

Deepening on Therapeutic Speech Formation and Drama Therapy

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Loss and Acquisition of Speech

Working with the Essence of the Spoken Word in the Lives of Children and Older Individuals¹

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The Connection between the Four Subtle Bodies and the Threefold Organism of the Human Being

The nervous system is the head of the threefold human being. The human self, or 'I', is the entity that works with the threefold human being. The 'I' is a fourth member. The threefold organism is the instrument – the gift of the Creation – that is worked through by the 'I' and that is formed by the participation of the 'I'. The 'I' is the being who makes the threefoldness, or trinity, into a unity, but which can also hold itself at a distance from this.

In regard to speech and language, Rudolf Steiner says that, before the 'I' comes to birth and come into the body, speech and language have already fully taken shape as a possibility, as lawfulness of the air element, as world wisdom. This is a very important perspective, particularly in relation to the difficult ethical issues that arise especially at the beginning and end of life, when we see a loss of autonomy in connection with the nervous system and the organism of the brain: Should a severely disabled child be carried to term? Should one not 'free' society from the burden of old people?

Elders themselves often feel that they are a burden. In view of these dramatic ethical issues concerned with the beginning and end stages of life, it is tremendously important to clearly understand that the body, the threefold organism, is only the instrument and that it is the 'I' who 'plays' this instrument, lives via this instrument experientially and thereby gains experience. The lines in the verse by Rudolf Steiner (see end of the lecture by Michaela Glöckler on Speech Development from Spiritual-Scientific and Neurological Perspectives) – "To one who can love language, language gives of its own power" – are true. The 'I' is pure love, is the will for freedom, is respect and the possibility of meeting – free from the misuse of power or of otherwise invasive behavior.

It is through love of speech and language that we create the connection that enables us to work with its power. It is very important that we have in mind both the bodily instrument as well as speech and language themselves – as an instrument entrusted to us, gifted to us, with which we can work and through which we express ourselves. This completely pure and modest attitude is therapeutic, and the patient or client with whom we are working senses that in therapeutic speech* we are working first and foremost in a shared, objective wisdom-filled space that is bestowed upon us, rather than out of an acquired competence.

I. Threefold Organism and Subtle Bodies

In regard to the threefold and fourfold human being, I would like to once more very basically refer to what Rudolf Steiner elaborates in the Second Medical Course.² This is, incidentally, also the course where the lectures for doctors took place in the morning and the in the afternoon the lectures on therapeutic eurythmy were held. This lecture cycle is called Anthroposophical Spiritual Science and Medical Therapy. It contains most of the indications about the mystery of substance, about the transformation of substance, but also about the differentiated way in which the finer bodies take hold of the physical, which is necessary for an understanding of therapeutic eurythmy.

Rudolf Steiner begins with the description of the threefold human being and shows how the subtle or finer bodies build up this human being via the metabolism. Everything starts in the embryological period, with growth and with these three processes: proliferation, differentiation and integration. Steiner makes it clear how this whole takes shape, taking on a certain configuration that creates its own boundaries and maintains itself, that doesn't overflow and doesn't destroy itself by hardening, but instead remains in balance.

The Uniqueness of the Physical Body

Rudolf Steiner calls the physical body 'spirit germ' [or 'spirit seed', spirit nucleus']. This is the mysterious member of our being that we give over to the earth at death and that we do not take into the spiritual world, and that is built uniquely for this life. The physical body represents the uniqueness of the physical, of what is especially particular to the here and now. It is prepared and conceived in the prebirth world. This spiritual conception in the spiritual realm is followed by the drawing together of our hereditary substance, including the possibility of a severe disability. There is no coincidence in this. I would like to allude to this more explicitly.

For a profoundly impaired child with multiple disabilities who is perhaps also afflicted with epileptic seizures, is therapeutic speech the therapy of choice? In such a case, shouldn't one do eurythmy, Bobath or Vojta therapy?

I would like to briefly go into these important questions. There is a huge possibility of abandoning the body before birth. Take artificial fertilization: Only ten percent of artificially conceived children are able to come to birth. Ninety percent die in utero without coming to term. These are all healthy, in vitro embryos, of which five or six are implanted in the mother's uterus. For this reason, if the cells develop at all, there are often multiple births – triplets, quadruplets, sometimes even quintuplets.

We therapists and doctors can learn a lot from this situation. For it is not the body that creates the human being out of itself, it is the spirit. It is the spiritual conception that determines whether it will be a suitable fit or not. Look how often there are miscarriages in the first trimester, sometimes three to four miscarriages, before a child is on the way! Parents can comfort themselves with the thought that it is not necessarily a case of several different children being unable to come. It can be the same one again. But what is being offered isn't yet a good fit. So the child goes away again and says: This isn't suitable. – The next time, the child comes

again, checks everything out, begins to take hold formatively, as we discussed, and then at the end of the second or beginning of the third month realizes: This is still not a good fit. So then another attempt is made.

Sudden infant death syndrome can be related to this, which one attempts to prevent by technical means. Yet it cannot always be prevented, because after three to five months of life the decision can still be made: this is not right for me.

Thus 'instrument' is formed

- from the **physical body**, which is our spirit germ or seed, our cosmic-universal inheritance, our spiritual-physical genotype that shows in an individualized way how we bring about the connection to the cosmos;
- from the **ether body**, which we gather up out of the cosmic ether forces so that it fits to our particular physical body, and which is therefore different for each individual in each life;
- from the **astral body**, the bearer of our destiny. It has this designation because everything that we do on earth and that consequently has its effect on us is of an astral nature. Our deeds change the world and form our destiny: Every kind word and every malicious word comes back to us again. Every word is heard, has an effect, and remains effective;
- and from our **'I'**, the player of this instrument. The 'I' is without sin – this is an incredible blessing. It is the member of our being that was integrated after the fall of man, after the separation of the sexes, after the astral body 'ran riot'. The 'I' stands under another jurisdiction. That is why – when we reflect on our 'I' – we can straighten up again and carry on after even the most difficult situation. It would be unbearable if our 'I' were our astral body. In that case, we would not be able to survive having killed someone, or, if we ourselves were the victim, we would not be able to face the other person again in another life. The 'I' can do this. Why? Because through the capacity to love, which distinguishes the 'I', it can always reestablish relationship again in a new and independent way, and engage with what is happening in the present. The 'I' can transform, forgive, reorganize; it has the ability to shape relationships in freedom.

