child. He looks without seeing, looks without looking. The I still lives so much in the periphery that the child cannot yet focus. In the first period of life the upper stream is not yet reflected to the degree that will later be possible once the brain has matured – i.e. has lost its vitality - and the bones have calcified. In the first seven-year period, but above all in the first few years of life, other forces predominate. Rudolf Steiner calls them sculptural-architectural forces in his lecture of 16 September 1920.⁷ There he speaks of soul-spiritual forces which come from the realm where the spirit soul dwells before conception. In other words, these sculptural-architectural forces come direct from the realm of spirit, enter the body from within via the brain, and stream through the body as far as the metabolism and the periphery.

These forces acting from within outwards now encounter the sensory world from the opposite direction – the I via the senses. An interplay of centrifugal and centripetal forces arises in which the centrifugal, heavenly forces first predominate. It is during this period that the child begins to walk, speak and think. Once thinking develops, the body has reached the stage where the I, the upper I stream, can meet the lower I stream in a way that makes it possible for our surroundings to pass inwards into us and be reflected there. This occurs in the third year when the child begins to say 'I'. This moment corresponds to the encounter of the upper and lower I stream in the head organisation. The I is now reflected into the earthly world. Before this, the child's soul has lived in the unmediated interplay of the hierarchies. This is why Rudolf Steiner says that it is not possible before the third year to impose one's will on the child, since he lives in the will

⁷ GA 302a, 'Meditatively acquired knowledge of the human being'

of the hierarchies. Now however, the I is reflected into the earthly world and thereby acquires a certain independence. This process does not occur from one day to the next, but runs on to the end of the first seven years and the change of teeth. There are people however, says Steiner, in whom the sculptural and architectural forces continue to work throughout life – and these are the sculptors and architects.

The upper I stream works from without inwards and increasingly permeates the whole person, reflecting the earthly inwards and introducing catabolic forces. The child becomes ever more earthly, and thus also ever more awake and conscious. In this process the soul experiences the world entirely from without in the centripetal head forces: entirely from an egocentric perspective, sensitive, absorbing the world from the periphery. And what does the infant do with all these centripetally active influences? He processes them through imitation – a response of real genius. Imitation does not stop with the head forces but, via sympathy, feeling, through action in the will realm, it enters the body. External impressions are brought into the activity of the I in the body and thus processed into capacities and transformed.

With the ninth/tenth year, a further interiorisation of the I streams occurs. Just as the upper and lower I streams encounter each other in the head organisation in the third year, so at the so-called nine-year watershed, they encounter one another in the rhythmic system. Whereas I consciousness enters in the third year, now the sense and feeling of I enters, an interiorisation of the I experience. The child acquires more inner life, feels himself to be sundered from his surroundings and experiences a sense of being thrown back on himself. The last threads to the heavenly realm are broken, and the I enters the child's own inner life. Thus we can understand why children at this age suffer particularly from loneliness, as well as fears and intimations of death – anxiety that their father, mother or siblings might die. We can summarise this as loss anxiety.

The upper I stream no longer works only from without, via the senses, but immerses itself in the body in the rhythmic system, and in the rhythmic processes of the circulation organisation it encounters the lower stream. If the upper stream is taken up in the right way by the centrifugal forces, it passes its centripetal forces to them, so that interior space arises. This enables feeling to become more inward. The ground is thus prepared for the astral body to be born and become free at puberty.

Now we can also understand what occurs at the age of 21, when we talk of the I being born. In his third year the child learns to say 'I'. In the second seven-year period we speak, or rather Rudolf Steiner speaks, of the I connecting and 'coupling' in the ninth year. At 21, however, he speaks of the birth of the I. What happens here? The upper I stream has now been interiorised to an extent that enables it to encounter the lower I stream in the metabolic realm. The I can assume full responsibility for itself, and from within, from the person's own inner world, work out into the world in freedom. However this process only concludes with the development of the consciousness soul between 35 and 42. But with the birth of the I at 21, the bodily basis is created for a person to develop towards freedom by unfolding of the sentient soul, mind soul and consciousness soul.

Characterisation of the I streams, or in other words the action of the invisible human being within us as Steiner presents it in the lecture in question, only applies fully to the adult, or at least only from the age of three. However, the upper I stream starts working into us from the first moment of life, as does the lower stream also. This is a fundamental principle in relation to this theme: one stream never works without the other. The upper I stream can only work into us if the lower comes towards it sufficiently, and vice versa. Point and periphery – that is the polarity in which the I moves and incarnates.

V. Pathology

One-sided tendencies in the interplay of upper and lower I streams

We have described how the upper and lower I streams act, each with their own qualities, and how they work together and encounter each other in the rhythmic system, creating interior space through their interplay. In the lecture we are concerned with, Rudolf Steiner now speaks of how the I streams can have either too strong or too weak an effect.

The upper I stream can have too strong an effect as a result of too much working in upon us from the external world - through our food, through sensory stimulus, or emotional pressure from without. This always involves an excessive impact of the outer world, which cannot be internalised in our own corporeality. Even in its normal action the lower stream is unable to dissolve and transform enough of what comes from without. This leads to so-called foreign deposits – of minerals or also soul elements. Such deposits become kidney stones, gallstones, and all other stone formations in general. Or, where undue stress is put on joints, so-called bone bridging forms – in arthrosis of the knee, hip or spine. Oedemas, or accumulations of fluid, are foreign deposits of this kind, as is lung emphysema – excess air in the lungs, or gas in the stomach. In the soul realm we encounter these phenomena as compulsive thoughts or actions – compulsions in general, which arise through the excessive influence of the upper stream. Where the upper stream works too strongly this means that it is working one-sidedly from without, centripetally, and therefore cannot be taken up by the lower stream. It therefore exerts a one-sidedly catabolic, mineralising and solidifying effect. The interplay between form and dissolution is disrupted.

The upper stream can also be too weak, however, because the lower stream is too weak and does not come towards it strongly enough. We must focus on this now in order to understand that one stream cannot unfold fully without the other. By stimulating the upper stream via sensory impressions, food and respiration, we can stimulate a lower

stream that is too weak – for instance by using compresses, massage and Kneipp applications.

In his lecture on the invisible human being, Steiner here describes the ‘tall pale stripling’ who grows too fast because the upper and lower streams are too weak and the etheric body is therefore left to its own devices. Such ‘tall, pale striplings’ are usually chronically tired and lethargic since their body hangs on them like a burden and they cannot penetrate it with their soul and spirit via the rhythmic and metabolic systems. This example illustrates that we can never work directly on the lower stream. To treat the pale stripling Steiner does not suggest strengthening the lower stream but ‘weighing down’ the upper stream. For this purpose we should give iron as added weight to the upper stream. As outer-sun metal iron always works from above. In fact every medicine and every therapeutic procedure really works from above, for what enters us with the help of the upper stream is always a gift from without.

We cannot however simply give iron in every case to strengthen the upper stream and better help it to descend. There are people in whom the upper stream descends too little while its centripetal forces, nevertheless, work too strongly. Then it can happen, and it does always happen, that we in fact reinforce the one-sidedness of the upper stream by giving iron. A person’s emotional expressions and movements will then grow intense or vehement: he will be agitated, impatient and abrasive, since he feels too confined and constricted. One has more likelihood of success with a copper remedy, with which we can prepare the lower pole in such a way that it can better receive the iron. Copper creates interior space, gives roundness and warmth – all qualities which correspond to the lower stream and the working of the upper stream within the lower stream. With copper we can therefore direct the upper stream better into the lower pole, leading it down into the lower stream; and the latter can also thereby better come towards and accommodate the upper stream.