Imprint of the Etheric in Brain and Sense Organs

There is an organ that is physically so completely formed that the finer bodies, or higher members, can imprint themselves upon it. Then the formative forces are released from this organ, so that an abundance of etheric forces are set free for reflective thinking. The imprint in the physical is as strong as possible and the remaining life-force as little as possible. These are the nervous system – the most physical of organs – and the sense organs.

Our spiritual life is based on etheric body, astral body and I-organization becoming free of the body and only a small part of the etheric remaining in the nervous system to enliven and regenerate it. This forms the constitution of our spiritual life. The only reason we need to sleep is that we have a nervous system: The part of the ether body that was lifted out during the day for

thinking, which mirrors itself in the brain and thus makes reflective thinking possible, goes back into the body, into the nervous system, so that it can be regenerated during sleep. During this time, reflective thinking is not possible. Sleep means that astral body and 'I' are outside the body and expanded into cosmic reaches because they are no longer tied to the physical body via the etheric. Rudolf Steiner depicts the major stages of development in seven-year periods: The form-giving process is rounded off with the second dentition – this is a very significant step. We think, essentially, with the etheric forces that have been released from the nervesensory system, but also with all of the forces that stream formatively into the other organs. When the etheric forces have fulfilled their task in their form-bestowing capacity, they become free of the body during the day. At night, however, they once again go into the organs from which they originate.

Rudolf Steiner says in *The Study of Man* [also published as *The Foundations of Human Experience*]³ that children must learn to sleep in the right way. What one thinks and says during the day is of immense importance because when our body-free etheric forces, which we have used for thinking during the day, go into the body again at night, they form and regenerate the body in either a health-giving or unhealthy way, depending.

In the course on Pastoral Medicine⁴, Rudolf Steiner explains that people would sleep less if they knew that they could also “sleep themselves ill”. For everything that we think and say during the day, that we have had in our thoughts, has an effect on our body at night. With thoughts that relate to spiritual and moral qualities, we meet the hierarchies in the spiritual world at night. If the astral body and 'I' do not have this contact with the hierarchies but instead only with demons because the human being fell asleep with violent scenes from television, this has corresponding consequences. Given this situation over time, the human being cannot remain healthy.

Development of Body-Free Capacities

In connection with the emancipation of soul-spiritual forces, Rudolf Steiner uses the wonderful expression “being born”: they are born, set free, put out by the threefold organism that was formed by means of these forces:

- In the first seven-year period, the ether body matures – at the time of the change of teeth the spiritual capacity of body-free thinking is born.
- Between 7 and 14, the astral body matures. This process is rounded off at puberty – then bodyfree feeling, as a soul-capacity, is born.
- Between 14 and 21, the 'I'-organization is freed up – body-free willing, as a soul-spiritual capacity, is born.

When our astral body and our 'I'-organization are “born” from the physical body after puberty at the age of 14 and after coming of age at 21, respectively, they are then ‘extra-somatic’, i.e. out-of-body, for our entire life. In the case of children and youth, we must look quite exactly at how things stand with their constitution in regard to their age.

The development of the body-free capacities can be assigned to the three embryonic formative gestures⁵:

1. Thinking is a formative, proliferating force.
2. Feeling is a differentiating force.
3. Will is an integrating force.

Endorphins, Neurotransmitters and 'I'-Activity [Ego-Activity]

We have seen how the configuration of the higher bodies of the nervous system is conditional upon its constitution bearing the stamp of the spirit. Because it bears the imprint of the spirit, one can find everything that relates to soul and spirit: For every thought one can find neural networking, and a neurotransmitter for every feeling. This is – and must be – the case, and we have understood only a fraction of this complex electro-chemistry that accounts for the physiological constitution of the nervous system. But this is all an outcome, not the cause. The error of materialistic thinking is to believe that it is the endorphins that create feelings of well-being. If one reflects a little and lets the research results speak for themselves, one sees how inaccurate this is. A little example: Music researchers have found out that the reason music is so healthy for children is that singing, instrumental music and artistic speaking of beautiful poems release endorphins. There are now researchers who say that singing is a drug, because it is known that drugs release endorphins. So for this reason they equate singing with being a drug. When we read something like this, we have to look at exactly what is triggered by what.

What can provide orientation in this regard?

I woke up to this theme already in my early years – at the dentist. When one gets an injection, it always contains adrenalin, which causes heart palpitations. I noticed that these artificial palpitations that don't come from me but from the substance, from the adrenalin, let up very quickly if I breathe very calmly.

But there are also people with whom the heart palpitations continue right into the night because they are afraid and maintain this condition for themselves. This varies from person to person, and is thus not just an effect of the substance.

We impress our soul-spiritual activity, our inclinations and predilections, onto the organ.

In therapeutic speech it is particularly crucial that we work via relationship. Relationship opens all doors, everyone breathes more easily, one dares to speak, and the being of the world opens itself to the patient, who is able to create a relationship to the intrinsic nature of the world (see verse at the end of the lecture by Dr. Michaela Glöckler on October 27, 2011, i.e. the lecture preceding this one at the Therapeutic Speech Conference in Dornach). In addition, it is essential to experience the spirit of speech and language, and for it to make sense and be enjoyable. Then one is able to influence the nervous system and 'transform' it to the point that it produces endorphins: When patients feel well, this can help them to get away from medication and drugs. For precisely this reason, therapeutic speech plays a crucial role in drug detoxification, and is, in this, case preferable to drama therapy. Experiencing through language takes the place of

drugs, including psychotropic drugs. It replaces them. Medications manipulate the physical only, and impede soul-spiritual activity. This is the reason why we use these as little as possible in anthroposophical medicine, and call upon the patient's own activity, the activity of the 'I'. For it is this activity that wishes to impress itself in the body.

Threfolding, Configuration of the Subtle Bodies, and Activity of the 'I'

- Our nervous system is the most faithful imprint in the physical of our soul-spiritual activity, and serves at the same time as a reflecting organ for all soul-spiritual activity.
- In the rhythmic system, our physical-etheric constitution is fully incarnated. The astral body is half within and half outside; this goes along with the breath. After the age of 14, the egoorganization is entirely body-free, and makes compassion and empathy possible – an independent, freely synchronized feeling-life.
- In the case of the metabolic-limb system, each of the two areas needs to be considered separately:
- In the metabolic system, all four bodies or sheaths are incarnated and working together lifelong, so long as one is healthy.
- In the limb system, the ego organization, or 'I'-organization, emancipates itself in the course of one's life, and is half within and half outside.

All human cultural development goes back to the emancipation of the 'I' from the limb system: The freer the 'I' becomes – the greater the determination with which even the smallest action is carried out – the greater will be the step in cultural progress. In this regard we are pretty much at the beginning. Freedom is only achieved by working at it, and has to develop. This is not given to us by nature – it is not an achievement of nature – otherwise we would all have it at our disposition.

Rudolf Steiner says that it is the task of eurythmy to bring it about that human beings become capable of dealing with free will. In eurythmy, we practice freeing the ego organization from the limbs, because in doing eurythmy we place ourselves with our 'I' into the etheric world and not into the physical world.

What both systems have in common is the orientation from the periphery toward the center, as the arms and legs are formed from out of the periphery.

II. Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis: an example

What presents itself in the case of a severely neurodegenerative disease such as amyotrophic lateral sclerosis?

This illness is a metabolic disturbance. The metabolism of the nerve cells does not have to do with the imprint quality that makes its mark in the wonderful neural networking, but is instead a part of the cell that is always working – on a small flame, to be sure, because it is, in the etheric sense, the “half dead” organ – the nervous system – and not the vital metabolic system.

In the case of amyotrophic lateral sclerosis there is, on the part of the metabolic-limb system, an attack on the ‘motor’ nerve cells, which gradually perish. In order to grasp these connections, it is important that we understand the motoric and sensory nervous systems well, and not fall into the mistake of thinking that the motoric cortex ‘does’ will-actions and the sensory cortex ‘does’ perception. Instead, we have two ego-centers or ‘I’-centers (see III. The Nervous System – an Organ of Perception), the unconscious peripheral will-organization and the conscious central nerve-organization, between which the nervous system functions as an organ that brings them into relationship with each other. The peripheral destiny-‘I’, or will-‘I’, guides the metabolic-limb activity in a manner that is unconscious to us.

In amyotrophic lateral sclerosis, there is a decision of the peripheral destiny-will-‘I’ to slowly remove itself and to no longer maintain the will part of the nervous system. It dies sooner, while the central consciousness-‘I’ remains fully intact. Thus there is a dissociation of the threefold aspect. Medically speaking, the rhythmic system is not strong enough to sufficiently hold together the will-‘I’ and the nerve-sense-‘I’, and to karmically work through why something is torn asunder here in the center, and why the one part can more or less drift away while the other part experiences everything that much more consciously. This is quite a particular constellation.

What is presenting itself biographically has to be researched individually in each case if the patient wishes to work on it. My experience with these patients is that one is often dealing with patients who are spiritually very differentiated, with whom one has to be very careful when entering this sanctuary.

How can one approach a clinical situation of this kind with therapeutic speech?

For the pathway of therapeutic speech, it is essential that one make clear to oneself that speech has its home in the middle sphere of the human being, where the two worlds come together and connect in a free space. The will-‘I’ works via the metabolism into the blood. The conscious nerve-sense-‘I’ works via the breath and meets the blood in the rhythmic system. Between the two, where feeling has its home – between will and thinking, and with regard to the rhythmic system – a wonderful free space arises that makes it possible for me to begin to really hear, to weigh up whether I want to speak, or whether I am going to accept something or reject it. This is the actual space of speech formation [also known as ‘creative speech’, ‘the art of speech’, ‘the art of the spoken word’]. For a patient with amyotrophic lateral sclerosis to experience this sacred middle as a realm of freedom for two to three years before his death would surely be something wonderful. Sometimes the illness draws out longer than this.

It is quite a particular initiation through life when one dies in regard to an active life of movement, when the will of destiny says “stop”, when karma seems to stop and no longer allows outer action. Motor activity is increasingly excluded, but the patient remains fully conscious in this process. The task is to concentrate on perception, internalizing, meeting. Every illness helps the human being to focus on something that he would not otherwise take up by choice. Rudolf Steiner designates illness as a “gift of the Father God for the adjusting

[balancing out] of karma” – one could not say this more beautifully. We therapists must in fact live in these images and ask ourselves: What is the nature of the gift in this case?

One cannot speak about this, but one may divine – have a sense of – this gift, this destiny-learning. When we go to a patient of this ‘school’, we should be ensouled with this feeling: If I would only manage to bring to experience this sacred freedom, to stimulate in every encounter of every session this free play of the middle in speaking and hearing, in forming, creating, fashioning, configuring, so that the patient becomes really quite aware of how precious this balancing middle is! This mind-set should resonate in the way in which one seeks and finds what one is going to work with, and in the way one practices with the patient. One will then find what is right for each individual patient.

Faced with this incurable and terminal illness, one cannot have the goal of healing in the usual sense. This would be too limited in our understanding. But the goal could be to offer to this incredibly strong consciousness – which the will-person lacks – something that brings this person as strongly as possible into the middle: something that he enjoys, with which he can enter into relationship, with which he can fully engage with his consciousness, and experience himself as a breathing, speaking, living, active person. The medicinal remedies will then work better and his life will last longer. When one accompanies this illness in a human way, it becomes quite a particular path on which every day that one lives is worth it, as is every step that one takes together.

III. Therapeutic Speech, the Subtle Bodies, and Threefoldness

Our soul life consists of thinking, feeling and will. The will is differentiated into free, voluntary will that comes from the limbs, and our unconscious will that is impulse-driven, and comes from the blood and metabolism.

In regard to the sheaths or subtle bodies, we should distinguish the following in therapeutic speech:

1. Do I want to appeal more to thinking, to bring health to the etheric imprint, by working via the meaning of language – or
2. Do I want to have an effect, via hearing, on the capacity to differentiate?

Effect on the Physical via Movement and Activity of the Senses

This is what we are after in the case of disorders involving the ability to distinguish speech sounds in early childhood or when there is a motoric speech disability such as an articulatory disorder. Here we have to work strongly with hearing, with movement, with differentiating, with the qualities that pave the way for speech development, and not primarily with substantive meaning.

Effect on the Etheric via Thinking and Meaning

By way of the meaning of language one can reach the etheric and work in a way that furthers 'imprinting', so that there is a healing effect during the night, because every good thought, every true word, becomes an effectively healing force via the etheric body that has assimilated it. When we do an exercise of this kind five times, the ether body rejoices. Why? Because it lives wholly in repetition. 'Only once is not at all' is the rule of the etheric. Anything that we do only once cannot reach the etheric body. Only what is done repeatedly imprints itself and can have a healing effect.