Let us now examine the basic constitutional types which Rudolf Steiner described in certain lectures. In the first doctors’ course in 1920 he speaks of hysteria and

neurasthenia. In several lectures there he simply speaks of the human being's upper and lower poles,⁸ or just of above and below.

He defines hysteria as the constitution where metabolic processes predominate, and neurasthenia as that where neuro-sensory processes are dominant. The centrifugal processes predominate in hysteria, and the centripetal forces in neurasthenia.

What happens when the centripetal forces are dominant? The neurasthenic can only experience and observe himself from without, and is alienated from his body: he experiences it as something outside himself, which he does not sense and experience – and which he therefore does not know. This triggers anxieties and insecurity. He becomes a hypochondriac in whom the life of thinking and picturing predominates, in a way that does not accord with the actual facts of life.

And how does the predominance of the metabolic forces, of centrifugal forces, lead to the hysteric? We can best understand this if we refer to the Curative Education course.⁹ In lecture 4 of this course this situation is described precisely: the spirit soul enters the body but finds no support there, since the organ walls are too permeable. As though through a sieve, the centripetal forces of the upper stream fall through the organ walls and are taken up by and along with the dominant metabolic forces in their centrifugal direction, without being able to retain their own power. The organs are too permeable because the rounding, delimiting forces of the head are too weak.

In the Curative Education course it is not neurasthenia but epilepsy that is characterised as the opposite pole to hysteria. In the epileptic the upper stream does enter but is not allowed through by the organs. In other words, the upper stream enters the body but remains a soul-spiritual stream working from without and is unable to submerge itself in the body. It therefore cannot be taken up by the lower stream. Seen like this, a convulsion is, on the one hand, a consequence of inner blockage. On the other hand, however, it also expresses the body's genius in attempting to liberate the body from this blockage. A seizure or convulsion does not refer to general spasticity but to tonic-clonic cramps. The

⁸ 'Der obere Mensch und der untere Mensch'

⁹ GA 317

body is shaken and moved, and loss of consciousness arises. Loss of consciousness means that the upper stream is as it were cast out. In another form of epilepsy, petit mal, things are different. Here we see ‘absences’ or in other words an actual letting go by the upper stream.

If we look further in the Curative Education course we find the description of ‘manic’ and ‘feeble-minded’ children (which nowadays we would call ‘too light’ and ‘too heavy’). The way these two types are described enables us to decipher the relationship of the I streams in these conditions also.

The manic, hyperactive or ‘too light’ child fidgets and suffers from motor restlessness, since every soul impulse works directly in the body. The upper stream has a one-sided effect, but strongly from without, so that the spirit soul as it were gets stuck in the body from without and cannot be taken up into the body as interior space. Thus every soul motion, every astral motion and also every physical movement becomes one that is not governed by the I. We can best understand what it means for the upper stream to be stuck in the body if we consider the image of a vase. Something gets stuck in the vase **wall**. This corresponds to the upper stream which ‘is too much stuck in the body’. But as a result it is too little *in* the body, in the vase **contents**. The manic (‘too light’) child’s fidgeting is not however caused by the upper stream. The urge to movement, to ‘shoot’ into movement, arises through the lower stream. But the manic child also fidgets when he is calm and not active in his soul, and this is usually associated with a rapid pulse. This is an expression of predominant metabolic forces – or forces which work in a one-sidedly centrifugal way, thus causing ungoverned movement. We can picture how the lower, centrifugal forces are left to their own devices when the upper, centripetal stream shoots too rapidly into the physical (vase **wall**!) – and thus remains stuck in the neuro-sensory pole before it can encounter the lower stream.

And how are things in the case of the feeble-minded (‘too heavy’) child? Whereas the upper stream gets ‘stuck’ too firmly in the nerve realm, thus working too strongly in the physical body, it is too weak in the feeble-minded or ‘too heavy’ child. It exerts too weak an effect, and also not from without.

Now let us turn to another clinical picture in curative education, that of autism. The autistic child is always surprisingly, strikingly present – although one continually asks where he actually is. He cannot say ‘I’, and usually cannot talk. Compulsions, fixations and tics are typical of the autistic person. This also extends to self-harming, biting or pinching himself, hitting his head and so forth. Outbreaks of fury are also common. This illness usually begins to manifest around the age of two or three, when the I starts to be reflected in and when the upper I stream in the head encounters the lower I stream. This is also when the speech organism develops. In autistic children, speech development usually starts normally – and then regresses from the time when the I should be born in the third year (see chapter on human biography).

If we observe the autistic child with our method we can find a strong predominance in him of the centripetal forces, which encounter the lower stream too weakly in the head. The upper stream cannot reflect into him enough, and too little interior space arises. Because of this the autistic child cannot enter into feeling, or does so too little. Instead he lives all the more in a sense of himself given from without. He does not feel himself within his body: the sense of self tied to the body is lacking, and soul sensing is all the stronger instead. This is why we always find this drama in the autistic child, and also these outbreaks of rage. No one notices how strongly he suffers from external influences, nor how much he experiences. To form a sense of self he bites, pinches, hits – and thereby has at least a moment of experiencing himself in the sense of touch, which never remains as lasting experience however, and must continually be recreated anew. Thus the autistic child finds no secure dwelling in his body, no interior space in which he can preserve his soul nature. But what does give him security are the repetitions and the outer structure of his daily life. This is why he feels panic when something customary is suddenly changed.

Like most people cared for in curative settings, the autistic child is best reached through the sense of touch. You can reach him if you touch him at the same time as speaking to him, and stand beside him rather than opposite him. Large surface area touch is usually better than touching a small point, which he is unlikely to perceive at all.

Compulsive disorders are the expression of an upper stream that is too strong. As with the formation of ‘foreign bodies’ or deposits in the organism, the soul element

cannot be sufficiently dissolved or internalised. Through continual reflection from without in the region of the brain, images and ideas repeatedly arise anew. Thus the autistic person has to live in a cage formed of his thoughts and sensations. Sensations also come from without, after all, and only become feelings through a process of internalisation, through absorption into the lower stream. This one-sided outwards reflection explains the autistic person's alertness and awareness in relation to the way he experiences his surroundings, with simultaneous outward indifference and absence.

Let us also examine the phenomenon of pain as illustrated by menstruation pains. Steiner tells us that pain arises when the astral body works too strongly in the physical. But elsewhere he explains menstruation pains by saying that this indicates a weakness of the astral body in the lower abdomen. People repeatedly complain about Steiner's contradictory statements, but if we understand the I streams we can resolve many of these apparent contradictions. Pain arises where the astral body works too strongly from above – that is, from without. Where the lower stream comes too little towards it, or if there is an obstruction in the organs of the lower abdomen, the upper stream cannot immerse itself sufficiently; cannot therefore properly incarnate in the lower pole, in the abdomen, and a weakness of the astral body manifests there. In consequence the astral body works in too strongly from without via the upper stream.