Effect on the Astral Body via the Rhythmic System

When it is a question of the prevention or healing of neurogenic and/or degenerative illnesses, the nervous system needs the assistance of the metabolism. The best prevention in regard to Alzheimer's and neuro-degenerative illnesses is to activate the weakened will that no longer sufficiently penetrates the nerve cells, and that no longer adequately supports them metabolically. In this way, we need to bring this will aspect of the human being to delight in life, relationship, the spoken word, and movement. We must help the metabolism to connect more strongly with the rhythmic system and the world of feeling. By means of the spoken word, one can come into an intensive relationship with a person by appealing to his feeling life and by choosing a beautiful text to work with. Children, for example, love the language of Dr. Seuss: simple, linguistically rich verses that are playful and sound funny. An example in German: the Bli-Bla-Blu verses⁶ by Alfred Baur. The text one chooses can be beautiful, joyous, funny, but also sad, meaningful, profound and serious. One can appeal to the rhythmic system by way of the full gamut of feelings, and can influence it already in how one chooses therapeutic material.

Disorders of the rhythmic system are related to the so-called neurotransmitter-metabolism and to electro-chemistry. Everything that is conducted via the nerves on hormonal or electrical pathways can be reached directly via feeling, because feeling regulates neurotransmitters and modifies them, in the sense that one can free a person from a gloomy mood by saying: "Come on, we're going! Leave everything as is – we're going to do something else now!" Why does he feel different after a while? Because within half an hour the neurotransmitters have been completely 're-educated' by feeling. If one would check the levels, one would see a measurable difference.

Effect on the 'I' via the Limbs

When one addresses the 'I' directly through drama, movement, gymnastic exercises or the six basic gestures (used also in therapeutic speech), one reaches the limb organism of the human being, and can connect it more strongly to the rhythmic system.

Effect of Meditation on the Threefold Human Being

Meditation is so healthy because we thereby retune ourselves. We can pull ourselves out of everyday life three times a day. These three times do us good because this has an influence on all three members of our soul:

- the first time, it takes hold of thinking
- the second time it has already become a rhythm
- the third time one has to make an effort because one says to oneself: I've already done it twice. This challenges the will.

In this way one has taken hold of the threefold human being. In the morning, we are more accessible intellectually; at midday we are more disposed to sleepiness and to our feeling life, and in the evening more artistically disposed: we're in the mood for doing something, and go out even when we're tired.

In this way one can align the meditative work in accordance with the threefold organism:

- The review in the evening is a will activity.
- At midday, feeling and the sense of life can be addressed through beauty, through what one treasures most, such as one's nicest memories.
- In the morning, one should concern oneself with a meaningful, essential thought.

However one configures this, it becomes a health-giving force at night.

The Role of the 'I' in Shaping the Threefold Organism

I hope that it has become clear that we accompany this threefold formative process with our 'I'. During childhood, up to the 14th or 15th year, building up the constitution on the physical-etheric-astral level has to take place. For this is what brings the 'I' into balance and harmonizes it as an integrating force between the ages of 14 and 21. At the age of 14, 15, 16, we reach 'earthly maturity', sexual maturity. If we were animals, we would all begin to procreate at this time. The human being is the only being whose individual development – individuation – is just beginning at the age of sexual maturity. The body matures further until the age of 20 or 21. It is only from this point on that we become responsible 'I' beings. Thus we can optimally imagine that the 'I' merely accompanies this body-forming process up until the time of earthly maturity, when the human being has the capacity to reproduce. When this has taken place, and thinking and feeling – these strong formative forces of the etheric and astral sheaths – have been freed from the body, only then, in the third seven-year period, can the ego-organization or 'I'organization carefully complete the forming of the body and finally withdraw from the body as free will. Thus the body is the threefold instrument upon which the 'I' plays. The 'I' has the last word, but not the first, and not in regard to what forms the constitution.

It is the 'I' that makes the body into a human body in the first, second and third years of life: through attaining uprightness, the acquisition of language, and learning to think by oneself. This

cultural triad takes place thanks to sheer 'I'-activity. According to genetics to date, the ability to walk, speak and think is not inherited. This can be acquired only through imitation. All 'I'-culture, all human culture that is based on walking, speaking, and thinking, is an individual accomplishment of the 'I', a melody played upon the threefold organism. This threefold organism, however, does not stem from the 'I' but from the wisdom of creation.

Since one always works via the 'I' in anthroposophic therapeutic speech, we can see that speech is the instrument that is closest to the 'I'. Through speech and language one can always reach the 'I' of another individual, and can always give patients the possibility to engage via one of the aspects of the threefold organism, regardless of their illness.

Speech Therapy as Future-Therapy

The therapeutic principle of the art of the spoken word is joy in speaking and love of language. Speech is the instrument by which we build up our own identity and bring it to expression, and enliven our 'I'. If we ask ourselves what is most important in life, the replies would end up being meager if we could only have thoughts about this, but no words. We want to put into words what is essential, so that it has meaning for us. When we have words for something, we have a human connection to it. Thinking is universal; speaking is individual. Rudolf Steiner gives us 'truth-wrought' verses, or words conveying truth, for our relationship to truth. He also gives us processes, methods and means of practice, such as eurythmy and the art of speech [or creative speech, speech formation], so that we can build a loving relationship to these words and learn to discover our humanity in them.

Seen in this way, therapeutic speech is future-therapy. If in the next ten years we continue to thoroughly cultivate and work through what we have in therapeutic speech, and learn to teach it in a qualified and professional way, it will be discovered anew, also in terms of its possibilities that lead into the future. This can't be otherwise. We should be well-prepared for this.

Speech Therapy for Neurological Problems in Elders

In view of neurological problems that often arise toward the end of life, the question arises: Where should one begin? Should one bring elder individuals into activity? Should one not rather allow them more of their own space?

There are very different feelings and experiences in this regard. The question 'What can I do with this older person?' asks of us, to begin with, that we perceive – intensively perceive – the person, and, in perceiving, that we bring about a relationship to him by means of the question 'What would you like me to do for you?'

1. Becoming total awareness:

The first step in every good therapeutic speech endeavor is to become totally ear, fully perception for the other. When one sees that an aged person is sitting there entirely absorbed in himself, perhaps because he is suffering from an involution depression or an advanced stage of Alzheimer's, talking does nothing. In such a case, it is important to sense that the person is already completely in his own world. One simply approaches, perceives, and hears.