Another clinical picture which we can better understand with the aid of this lecture is that of diabetes. The diabetic can no longer transform sugar, and carbohydrates in general, into the substances of his own body, and instead eliminates them via the urine. Arteriosclerosis and damage to the peripheral nerves are concomitant symptoms of this disorder. This damage arises due to disrupted blood supply caused by accumulation of sugar (fructose, sorbitol) and changes to the structural proteins. I do not wish to trace the details of this disorder here, but merely to show that we can understand diabetes by examining its salient characteristics and thus forming a diagnosis of the supersensible bodies. Steiner's suggestions can help us understand it better. In his statements about diabetes we again encounter supposed contradictions. In the first doctors' course,¹⁰ Rudolf Steiner says that diabetes involves a 'weak I', a 'weak I organisation which is not

¹⁰ GA 312, lecture 15

adequate for mastering the whole process that needs to occur in sugar formation'. Further he states that 'really the I is weak...' and that 'this I not capable of entering more deeply into the organism...'. On the other hand, in GA 314,¹¹ he refers to an 'excessive activity of the I in the organic realm itself' in diabetes, and of the I sinking too deeply into organic processes. How can we understand this? We need to read what Steiner says very carefully. The passage in GA 312 referring to an I that is too weak states that the I cannot manage to fully organise sugar within the organism, and that it is not adequate for mastering the whole process that needs to be accomplished in sugar formation. Because it is too weak, the I restricts itself to working more at the organism's periphery and developing a strong intellectualism through the brain.

In the lecture of 9 October 1920, on the other hand, Steiner describes an excessive I activity within the organic realm, speaking of a conscious spirit soul, an I-permeated spirit soul that works too strongly and thus leads to abnormal processes of elimination. This is a precise description of what the upper stream does when it works one-sidedly. Where the upper stream, the eliminator, works too strongly, we get accretions or deposits. In this case accretions mean the accumulation of fruit sugar and sorbitol in the nerve sheaths, so that these become bloated. One can also see the rise in blood-sugar level as the depositing of sugar in the blood, where elimination means glucosuria or the excretion of sugar in the urine. This is the excessive I activity in the organic realm (GA 314). The upper stream as such works too strongly down into sugar metabolism, is too little immersed and works inwards too little. Thus it does not work together with the lower stream. That is the meaning of I weakness – a weak I that cannot master the processes that should occur with sugar. The sugar cannot be transformed into warmth, into I-permeated substance, because the upper I stream is not active enough internally, and instead works too strongly in a centripetal way from without. This key can also enable us to understand the consequences of advanced diabetes: in sensibility disorders the I comes too little from within to the periphery. Arteriosclerosis represents the picture of excessive breakdown processes, with deposits, loss of vitality and hardening.

¹¹ In a lecture dated 9.10.1920

Not all of Steiner's explanations or symptomatic pictures equate illnesses so precisely with the two I streams. But this example may encourage us to at least attempt to apply such insights, or at least to ask the relevant questions.

VI Work on the text

Exegesis of the text of the lecture given on 11.2.1923, ‘The Invisible Human Being In Us. Pathology as basis for therapy’.¹²

Let us assume that every reader of this volume has already read the ‘Little boxes’ lecture which Steiner gave on 11 February 1923 – or at least has tried to read it. It is one of the most difficult of his lectures to understand, and in places even seems contradictory. This is why many soon lay it aside. Based on many years’ seminar work on this text, I now want to offer some remarks that may help people study the text more closely themselves. Let me preface this by saying that even after studying the text for 25 years I still have not succeeded in resolving all the difficult passages. The following study therefore only corresponds to my own current understanding.

Much as already been set out in advance in earlier sections, either as summary or as expanded commentary. The reader will find some repetition here of what has already been said. But now I wish to scrutinise the text itself more closely in an effort to explain difficult individual passages in the lecture.

In *section 1* Rudolf Steiner speaks of two entities we need to distinguish in the human being: the visible human being who stands before us and, working into this latter, the ‘pre-earthly organisation’, also called the ‘spiritual organisation’. Later he refers to this spiritual organisation as the ‘invisible human being’ (*section 2*) and the ‘super-physical human being’ (*section 5*). In *section 1* he even calls this the ‘physical organisation’ which is spiritually prepared in pre-earthly life. This is a signpost we should note well: when Steiner speaks of ‘physical organisation’ we must always simultaneously picture all four organisations. The ‘physical organisation’ is always penetrated by I organisation, astral organisation and etheric organisation, and must therefore always be seen as fourfold organisation. During the embryonal period, the spiritual, pre-birth organisation is incarnated into the embryonal sheaths (amnion). Let us attend to this sentence: ‘...as it is sent down as it were as spiritual organisation’, finding its physical expression in the

¹² GA 221

amion, ‘before the human being himself with his I enters into earthly existence’. Here we can see that this fourfold spiritual organisation is **not** what we call our ‘true being’. ‘The human being himself with his I’ is something distinct from it. As we will see, the human being himself works via the I streams from the pre-birth human being, from the ‘spiritual organisation’ into our earthly being. When we read: ‘...as the human being’s physical organisation is spiritually prepared...’ then we know that this refers to the four sheaths of the invisible human being.

At the end of section 1 Steiner speaks of the human being’s activity of body, soul and spirit’ which is something different, is differently constituted from this pre-earthly organisation. We can now see, if this was not clear before, that the invisible human being does not refer simply to the invisible sheaths (etheric body, astral body and I organisation of the visible human being). The visible human being as he stands before us as ‘the human being’s activity of body, soul and spirit’ has a physical body, etheric body, astral body and I. The I being can live within him since the pre-birth, spiritual organisation, the invisible human being, works into him ‘throughout his life’. The visible human being supplies the bridge into earthly existence for the invisible human being, through whom our true being aims to fulfil its karma on earth.

In *section 2* we learn in greater detail where the invisible human being works in the visible human being: in the forces which engender growth, nutrition, reproduction and movement – that is, in the metabolic-limb system (*section 4*). The physical organisation as we have come to know it as fourfold organisation, is present in the amion sheaths in the embryo, and in the human being after birth in the ‘processes of nutrition and regeneration’. To put it more precisely, the physical organisation of the invisible human being is united with the physical organisation of the visible human being in the metabolic-limb system. The one is ‘embedded in the other’ (*section 3*). If we look carefully at the ‘little boxes’ drawing, the physical organisation of the visible human being is what is ‘embedded’ in the physical organisation of the invisible human being.

In speaking of the fourfold nature of the invisible human being’s physical organisation within the metabolic-limb system, we must at the same time imagine a stream that flows from the I organisation to the astral, etheric and physical organisation,

and works in the physical organisation of the visible human being, in its upbuilding processes. This stream works from below upwards (*section 6*).

Then Steiner describes a second I stream that does not first pass through the whole invisible human being but which enters the whole human being by passing ‘directly from the I’ (from the I organisation of the invisible human being) through the neuro-sensory organisation, thus working from above downwards (*section 6*).

If we attend to the precise formulation in *sections 7 and 8* we see that the I organisation streams ‘along the neural pathways’ - not ‘in’ the nerve tracts, therefore, but ‘lengthwise along’ them. The spirit works directly into the visible human being. But wherever spirit works directly into matter, processes of destruction exist, a ‘subtle death process’. This does not mean however that matter is destroyed or dissolved but rather that vitality dies away. This also, therefore, means precipitating salts and forming visible matter.

In the lower stream the I does not work directly into the physical. The forces of the I are first permeated with soul in the astral organisation, and with ether in the etheric organisation, and pass through the physical organisation of the invisible human being. This I stream does not stream ‘along’ but ‘the I streams in the blood’ from below upwards; and, as we have learned in *section 13*, from within outwards. The upper, devitalising stream is therefore always a purely soul-spiritual stream while the lower, upbuilding stream is always a ‘bodily’ stream, in and active in the body.