We make our way into the first stage of speech development: getting a sense of what's what, finding uprightness via all of the senses, experiencing the space in which we are, i.e. I try to experience the other. I try to find out whether he likes proximity. This is something I have to sense. Many people like when one sits down very close to them and is quiet to begin with. Or that one touches the person's hand, touches the back of the hand, takes the person's hand. It is about really sensing the reaction, and whether one is of benefit to the other – and always out of the attitude: Not my will, but Thy will be done. For with this attitude, we bring about a contact on the level of the will, from metabolism to metabolism: What does your peripheral 'I' want? I am an offering, a space, readiness, without taking up space myself. I create space. Through the intuitive connection, I can be inspired by the other: He lets me know instantly what he wants. But we often don't notice it because we're 'so bent out of shape'. If we're open, we know intuitively what the next step is, and can completely rely on our intuition.

Steiner wanted a teacher to be well-prepared for a lesson, but to forget everything when arriving at the door and to first just perceive the students, and to shape the lesson out of this perception.

This applies to therapy as well. Sometimes a therapeutic speech session is also about standing at the window together and looking at what's outside. The first step is awareness and perception, and only then can the spoken word convey and mediate.

2. The spoken word as communicator:

Is the contact already good enough that one can begin to speak, that one can meet each other, that the spoken word can convey something? What can we communicate to each other? We can tell each other something, we can ask, answer, hear.

3. Forming the spoken word together:

What can we form together? Something can be formed out of the impulse to communicate. Everything that builds up the nervous system has a beneficial effect in therapy. The nervous system is built up when it is used well, i.e. when one observes well, hears well, fully concentrates on something. When something is repeated and deepened and something is experienced in the process, the nerve endings 'sprout'.

These three phases need to be well differentiated, and are valid at every stage of life.

IV. Speech Therapy in Cases of Loss of Autonomy and in Palliative Care

Why is it that a person who is ill often cannot help himself by doing these exercises on his own? This is a developmental mystery of the 'I'. We know from physiology that children and youth need the proximity and presence of other people: they need someone to be there, to come into conversation with them, to be a point of orientation for them. Until the age of 19 or 20, the human being needs other people until he has grown and become autonomous in all areas. In the case of someone who is ill, this autonomy is always affected. Whenever autonomy – the 'I' – is affected in this way, the law of development comes into play again. In the areas in which there is a deficit of autonomy, the presence and nearness of another person becomes necessary,

until the individual becomes totally autonomous again and can do everything himself. Yet one should only be of assistance and help until the individual can take things in hand again. It is usually not very helpful to say to the patient: Do observation exercises! Or: Meditate this verse. A suggestion of this kind is seldom taken up right away.

As therapists working with therapeutic speech, we must accompany the patient attentively, and do observation exercises with him that strengthen him for finding his way back to autonomy. Observation exercises are exercises that prepare for speaking. In doing them, we discover and experience, we come into relationship, we name, think, and identify. Movement, speech and meaning slowly lead to developing identity again through the world and for the world. The instrument for this is the nervous system.

But what about when this access via the nervous system is no longer intact, as in the case of a patient in a coma, for example?

I see a tremendous future for speech therapy in hospice work, in accompanying the dying process, and in palliative medicine for bed-ridden intensive-care patients, for example those in a so-called artificial coma. In this case, the astral body and 'I' have been driven out of the body by medication; they have been drawn out of the nervous system and cannot approach.

Anesthetics always alter the bio-chemistry of the nervous system, so that the etheric body cannot be reflected by it because the nerve-metabolism has been changed by the anesthetic. When, in addition, blood pressure medications have been given, the 'I' is far away also in regard to the rhythmic system, and the astral body doesn't have the possibility to maintain the blood's own pulse and rhythm. All in all, this is a situation that is quite removed from the 'I'.

When someone is in a natural coma due to damage to the nervous system but the person's vital signs are strong, one has to assume that he is present.

When one knows the spiritual interests the patient had, what he was involved in in life, one can quietly read related material as one would read to someone who has died: very slowly, calmly, meaningfully, yet also full of experience, as one learns to do in the art of speech – as well and as beautifully as one can. This can be a tremendous experience for the patient, a spiritual medicine, an experience of being taken seriously on a spiritual level, for he is lingering between two worlds. Sometimes a person who is already no longer present can seem to come in again for a short time.

Given what is today sometimes a drawn-out process of dying, we are in a situation in which people in our materialistic age may live into the spiritual world slowly, while a number of friends and family members are able to experience this and to learn how to accompany this in a right way. We have a big task in this area. Also here, on this side, a lot of encounter and meeting each other should still take place on the human level and, wherever possible, also on the spiritual level. Encounters of this kind can best be shaped by means of dealing consciously with the spoken word.

With regard to therapeutic speech, it is necessary to be conscious of the wholeness of the surroundings out of which speech arises:

- How speech is formed in childhood out of movement, out of structuring, out of the relationship to the world, out of the need to react and to name.

- How words – through thinking – become carriers of meaning.
- How the need arises to communicate via meaning.
- How – out of the human being's need to develop, to form, to become healthy – the word becomes a bridge into the spiritual world: the meditative and ritualistic word; the word that summons spiritual essence and being.

The roll of sense perception in the acquisition of speech – particularly the sense of hearing – , the role played by motor activity in speech development, and the role played by the nervous system – the brain and its significance for reflective thinking: these three – hearing, practicing and thinking – mirror the three core motifs of our Rosicrucian culture:

1. The sense world is our world given by the Father God.
2. The world of practice, of movement, of experience and feeling is our world of the Son.
3. The world that gives meaning and perspective is the Resurrection-world, into which we awaken in the spirit to what the word carries, and to what incarnates in the Word.

* As one of the artistic therapies founded in anthroposophy, anthroposophic therapeutic speech engages the activity of the individual, specifically with the life and qualities of the spoken word. In this way, the artistic components of the art of the spoken word can work therapeutically in the life of an individual dealing with illness, constitutional issues, or developmental challenges, some of which may or may not also manifest as a speech disorder, whereas traditional speech therapy addresses speech challenges per se.

¹ This is the second of two lectures held at the Conference for Therapeutic Speech on October 27, 2011 at the Goetheanum, Dornach

² First lecture (April 11, 1921) in Anthroposophical Spiritual Science and Medical Therapy. Mercury Press, 1991. German bibliography no. 313

³ German bibliography no. 293

⁴ German bibliography no. 318

⁵ See preceding lecture by Michaela Glöckler

⁶ Published by Mellinger; in German only.