In *section 10* we read with surprise that there is something still more vital than the etheric body. Previously (*section 9*), Rudolf Steiner has spoken of a weakened or attenuated breakdown process since the I, the spiritual, does not work directly into the physical but passes first through the astral organisation. Now he speaks of an attenuated regenerative process. This fourth stream also works from below like the first but has a less strongly vitalising effect than the first stream since it does not stream all the way through to the physical organisation of the invisible human being but only as far as the etheric organisation, working from there into the circulatory system. Thus the physical organisation of the pre-birth human being, which is prepared in the realm of the fixed stars, is the most vital aspect within us which we can conceive of.

Now there follow the key sentences in *section 13*, which can give us the basis for

specific practice – for the practical application of what we learn about the invisible human being in relation to diagnosis and therapy: ‘The blood process always really passes towards the periphery, acting centrifugally within us. The nerve process, which is really a devitalising or breakdown process, always has a centripetal dynamic and passes towards our interior.’ We will examine this in more detail in the section on ‘Applying anthroposophical insights’.

One could write a whole treatise on the first sentence of *section 15*. ‘Through the direct intervention of the spirit via the circuitous path of the I’... A phrase for meditation. Here can gain an inkling of where the source of the I streams can be sought. The secret of the I lies in this phrase. Let us return to the sketches, primarily the blackboard drawing, where all four streams are depicted. ‘...via the circuitous path of the I’ might also mean ‘...via the circuitous path of the invisible human being’s I organisation’. The I streams do after all derive from somewhere in the I organisation of the invisible human being. Let us take this literally – it will accompany us in our further study: ‘Through the direct intervention of the spirit via the circuitous path of the I...’

Now come examples of how illnesses can arise when the upper and lower stream do not work into each other in the right way.

Where the upper stream works from without, where the spirit, or the soul-spirit together with the weakened upper stream, works directly into the physical, it always brings the external world with it. Rudolf Steiner calls this ‘foreign bodies’. This upper stream is met by the lower stream with its forces of dissolution. Because these latter have a dissolving effect they allow an interiorisation, a transformation into the body’s own substance.

In the example given in *sections 15-18*, the upper stream predominates. It is not sufficiently met from below, and thus deposits form. Steiner does not speak of deposits but of foreign bodies. They are foreign bodies because they retain the nature of the external world and cannot be penetrated by the body’s own members and therefore cannot be absorbed into its organisation. ‘Foreign bodies which may not immediately be visible as physical accumulation...’ We might initially think of stone disorders – gallstones, kidney stones; or arteriosclerosis, arthrosis with its bone bridgings. We can

also consider oedemas to be foreign bodies. Oedemas arise where the fluid element falls away from the etheric body and is then governed solely by the physical laws of physics or chemistry. The fluid can no longer be sufficiently permeated by the etheric body because the upper stream brings too much from without, and cannot be adequately absorbed and taken up by the lower stream. Lung emphysema is also a foreign body in this sense. Here the air is no longer governed by the astral body and cannot be sufficiently inwardly permeated by it. However, such ‘foreign bodies’ can also form in the realm of the soul or psyche – for instance compulsive thoughts or actions, or just thoughts that ‘get stuck’ in the mind, or a tune we can’t get out of our head. These can be thoughts, tones, words or feelings which are introduced into us from without and which we cannot immediately dissolve and incorporate.

In *sections 17 and 18* the process of healing such foreign bodies is described. A cure involves supporting the etheric body so that it ‘develops its proper activity’. In relation to what enters the organism from without, the bloodstream aims to ‘penetrate it with the right astral and etheric force which can surface from below, to deter the I or the astral body with the I, from acting on their own.’

One might imagine that a cure would simply involve stimulating the lower stream, and directing it to where the etheric body needs to go. But really it means strengthening the lower stream in such a way that it can take up into itself the upper stream working too strongly from without and ‘acting on its own’. While the lower stream on its own does work in the body, in the metabolism and bloodstream, it cannot internalise the supersensible members since it works centrifugally, or in other words has a dissolving effect. What it can do however is to make the interior space accessible to the upper stream, and disable its devitalising activity, its formation of foreign bodies, by absorbing it into its centrifugal dynamic. The text states: ‘...the other system that runs along the blood vessels...aims to penetrate what is in the organism with the right astral and etheric force which can arise from below; aims to deter the I, or the astral body with the I, from acting on their own’ (*section 17*). And it continues in *section 18*: ‘...so that I activity does not intervene in the right way from the etheric body’. Thus to intervene in the right way would mean that the upper stream immerses itself in the lower stream and together with it penetrates substances, or the body, centrifugally from the etheric body.

We will not examine how to achieve this therapeutically here, since we are concerned at present with textual exegesis.

In *section 19* comes a description of the second possible way in which upper and lower stream do not properly work into each other. Here the upper stream is not too strong but too weak. However, it is not too weak because the lower stream is too strong, but because the latter is itself too weak and therefore does not come to meet it sufficiently from below. It is good to pause at this point and note that neither the upper or lower stream can ever work in on their own. When the upper stream passes out of us, for instance when we sleep or lose consciousness, the lower stream is also outside us, in the world of spirit. Here we should read the key sentence in *section 20*: ‘The night organisation of the human being lying in bed, not that of the invisible human being, which is outside him...’

Let us attend to the sentence in *section 19* about forces of growth which predominate when the upper stream is too weak, works in too little. Here the upbuilding stream is usually confused with the growth forces. The lower, upbuilding stream is too weak, intervenes too little in the blood process and does not adequately rise to meet the upper stream. The latter cannot therefore immerse itself sufficiently in the body, thus leaving the etheric body alone. In consequence the etheric body’s uprising forces work too strongly upwards. Those who doubt whether this is so should read the following sentence about the constitution of people who are pale; who already in childhood ‘stay thin or, through the predominant growth forces, shoot up quickly.’ Here ‘...we must act to attenuate the etheric body’s excessive activity...so that the hypertrophic, excessively active (growth) forces are led back to their proper scope...’

Now follows the difficult passage with the ‘night organisation’. At night the physical and etheric remain lying in bed while the soul and spirit leave the body. Steiner puts it the other way round: The physical-etheric organisation no longer accepts or takes up the soul and spirit during the night. ‘During the night’ means ‘during sleep’ in this context. This condition, in which the physical-etheric is abandoned by the soul-spiritual, is what he calls the ‘night organisation’. And this also continues to exist in us at certain levels or in certain regions when we are awake. In waking consciousness, too, we bear sleeping aspects within us. This is what Steiner calls the night organisation. It is this that

is too strong in the tall, thin children with pale complexions, while the day organisation is too weak in them – corresponding to an insufficient intervention of the upper stream, and a lower stream that permeates physical-etheric corporeality too little.

In *section 21*, in passages about the opposite process of food, I always feel like asking what the opposite of an orange might be. A ‘foreign process’ can never be internalised. It must first be prepared in such a way that it can be absorbed by the human organisation. ‘Transformation into its opposite’ here means no longer being external world or outer nature but to be entirely broken down and completely permeated by the human etheric and astral body and I. In the second doctors’ course Steiner also speaks of ‘polar processes’ to which a substance is exposed. Here too we are concerned with the polarity between human being and nature. This is the polar process to a mineral or a plant, in which the human being incorporates substance into himself.