Translation: Helen Lubin

Speech Development from Spiritual-Scientific and Neurological Perspectives¹

Dr. med. Michaela Glöckler
at the Conference on Therapeutic Speech Formation 2011

There is hardly another part of the human being about which so much is currently being written and discussed as the nervous system. Everything that is determining for our life ethically, but also in terms of our understanding of the human being, is tied to this organic function. This is because we see the nervous system as responsible for everything the human being does: first of all for thinking, but also for our feeling life and for the will. Our nervous system, as a sensorymotor complex, is seen as responsible for everything. For this reason, our life is regarded as worth living only if our nervous system is intact.

Given this backdrop, we can understand Rudolf Steiner's statement that the whole of social life, human intercourse and the value of life are all influenced by this, in so far as one is of the opinion that the human being is a product of his nervous system and that this nervous system is the outcome of a person's genetic disposition in combination with what has transpired in the environment. This perspective results in a picture of the human being based on a totally materialistic understanding. One reduces a person to his nervous system that, seen from a purely material perspective, is formed from a basic genetic configuration – without looking at the being who forms, uses, and one day lets go of this nervous system. This can be clarified with a short case history.

A nine-year-old girl came down with the measles and, with severe symptoms, was brought to a clinic. Due to measles-encephalitis, one of the rarest and worst complications of measles, she quickly lost consciousness. The parents were given permission to look after the child around the clock. For three weeks she was in a coma caused by the illness, and then slowly woke up again, began to get better, was discharged and in half a year her health was fully restored. One evening, during her bedtime ritual, when a song was always sung, she asked her mother: "Mama, when will you sing me that beautiful song again that you once sung to me in the hospital?" The mother proceeded to sing all of the songs that she had sung at the time, but the desired song wasn't one of them. Now the mother was stumped, until it occurred to her that one night, when she was in total despair and didn't know what to do anymore, she sung a hit song from her youth – a touching, sentimental song about death, love and loneliness. She hummed the melody and her daughter began to beam and said: "Yes, that's the one!"

Out-of-Body Experience from an anthroposophical perspective

I am telling you this story because the singing of this song brought about a process that belongs to the riddles of the nervous system. This is a riddle that modern research and science are up against because many patients speak of it, yet it cannot be explained on the basis of the physiology of the brain.

On the basis of anthroposophy, we can clearly explain so-called out-of-body experience – the fact that one incarnates as death approaches. The etheric body is loosened, and the astral body and ‘I’ are closely connected with this etheric body. The etheric body doesn’t disengage entirely from the physical body, yet far enough so that the review of one’s life begins and the individual sees the body, with which it was connected, from outside. In this process, he perceives the entire surroundings. This perceptual capacity is an encompassing one; one is entirely in the periphery, but there is still a connection to the body. In this review of one’s life, one sees one’s life as a panorama, while also being aware of the current situation, such as how one’s body is surrounded by people attending to it. Many people who were out of body due to anesthesia during an operation have forgotten their supersensible experiences once they come back – due to the medication. Most have no recollection, but 10-20% of heart patients, for example, do remember. They have recently begun to be asked about this, and one learns more and more how one must ask in order for the memory to suddenly come back.

The girl who was mentioned had forgotten everything. Half a year passed before some sound reminded her of the song and it suddenly occurred to her that her mother had sung it during her illness. This opened the door to her out-of-body experience during this time. One has to bump up against something sensory in order for what was a sensory experience to become a memory, quasi mirrored back by the consciousness by which the nervous system is supported. For this girl, the song was the doorway to her out-of-body experience. Her mother did exactly the right thing in this situation: She simply sang the song, and the entire atmosphere came alive again, also for the mother. Then she asked: “I thought you were fast asleep. How could you hear it? How could you remember?” At this, the girl reacted with astonishment: “But Mama, didn’t you notice how I was accompanying and comforting you? I was there the whole time.” Now the mother asked: “How do you mean that?” Through her questions, she was helping the child more and more to open up her consciousness. Thus the little girl told her that she had found it particularly exciting when the mother went with her blood from the intensive care unit to the laboratory, and described the entire way there and back. “I was there the whole time!” In today’s ethics and understanding of the nervous system, the enigma of these kinds of experiences is not yet accepted and integrated into the existing views.

I. Foundations for Brain Development

Formative Spirit

The human being forms his own body, as Friedrich Schiller, who was also a physician [besides a poet and playwright], says in his dramatic work *Wallenstein*: “It is the spirit that forms the body.” Or, as Leonardo da Vinci puts it in relation to the artist²: The inexperienced artist wouldn’t know that he reproduces himself, painting his own state of being. The experienced artist, by contrast, would be in a position, with the help of the forces of his own being – Leonardo da Vinci speaks of the “soul” – to give artistic form to objective elements. This would be the soul forming the body. If the human being would begin to work artistically, he would make a copy of himself. This is the reason why one fashions and forms oneself. In painting therapy, ‘diagnostic painting’ is based on this fact: We can read the pathology in the picture.

This is also the case with children's drawings. The drawings reveal the state of development, because children always draw themselves. But also in earlier times, before these concepts existed, great artists instinctively knew of these connections. The eternal element in us, our astral body and our etheric body form the physical body. When an organ is damaged, especially something as central as the nervous system, the spirit or mind is still alive, active and 'there', but the organ is no longer in a position to mediate between the activity of the spirit/mind and the environment. For the nervous system is primarily a junction, a place of interface, whose task is to mediate.

The Brain as an Organ of Relationship

Neurobiologist and neurophysiologist Thomas Fuchs of Heidelberg has written a book called *Das Gehirn – ein Beziehungsorgan* [The Brain – an Organ of Relationship; not translated]. He calls for a paradigm shift in today's neurophysiology when he says that the picture that one has of the nervous system in modern medicine, and which is based on genes, is incorrect. There are, he says, many experiments that substantiate this, so that this view should not be maintained. Thomas Fuchs, who is not an anthroposophist, speaks only of what he has researched himself. He shows in his book that the brain is constantly creating relationships lifelong, and that it forms itself solely on this basis. In a podium discussion I pointed to the fact that relationship is of a supersensible, soul-spiritual nature. He admitted that he doesn't yet have any clear concepts for this, and that this is not yet thinkable for him in his scientific context. Yet, he said, he could already say – and would limit himself to this – that what is of a soul and spiritual nature is also an expression of living processes. For him, life is relationship in an encompassing sense: spiritual life, soul life, bodily life – he didn't differentiate these, to begin with. Life is thus the epitome of a multi-configured relationship to the surroundings, nourished by reciprocal awareness, and the nervous system is in the service of this awareness. It is the organ of communication and relationship par excellence.