Now follows the example with the splinter, describing how the human organism reacts in different ways to a foreign body. *Section 22* is no doubt easily comprehensible. But let us specifically look at the fact that a predominance of neural activity leads to elimination. In other words, it is the upper stream that eliminates and excretes. And let us note also what it means when the upbuilding force in the flowing blood shifts from its proper place. A few lines later Steiner tells us that the lower stream can then only permeate the etheric body, not the physical body. He says that the upper stream, the astral body, needs to take hold of the etheric body without the etheric body being permeated by the physical body. If the splinter lies more on the surface (*section 24-26*) neural activity predominates. This ‘arouses the blood activity’ so that there is no exudate or excretion, but instead dissolution and suppuration. We have learned that neural activity works centripetally while blood activity works centrifugally. And now, in *section 24*, we hear that the suppuration ‘is driven towards the outside of the body, towards the periphery, by the impetus passing through the nerves in devitalising anabolic activity’. Here we meet one of those ‘Steiner contradictions’. But of course this is not the case. The pressure inwards, arising through the centripetal forces, leads to what Steiner here calls the ‘impetus towards the periphery, towards the outside of the body’.

I will conclude this exegesis here. The lecture continues, but it was not my aim to summarise the entire text but instead to draw attention to the various pitfalls and so-called contradictions. If one comes to terms with what has so far been described, the further examples and comments from *section 29* to the end will pose no further problems.

VII Incorporation of the supersensible members

So far we have spoken of the three births of the I at the ages of 3, 9 and 21. In his writings and lectures Rudolf Steiner tirelessly described how the I and astral body interact with the physical and etheric bodies. At some places he examined this incorporation of the supersensible members in more specific detail.

As we have seen from the example of the invisible human being, supersensible force systems cannot directly incarnate. Here we repeatedly find bridges where the physical substrate on the one hand is prepared in a way that enables it to bear within it qualities resembling those of the spirit (e.g. movement and vitality) and where, on the other, the spirit's properties corresponds to the physical (e.g. in the physical organisation of the invisible human being). The spiritual nature of the supersensible members must be attenuated to enable the latter to unite with the physical body. And the substance of the physical body must be inwardly permeated in such a way that the external element of the independent soul and spirit can be accommodated there. Without these complex mutual accommodation and inter-levelling processes we either could not unfold our full earthly vitality, or would actually be unable to inhabit the body.

Now there are four lectures where these precise stages of mutual accommodation are described specifically. This first influx of the individuality is described in the lecture on meditatively acquired insight into the human being.¹³ In the volume 'Physiology and Therapy',¹⁴ Steiner more specifically examines the incorporation of the supersensible members in the child's first seven years. Then, in the so-called 'unleashing' lecture,¹⁵ he details how the I and astral body reach the lower pole of the human being via the nervous system. Finally, the lecture on 'The invisible human being within us'¹⁶ describes primarily how the spirit soul works into daily life. These four lectures refer in part to the first seven years, while other aspects apply to later stages. But we need to imagine these different processes as occurring simultaneously. They all unfold at the same time, but do not have the same significance at every age.

¹³ GA 302a, 16.9.1920

¹⁴ GA 314, 27/28.10.1922

¹⁵ GA 174, lecture 19

¹⁶ 11.2.1923

Let us therefore adopt a synoptic mode to consider the four lectures we have referred to. In relation to the first contact of the soul and spirit with the newborn human being, we can discover in ‘Meditatively acquired knowledge of the human being’ how, from birth onwards, ‘radiations’ emanate from the head, penetrating the whole body ‘right into the periphery’. Steiner calls these radiations ‘...forces which are particularly active during these years when imitation plays such a big role.’ He calls these forces soul activity, and later also sculptural and architectural forces. ‘These are primarily the forces which are laid down in the child from the world of spirit, in which the child’s soul lived before conception.’

This soul activity, this radiation emanating from the head, enters directly from the world of spirit, from the pre-birth human being, radiating into corporeality from above downwards and entering right in to metabolism. However, we should not regard this as the upper I stream of the invisible human being, since the latter enters from without via the senses. The radiations in contrast enter from within into the brain, radiate from the head from above downwards. And these two inner forces – from above downwards and from below upwards – impact upon each other. Steiner speaks of the battle which occurs in the organism between the two types of forces, which then culminates in the change of teeth.

At the end of the first seven-year period, these ‘soul forces which are previously at work in the organism’ become newly active as powers of reason, as forces of intellect. There are people in whom all these forces pass into intellectual life; and others who retain these inner, radiating forces. We find the latter as sculptural forces in the sculptor or architect. We can therefore see that a developmental stage, a process can be concluded and a new one can arise in which, nevertheless, the first process simultaneously continues.

At the same time, from birth already, the interplay between the upper and lower stream of the invisible human being is occurring, but does not yet have the importance it will later acquire in the second seven-year period. With the first sensory stimuli at birth – light, cold, touch, noises and language, smell – the upper I stream is called in. At the

same time the centrifugal forces radiate from within outwards; but an encounter between these two I streams only gradually occurs at various different levels.

How does the child emerge from this condition, in which he is permeated by centrifugal and centripetal forces, without being able to counter it with something? How are the supersensible members internalised and how does the body's own interior space arise in the first place? We find a very detailed description of this process in the lectures on 'kidney radiation' given on 27/28 October 1922.¹⁷ There we learn how the *etheric* is caught and contained by the activity of the heart-lung system. And through absorption of oxygen, this etheric organisation is incorporated into the physical.

In relation to the *astral body*, Steiner speaks still more clearly. The astral body lives in the gaseous organism but needs a 'direct point of contact' to be able to live there, and this is provided by the 'kidney and bladder system'. This radiates the astral organism into the human organism, from below upwards and from within outwards, 'through to the periphery' and into the nervous system. From the latter the head forces come to meet this kidney stream, rounding from above and reflecting astrality back. These are the interior head forces previously described. And only this reflected astrality can then be incorporated into the body. Here is the passage that refers to this: '...in the first period of human life up until the change of teeth, these radiating streams are dulled (that is rounded off) by the liver and kidney system, and this dulling is the prime thing... ..but these radiating streams have no significance as such, but rather... ..only their reflection into the organism appears as the active principle.' It is only through this reflecting back that the physical organ of kidney and bladder arise in the first place, by the agency of nitrogen.

A corresponding process also unfolds for the *I organisation* at the level of the warmth organism. Here it is the liver and gall system which brings food as far as the I organisation, streaming it through the whole human being in the warmth organism. But these radially outstreaming forces are cast back by the head forces so that, with the aid of hydrogen, the liver and gall system is structured right into physical organ formation and, from the warmth organism, the I organisation also penetrates the air and water organism right through to the physical organisation.

¹⁷ GA 314

In the so-called ‘unleashing lecture’, a description is now given of where the astral organisation and I organisation are reflected in. The solar plexus is identified as main contact point of the I – and more precisely of this reflected I, for the liver and gall system was the main contact point in the warmth organism. In the ‘unleashing lecture’ Steiner distinguishes between *I thought* and *true I* – which is also called *active I*. ‘The *true I*, as ductile force, intervenes via the solar plexus in the human being’s whole organism.’ The *true I* is the I that is not reflected in from without as in the upper I stream of the ‘Little boxes’ lecture. The *true I*, also called the *active I*, works into and through the whole organism via the radiating stream of liver and gall, and is reflected back by the sculptural forces of the nervous system – that is, by the interior head forces, entering the lower pole of the human being via the ganglia system. Steiner ascribes the plexus sacralis to this, as its place of entry. But doubtless this is equally true of the plexus solaris. We can also view this in terms of the I streams of the invisible human being. Here the *thought I* is the I consciousness arising from reflection of the upper stream from without. The *active I* appears when the upper stream enters and encounters the lower stream within, that is, in the rhythmic system, becoming centrifugally active with the lower stream via the solar plexus and sacral plexus in the blood system.