Speech and Brain

These connections form the bridge to speech. Speech is the main feature of communication and relationship in our life, and therefore has very much to do with the brain. Speech has a very strong relation to the brain.

In cases of peripheral or central damage to the nervous system, patients are often of the opinion that everything's no good now because the nerves are kaput. But nerves form throughout life; they have lifelong plasticity and can continue to assimilate and maintain relationships, as well as bring them to consciousness. They can react to relationships and can form relationships – on the organic level, but also with the corresponding consciousnesscorrelate.

Speaking, Remembering, IQ

An initial research result regarding our theme comes from Wellcome Trust Center for Neuroimaging of the University of London. This has to do with the research branch of neuroimagination. Teenagers were examined with regard to the role played by neuroimagination

in speaking and remembering. IQ was measured, whereby one measures recall capacity, speech faculties and tactile intelligence. These are all brain tests covering motor activity, sensory activity and memory. The participants were tested and retested throughout the whole of puberty. To the great surprise of the researchers, it was found that there was an extreme change in IQ between pre-puberty – nine years old – and full puberty at the age of 14 and 15. Children who had very low IQs at the age of nine, for example in verbal skills, had peak IQs after puberty. The same thing applied to memory. It was noted that IQ development took a very individual course, and that no predictions could be made: When a nine-year-old is like this and this, one cannot say that he or she will be like such and such later on. As anthroposophists we'd say: Of course! In puberty the individual element first begins to take effect. This opens up entirely new opportunities. How a teenager develops further depends very much on the surroundings. Puberty is a precarious age. The reasons the researchers were very surprised about their results was because current doctrine in neurology says that a person has one and the same IQ for life: one is either intelligent or stupid.

“An increase in verbal IQ, i.e. in language intelligence and memory intelligence thus correlates with an increase in the density of gray matter.”

They measured not only IQ but also brain mass, which can be done very well today with the help of MRI and other neuro-diagnostic imaging techniques. In this way it was determined that during puberty not only do numerous nerve cells die, but that the gray matter becomes larger and other areas become active, and that numerous new nerve processes [axons and dendrites] are formed – which means that the core nerve substance is continuously changing. This wasn't known before. There are only a few areas of the brain in which nerve cells are still reproduced from embryonic cells throughout life. These are the exception. As a rule, one has one's basic configuration. But this develops further, also with regard to size. It was observed that the further development of this gray matter takes place particularly in the course of speech development, which contributes a lot toward an improvement or decline in IQ. This fluctuation in IQ cannot be explained from a scientific perspective. It is discussed in terms of children being early or late developers.

“Besides this, scientists also see indications that the brain does in fact remain malleable throughout life and is constantly able to accommodate itself to new challenges.”

If the challenges are of a negative kind, the child withdraws, becoming weaker in what he is able to achieve. If the child is challenged positively, exactly the opposite takes place. The brain is an organ of relationship, it accommodates lifelong – it mediates.

Seeing and the Etheric Body

Naturally, it is not only the brain that is involved in bringing about relationships, because who is it that shapes and makes use of these relationships? It is the soul-spiritual human being. From an anthroposophical perspective, the brain faithfully bears the stamp of these relationships and forms itself accordingly. It is the imprint or replica of supersensible perceptions, and thereby forms the organs. In *Study of Man*³ [also published as *Foundations of Human Experience*] Rudolf Steiner describes the process of seeing from the perspective of natural science. In summary, he

says: The eye is an apparatus based on physics, configured – right down into the lawfulness of the refraction of light – so as to refract and focus the light entering the eye.⁴

It is built like a camera, with a lens and camera obscura – but this is only one aspect. The other is the fact that there is only very little life-sustaining etheric force in the physical nature of the eyes. It is for this reason that, seen in terms of the physical and physics-related attributes, they are so easily injured and tire so easily, and we always have to allow them to regenerate again and again. We keep closing them briefly – when we blink. The greater part of the etheric of the eye is quite loosened and body-free. It reaches out like a polyp or tentacle, and ‘touches’ everything in a sensing way. Our eyes always wander back and forth in the process of seeing. The etheric body is like a ray that touches and makes an image of everything, in fact replicates. With the help of mirror neurons, which have meanwhile been researched, this image can be held and, in turn, mirrored into consciousness via the nervous system. We do perceive also supersensibly: we see with our ether body, and the nervous system and eyes are the instruments for this. They are merely the intermediaries.

Rudolf Steiner’s definition of a sense, on which he built what he has taught us about the senses, can be read in Anthroposophy (A Fragment) of 1910: “In the light of anthroposophy, everything can be called a sense that gives the human being occasion to recognize the existence of an object, being or process in such a way that he is justified in placing this existence in the physical world.”⁵

It is essentially defining for our twelve senses that, when we engage them, we know at the same time that this is not a supersensible perception but that we are perceiving something of which we know that it is sensory, physical, present, verifiable. Today we would say that it is “intersubjectively verifiable”. If I see it, so do you. All other perceptions are supersensible. Thus the sense organs are also organs that give one the possibility to know that something is there in the physical.

This is a terrific definition. If one further pursues the path of Thomas Fuchs, one will be able to read about the organic correlates of the senses not only in anthroposophical books. One will come to understand and be able to acknowledge the twelve senses and their organs also from a mainstream medical perspective.

Laterality and Writing with the Right Hand

A second research result that is important for our topic relates to the laterality of right and left. In the lectures of April 6, 1923⁶ and May 2⁷, 1923, Rudolf Steiner speaks of lateralization and mentions how the left and right hemispheres of the brain are differentiated. Our brain has two hemispheres and, in the middle, the sulcus – a fissure. In Steiner’s time – and something of this is represented in the two lectures mentioned – one was of the opinion that speaking is directly related to writing, and that, if one writes with one’s right hand, the speech center is in the left hemisphere. In the case of left-handed individual’s, it was believed to be on the other side. Rudolf Steiner links up with the knowledge of the times in order to make himself understood by his contemporaries. His view that one should help children to write with the right hand is also in accord with today’s research. He never spoke of converting, but only of learning to write with the

right hand; everything else could be done with the left. Writing with the right hand really is helpful, good and important, even if there are authors from time to time who assert the opposite, and with as much emotion and engagement as I myself. The basis for this debate is a vast topic of its own.