The same applies to the *astral body*. This has its main contact point for entering corporeality in the spinal cord, and secondarily also in the ‘ganglia system’ (vegetative nervous system).

The *etheric body* has its gate of entry into physical organisation in the brain, but also in the spinal cord and ganglia system. It is not reflected from without, but dives down into corporeality in the head already. It is described thus in the ‘unleashing lecture’. If we read the lectures about kidney streams carefully (27.10.1922), we will find that the I and astral body are reflected back by the head forces. By this means they remain as free soul and spirit in the head region, and enable us to be conscious.

With the aid of these lectures we can trace the gradual incorporation of soul and spirit into the human being.

VIII Applying anthroposophical insights

When the upper and lower stream interact in the right way, we are healthy. When do they do so? In the right dynamic, the centrifugal forces coming from below are reflected back by the centripetal forces coming from above, and delimited or rounded off – thus giving rise to interior space. Reflection inwards is possible when the upper stream dives down into the inner body and works centrifugally with the lower stream. The proper interplay of the two streams is possible when the upper stream does not work from without, when it can be internalised quickly enough and can transmit itself to the centrifugal forces of the lower stream.

The two streams can however act too strongly or too weakly. If the lower stream is too weak, the upper one cannot come to meet it adequately. If the upper stream is too strong, the lower one cannot sufficiently balance its effects. The two streams can disengage from each other so that each of them works separately in their own way, centrifugally or centripetally. This means that interior space is lacking. The lower stream can dissolve too strongly, or the upper stream can get stuck too deeply in the body. Then adequate engagement of the two streams with each other does not occur.

Now I'd like to describe an exercise by means of which we can fetch in the upper stream working too strongly from without, and can thus create the interior space that is lacking. This works best via the lower senses, since these are already active within the body. For instance, if we use the sense of touch, we fetch the *upper I stream* into ourselves – for with every sensory stimulus the I enters anew into us. If we feel our way from within outwards, that is, centrifugally from within to our body wall, and sense this latter, at the same time we create a quality corresponding to the *lower stream*. In the nervous system a lack of movement prevails, enabling the brain to become a mirror. In our blood system, activity holds sway – and into this works the lower stream. If we feel our way centrifugally, therefore, moving back and forth, we create qualities which allow the lower stream to approach. And if our touch has a rounding rather than angular quality, this corresponds to the *etheric body*, which can thus stream into the physical with the lower stream. At first sight it may strike one as somewhat banal, but by practising it in this way we can discover how interior space arises through such inner, centrifugally

rounding, expanding movement, and how warmth spreads within it. This may be just a foot or a hand, or also the whole person. If one succeeds in sensing the whole human being from within, one will feel oneself to be round since the etheric body entirely permeates the physical body from within with the help of the lower stream. The roundness of a Russian doll corresponds to the description of the etheric body which entirely permeates the physical body. This is why this is also called the Matryoshka exercise.

But as we practise we will find that we don't always sense the body wall. We do not reach the periphery enough because our delimiting head forces cannot be sufficiently internalised. We can see this in a very marked form in the neurasthenic clinical picture, in which the centripetal forces work too one-sidedly from without. This is, however, also the case with the hysteric in whom the centrifugal forces predominate, although the upper stream enters. The spirit soul is then within the body but flows out through its boundaries, whereas in the neurasthenic the spirit soul remains more outside, working on the body from without. Both constitutions will gain help from this touch and sensing exercise to create interior space if they succeed in sensing the body wall from within through this rounding, expanding movement of touch. Repeating the movements is also a quality corresponding to the etheric and upbuilding stream. This is why repeated, rounding touch will eventually succeed in sensing the lacking boundary of the body, and use it from within as a point of reference and support.

If the exercise is successful we will on the one hand arrive at a quite new sense of the body, which one might call 'stability' or 'sense of existing'. On the other hand we also arrive by this means at an experience of our I as sense of I, as the active I, as the I in me. If we stay with this activity of expansion, opening our interior space continually anew from the centre, we can pass from an experience of I in me to that of the Pauline phrase 'Not I but Christ in me'. By bringing the two streams together in us in the right way we pass with the *sense of I* and the *active I* through this centrifugally opening movement and via our invisible human being into dimensions of what Steiner calls the true I.

In touch the I can really anchor itself right down into the physical body. Rudolf Steiner writes of the lower senses: ‘In them the I experiences itself as fulfilled.’¹⁸ This is why it is important that we do not merely move inwardly but really feel our way through to physical touch and sensing. Then the I can as it were find support and anchorage in the body. From there we can as it were burst the bounds of the physical body, or in other words expand them. In eurythmy Steiner calls this ‘overcoming the physical body’. This does not mean not needing it any more or neglecting it or suchlike, but rather penetrating it with the I streams and with the etheric body in such a way that it can be absorbed by the lawfulness of the etheric body.

If we add the accompanying or subsidiary exercises as these are described in ‘Guidance in Esoteric Training’¹⁹ we will discover that Steiner here gives us nothing other than instructions for this fulfilment and overcoming of the physical body. There however the comments on experiences of the sense of touch and movement are more differentiated and take us further. The accompanying exercises turn out to be basic exercises for arriving at body-free thinking that is not bound to the brain. They are basic exercises for being able to meditate within the body with presence of mind. They are also basic exercises for coping with daily life. The Matryoshka exercise helps us additionally to be present in our daily life in a way that enables us to be in better control of ourselves and to be perceived and taken seriously by our surroundings. In this way we can draw fully on our forces without growing tired too quickly.

Let us therefore trace the description of the accompanying exercises. They start with a first section of exercises which I will call *exoteric* since this section is also described in public texts. This first part concludes with a second, which I will call *esoteric*. This second part has a deep-seated effect, permeating our whole ‘spirit soul-body activity’, because the measures described really allow the invisible human being to work into us with its forces. Via the fourth and fifth exercises we can arrive at imagination, and even inspiration. We will return to this later with an account of observation exercises.

¹⁸ GA 45

¹⁹ GA 245, p. 15ff and 105 ff in German edition

With the *first accompanying exercise* we are asked to focus attention on an idea or an object, to ‘hearken’ to the feeling that arises in us through concentrated thought and then pour this feeling of stability and security into the body. In the esoteric lesson given in Munich on 6.6.1907,²⁰ Steiner says that this feeling arises primarily in the front portion of the head. ‘From there one pours it into the brain and spinal column’. In other words it does not radiate outwards, nor is it guided or directed, but we ‘pour’ it or ‘pour it in’. This means that from a state of concentration in which we are more given over to the centripetal forces, the feeling is directed in thought into three dimensionality, filling the body from within outwards. Here it is primarily the sense of touch and movement that are activated. The firm, secure thinking developed in concentration work is connected with our sense of the body via sensing and touching: ‘...one should think of one’s head and of the centre of the back (brain and spinal column) as if one wished to pour this feeling (stability and security) into this part of the body’. In the description given on 6.6.1907,²¹ we learn more precisely about this process: ‘...it chiefly appears in the front part of the body. Once one has sensed it there, one should imagine pouring it into the brain and the spinal column’.

In the *second exercise*, ‘taking the initiative’, one should note the sense of inner impetus for activity’ and ‘pour this feeling into one’s body in such a way that one allows it to stream down from the head as far as and including the heart’. We should note here that we let the feeling stream **to** the heart but **within** the ribcage. This exercise is particularly suited to preparing us for heart thinking. However it will also help to bring us from cognitive will or willed cognition to willed acceptance and humility, to allowing the will to hold sway. In this way we will connect and identify all the more strongly with our will impulses, but without imposing them on others, for we fill ourselves with them. This means that our I is active centrifugally, in the direction of forces of sympathy which create interior space - creating space and allowing expansion.

With the *third exercise*, that of composure and equanimity, we have precisely what was described above as the Matryoshka exercise. We should pour the feeling of inner composure that grows through this exercise into the body by letting it stream out

²⁰ GA 245, page 103 ff. German edition

²¹ Page 106 in German edition

from the heart into the hands, feet and finally into the head: ‘One should allow this feeling to flow through the whole body...’²²

Now our body is filled right into the periphery with feeling-imbued streams of thought. This means that the upper stream is consciously active in the lower stream, and with it penetrates the body from within through to the periphery.

Now follows the somewhat more difficult step into the *fourth exercise* – the positivity exercise. Again we find, firstly, the exoteric activity of seeking the positive in everything and in all that happens. For instance by asking ‘Why is the other like this or why does he do this?’ This will enable us to broaden our horizon of observation so that we learn to separate perception from our own self-focus. Steiner describes how a new feeling of transparency arises in us as a result, and our soul opens wide so that we become capable of perceiving more subtle processes. Again, we should guide this feeling towards the heart or, we can also say, fill our heart with it. From there we should let it stream into our eyes and through them out into the space around us.

In the second discussion Steiner says: ‘Then one gets the sense of expanding beyond one’s skin...If one feels this, one should let it stream out through eyes, ears and the whole skin, but chiefly the eyes.’ This corresponds to what we called opening wide above: ‘...the sense of expanding beyond one’s skin’. This is an intensified internalisation of the upper stream. The I no longer reflects itself against the physical body but against the etheric body. This process is also described in the lecture cycle on ‘Occult Physiology’: ‘Nerve activity is not inscribed into the blood table but is reflected back by the etheric body within itself.’²³ This esoteric part of the fourth exercise succeeds best if one starts from the third and, with the sense of expanding and outstreaming, retains alongside it the third exercise of ‘filling the heart’. This corresponds exactly to what occurs in eurythmy.

This brings us right into the *fifth exercise*, that of impartiality or lack of prejudice. Here a subtle feeling arises in the surrounding space which is experienced in the fourth exercise, a ‘subtle resonance’. We should let this feeling stream in through all five senses, especially the skin (sense of warmth). At this stage however we should not focus on the

²² Page 106 in German edition

²³ GA 128, lecture 2

impressions of the lower senses (touch, taste, smell), should not direct our attention towards them, since we won't be able to sufficiently distinguish the good from the bad influences. This fifth exercise is doubtless the most difficult by a long way; and if it succeeds will lead far beyond imaginative perception. Corresponding with Steiner's description, this exercise serves as preparation for intuition within corporeality. However, like all the other exercises described, it primarily helps to connect the soul capacities we are thereby developing with the body. By this means we achieve real presence of mind and the capacity to let our actions be informed by it.

A further complaint or problem where it can be very helpful to apply anthroposophical insights is anxiety. This is always a symptom of partial disengagement of the etheric body in the solar plexus region. Anxiety and panic attacks can arise where the upper and lower stream detach from each other. In all conditions of fear and anxiety, and also in panic attacks, the method described can enable the patient to interweave his upper I stream into the lower stream through strongly pushing the pelvic muscles apart, thus anchoring the I in the body. It will be particularly effective if he starts from the sacral bone, pressing the coccyx and sacral bone backwards, and from there expands the whole pelvis. In this way he will end up sitting on his haunches as though in a bowl that carries and holds him. This will reconnect the etheric body better, thus allowing fear to dissipate. The patient will gain a greater sense of security and lose his fear of fear. If practised regularly, such fear can vanish entirely. Panic attacks will still occur initially, but can be better controlled by these means. Eventually, with focused practice, they will no longer recur in situations which would otherwise have triggered the panic. The same also applies to fear of flying, claustrophobia and agoraphobia.

Now I would like to describe another means of applying these insights. In lecture 2 of the cycle 'Mystery Centres',²⁴ Rudolf Steiner relates how one can come to perceive ahrimanic spirits in fog or mist. One way, 'among other exercises' to arrive at imaginative perception is to 'load one's will'. This means that one traces the feeling of

²⁴ GA 232

certain physical organs, particularly muscles, through inner concentration on the muscles, and thus invokes a kind of inner muscle feeling, or muscle sense.

But during this inner muscle sensing it will be important for us to focus our attention simultaneously outwards, on the object of perception – in other words we must once again go from within outwards. By sensing the muscles we immerse ourselves with the upper stream in the body's interior, but remain conscious as we do so, and do not allow the stream to vanish into the body's unconsciousness and the blood stream. In full awareness we maintain its centrifugal direction and direct it with our attention from within outwards. From sensing the muscles, from the realm of will, we turn our attention to the object. We could also say that we make ourselves expand, in a way similar to that described for the accompanying exercises. This gives rise to the reflection in the etheric: with our I-permeated etheric body we encounter the etheric in ourselves. 'Encounter' really means that we live in the being we perceive - and the being lives in us. Our etheric body, our I in the etheric body, joins in with the movements made by the etheric body of what we perceive, and thus experiences the imaginative picture of the other being. Here it should be noted that we remain fully awake, simultaneously keeping our awareness on the physical phenomenon – the mist or fog in our example.

Whereas, in ordinary sensory perception, we look from without on the mist, and through our cognitive forces conclude the perception process with a ready-made concept, in imagination we 'see' with our whole being, starting more from touch, from sensing and feeling our way, sensing movement and form from within outwards, experiencing the mist from within. This means that we prevent the centripetal closing off of cognitive forces and remain in conscious will activity, in the centrifugal forces. Rudolf Steiner calls this being 'conscious' or 'intentionally loading the will'. In the lecture on 'The Boundaries of Natural Science',²⁵ he also describes how we can come to imagination via the sense of touch.

Our insight into the I streams of the invisible human being gives us the basis for understanding these processes. If we look at things 'normally' – in other words observe an object from without - the upper, centripetal stream predominates. The spirit soul works from without and remains outside. It supplies us only with the dead reflection of

²⁵ GA 322

the object, although in sensory perception the fourfold lower stream also comes to meet the upper stream. Quite generally this is how soul experience arises through a sensory stimulus.

If we seek imagination, and what can be perceived only imaginatively, then, via the sense of touch (sense of touch and movement), we can allow the upper stream, the spirit soul, to immerse itself in the lower stream without relinquishing consciousness in the process. By this means the spirit soul can awaken in the etheric. It no longer experiences the dead reflection but the etheric phenomenon. This form of practice works best in relation to moving water – a stream or a lake ruffled by the wind. If we observe plants by this means we can succeed in experiencing the movements of growth, the etheric streams of growth.

Practising this with plants is perhaps still closer to what Steiner goes on to describe in lecture 2 of ‘Mystery Centres’. He shows us how we can imaginatively perceive luciferic spirits in the flooding light above evening clouds. This is an intensification of what was described above. With our thinking we go far beyond ourselves when we try ‘...to let normal thinking accompany the figures and colours of transforming clouds, when we give our thoughts the capacity to metamorphose and transform instead of retaining sharp outlines; when our thoughts become as wide or narrow as the clouds themselves, accompanying the cloud shapes and partaking of their forms and colours.’ If we observe plants in this way, the etheric streams can also be experienced through the physical phenomena.

The attentive reader will no doubt have noticed here that we are doing the same thing on a thought level as we did at the will level with muscle sensing. But really this is also still a process of touch. When Steiner describes giving thoughts the capacity of not having sharp outlines, this means maintaining thinking activity so that reflection does not occur. Thoughts should be kept within the centrifugal forces in such a way that mirroring does not arise, and they do not close into a fixed form. Thus they can remain in movement rather than rigidifying, and can transform and metamorphose. Our own thought forces follow the shapes and movements of the object we perceive, permeate the rigid, mirrored form, and live in the forces that gave rise to this form. Once again it is the mirroring of consciousness in the etheric that leads to wakeful imaginative perception.

A very simple, elementary exercise for developing imaginative perception can be undertaken with a stone and a plant. You first observe the stone and allow it to affect you. In doing so, you note what you feel – for instance where in the body you feel it most. Then you observe a plant in the same, normal way. It is best to do this with a plant with many leaves. Again, after observing it for a short while, you note what kind of feeling arises in you. You may detect a difference on the very first occasion – or maybe not. Now you undertake what Steiner calls ‘soul muscle training’: alternating a few times from the stone to the plant and back again. For all, a moment will occur when they experience the contracting, centripetally active forces of the stone and expanding, centrifugally active forces of the plant – both in themselves and in the stone and plant.

Using this tool we can now also investigate other objects and ask whether centrifugal, expanding forces predominate, or contracting, centripetal forces. For instance we can distinguish artificial flowers or fruit from real ones, or test whether a tree is already dead or not. In diagnosis of the supersensible sheaths this also helps us approach the question of how the etheric body penetrates the physical body at various places. We can also draw on this to examine how the upper and lower I stream act in the body.

I have tried to show how knowledge of the invisible human being and his I streams can help us ‘tangibly’, right into specific and practical medical detail, but also for the path of schooling and self-development.

IX Eurythmy and eurythmy therapy in the light of the ‘Little boxes’ lecture

When we know about the I streams of the invisible human being, we can also enquire into the aspect of eurythmy relating to the supersensible bodies. For a comprehensive anthroposophic view, we ought also to explore the connection of planets and zodiac with vowels and consonants and with the human organism. Since this exceeds the scope of this study however, I will refrain from doing so here.

In relation to the supersensible bodies and I activity while doing eurythmy, one can certainly perceive eurythmy’s specific attributes. Based on our previous observations we can say that the impetus for movement always lies within. Movements are three-dimensional and always proceed from within outwards. Other approaches starting from within and passing from within outwards, can also be found in certain therapies such as rhythmic massage, Eutonia, Feldenkrais and Middendorf. The latter also leads to a three-dimensional experience of the body. Doubtless there are other therapies one could mention.

In eurythmy this fully conscious movement occurs from within outwards. We open our interior space and expand it into our surroundings so that our speech-sound gesture can be taken up by the cosmic speech sound - and vice versa. Our body thus becomes the place where cosmic speech forces come to visibility. The same also applies to tone eurythmy.

This becomes possible because the eurythmy movement impetus leads the upper I stream directly from within outwards. Thus instead of mirroring, manifestation occurs – manifestation of what is spiritual through the fact that the movements create corresponding qualities connected via the lower stream, via the invisible human being, with the world of spirit. Through the invisible human being we also live in a waking state in the world of spirit. We just know nothing of this if we only live in a one-sided way in the centripetal forces and in mirrored thoughts.

In eurythmy therapy the same applies as for eurythmy, but here we enter less into our surroundings with the inner movement, working instead in a more body-related way. This means, however, that we permeate the body with eurythmy, and thus from within outwards: from within to the body wall or also moving beyond its confines. We can

therefore understand why it is possible to alleviate pain with eurythmy therapy. As we have seen, pain arises due to the astral body working too strongly from without and directly into the physical. The centripetal forces of the upper stream predominate. If we work at the place of pain with a speech sound, a eurythmy therapy movement from within outwards, and through the site of pain, the upper stream is engaged from within and the centripetal forces – the pain – can dissipate.

We can now therefore also understand why eurythmy can be so helpful in cases of paralysis. Here the I is stuck too deeply in the body so that engagement and disengagement is no longer possible. The upper stream is too strong and works from without inwards – at least in cases of spastic paralysis. If we now move speech sounds for and with the person who is paralysed, we make it possible for the upper I stream to disengage and become internalised again in the right way, so that the I organisation becomes free again for movement from within.

I will now give a few examples that highlight descriptions in the Curative Eurythmy Course²⁶ which can be helpful for our understanding of the invisible human being.

At the end of *lecture 3*, Rudolf Steiner speaks about the need to bring a pictorial element into speech: ‘...the word experienced without pictorial element is really an inner cause of illness’. Abstract language acquisition makes the ‘rhythmic system become unrhythmic’ and leads to a ‘refusal of the metabolic forces’. In ‘abstract language acquisition’ the upper stream remains too strongly in the realm of the neuro-sensory system. The conditions are lacking whereby language or speech can work via the rhythmic system right into metabolism: and the lower I stream cannot adequately come to meet what descends from above downwards through language.

In *lecture 5* we can also regard the Yes-No soul exercises and sympathy-antipathy exercises in this light.

In relation to the Yes-No exercise, Steiner says it is ‘the eurythmic anchorage of judgement’. It is given for treating ‘shortness of breath’. In practice it is also good for asthma. The exercise is characterised as one where a thought takes wing and passes into movement. ‘Thus it is a thought that rides upon movement.’ And by this means,

²⁶ GA 315

‘circuitously via the etheric body’ the effect on shortness of breath is achieved. But what does it mean to say that ‘a thought rides upon movement’ and ‘circuitously via the etheric body’? The thought arises primarily through the activity of the upper stream. We can be awake because the upper stream is mirrored against the nervous system. If, with this wakefulness, we perform the Yes-No movement, we lead the upper stream down into the legs. This movement should be done several times, relatively quickly. On each occasion it will prove easier to initiate the upper stream directly and centrifugally in the leg and to perform the movement directly from within. In consequence, reflected consciousness will be somewhat dulled in the head while consciousness in the legs becomes more awake. The upper stream works via the lower stream ‘circuitously via the etheric body’. As a result it no longer compacts above but creates interior space from below so that breathing becomes freer. The thought is integrated into the limbs – in other words into the will domain. Constricting, contracting, centripetally active forces are led down as far as the lower pole and transformed into centrifugal, space-creating forces.

In the sympathy-antipathy exercise, this process of internalisation is intensified still further. Rudolf Steiner calls it a ‘will affirmation’. In other words, we do not start from a thought but from the will. This exercise is performed slowly: one falls asleep a little as it were, and the imaginative picture of sleep arises. ‘Thus the I is more strongly active in relation to the body than it is otherwise.’ Through this movement the upper stream dives down still more into the lower stream, giving itself up entirely to the lower stream’s centrifugal forces. Expanding centrifugal forces are also what lead our spirit soul into sleep. But now we perform the same movement while awake, thus strengthening the I in the human being’s lower pole, and proceeding from this lower pole. For this reason the exercise has a stimulating effect on circulation and digestion. Steiner calls it ‘complete digestion’. The effect does not lie solely in the intestinal area but also beyond the walls of the intestines.

In a similar way one could consider many other exercises in relation to the mutual interaction of the I streams. These examples aim to offer a stimulus for this.

X. Concluding remark

These studies do not aim to be complete, but could be augmented by countless passages in Rudolf Steiner's lectures and writings. One could also examine several other clinical pictures from this perspective. Thus my observations here aim to serve as material for further study.