Right and Left Hemisphere

To understand the nervous system, it is important to know that the right hemisphere is strongly connected with the eyes. This hemisphere processes optical and spatial experiences. If a person is blind, it is connected with the area of touch. The right hemisphere is a space-hemisphere, an imaginative sphere, a primal, archetypal image-furnishing and image-bearing hemisphere. It is first developed during childhood, when its development is favored. Or put differently: The left hemisphere takes longer to develop. Specific lateralization to left-handedness or righthandedness comes about between six and eight years of age. Mixed or cross-dominance can be attributed to underdevelopment. At the age of five, one is still ambidextrous and usually not yet lateralized.

One could even remove one of the hemispheres of a five-year-old, and the child would hardly have any neurological deficiencies because everything is still so malleable and interconnected – but also because spatial capacities remain intact or are quickly “carried over”, since the entire brain takes part in the structuring of the right hemisphere, just as the entire brain is subsequently involved in the structuring of the left hemisphere. In a middle phase, it is decided what remains on the right and what on the left. This is a highly dynamic process.

What is decisive for us is that

- space, image, imagination, creativity and wholeness belong to the right half of the brain.
- time, analysis, differentiation, speech/language acquisition, music acquisition, sound acquisition and everything else related to this belong to the left half of the brain.

Thus we have at our disposition a pictorial, outwardly-directed perceptual capacity and a nonpictorial, inward-directed inspirational perceptual capacity.

Why did Rudolf Steiner want one to pay attention to orthography starting at the age of nine, when the decision has been made between right and left, and, up until then, to let children write what they hear, without being fastidious about spelling? This has to do with the fact that the left hemisphere needs more time for its development than does the right. If it is overly stimulated and challenged too early, for example by orthographic precision, something of the capacities of the right hemisphere are suppressed – capacities that account for the holistic, imaginative, one can also say spiritual, complex, structuring, creative perceptual potential. If the right hemisphere is suppressed too early, this results in a development in the direction of analysis, abstract thinking, lack of pictorial qualities, aridity.

Effects of Writing with the Left-Hand

When an analytical quality is quasi imposed on the right hemisphere of the brain due to writing with the left hand, a wrong impulse likewise takes effect on this hemisphere and needs to be worked through there. For this reason, it is of no help to let the child write with the left hand. However, artistic painting, everything imaginative, creative puzzles and activities that promote dexterity don't disturb the development of the right hemisphere because they are suited to it and even further eye-hand coordination, i.e. they support spatial development. This precise information has been available to us only for about the last 25 years, since the availability of modern imaging techniques. In this way, Rudolf Steiner's indications to further crossdominance by trying to strengthen the weaker side with corresponding exercises acquire new significance.

II. Embryonic Development

In the third week of embryonic development, one sees the embryo for the first time as a bilaminar, and very soon thereafter as a trilaminar embryonic disk. In the fourth week this germinal disk configures itself wonderfully into a double-folded surface – the archetypal form of the etheric – concave and convex. The sheaths surrounding the body stalk allow the delicate embryo to swim in its watery sheaths. We now clearly see that a center is being formed within a large peripheral surrounding. This center has an outer cell layer, the so-called ectoderm, and an inner cell layer, the so-called endoderm, from which the organs of the metabolic organs are formed. All of the nerves and sense organs are formed from the ectoderm. The embryonic formative gesture and development, the entire imparting of form, is determined by the nervous system. It is the largest and most powerful, potent organ. When one looks at the embryo at the end of the second month, it forms a circle, and all of the organs are already there in their beginnings. No one understands why the embryo curves itself at four weeks. It would have ample space to stretch itself out. Prior to this, it is wonderfully outstretched. Why doesn't it just continue like this – hovering, floating? Why not?

The embryo forms a “human circle”, says Rudolf Steiner, so that the cosmic forces, the zodiacal forces, can work in from all sides, imprinting and forming the embryo.

In the first two months, we speak of embryogenesis, the formative phase of the embryo. Today one knows that in embryogenesis all of the organs become established, as far as their form is concerned. It is for this reason that the severest gestational deformities can come about due to infection or, for example, to extreme and regular alcohol consumption during this phase. These kinds of embryonic deformities arise on in the first two to two and a half months.

The Fetal Phase

After the second month, we speak of the fetal period. The embryo has now become a fetus. The organs are already formed. At this stage there may be abnormalities in how an organ matures, but not any more in the actual formation of the organ as a whole. The fetus just continues to

grow and to shape its organs. The nervous system sets the pace for the entire process of shaping and forming. It is the largest, most prominent organ.

There are three embryonic formative gestures:

- A first gesture is the purely etheric one. The technical term is “proliferation”. Proliferation means the forming of new cells, i.e. growth.
- The second gesture is differentiation. Each cell becomes differentiated, specialized. For example, the forming of the hand takes place as follows: The first preliminary stage that gives rise to the fingers and hand is just a disk. To begin with, this disk first curves and then forms deep indentations from the periphery, until in the end the hand is formed. This involves a distinct process of differentiation, which is integrated with the process of proliferation.
- The third gesture is integration. This involves a process of integration that ensures that the fingers, for example, are later a proportional fit with the arm and the overall structure.

What it looks like when the human being has not yet completed the integration phase can be seen most clearly during puberty. The overall build is not yet harmonious: long legs, narrow trunk, retracted shoulders, giant-sized feet – not really beautiful. The wonderful last part of the maturing process, until the adolescent is fully grown, is for the purpose of integration: The growth forces of the ether body have done their work and already freed themselves; the astral body has completed the process of differentiation and has also freed itself; and now it is only the ‘I-organization’ that is still at work as an integrating force, harmonizing the whole.

In summary, the three formative gestures:

- the etheric body proliferates, allowing for growth;
- the astral body differentiates and forms intervals, analyses sequences and proportions;
- and the ‘I-organization’ integrates.

Speech-Forming Processes and the Working of the Finer Bodies

We find the three gestures again in how the finer bodies work together in the art of speech [a.k.a. speech formation or creative speech]. The etheric organism is responsible for the possibility of forming speech. There can be disorders in which the speech organs and the ability to form sounds are affected. But forming sounds is not yet speaking. Animals can also create sounds, but this isn’t “speaking”.

Spoken language requires the ability to structure and to analyze – the ability to differentiate sounds, and to form each sound separately. This is an impulse of the astral body. But it is the ‘I’ that speaks and that plays upon this claviature of etheric potential and astral differentiation, bringing into being a wonderful and differentiated whole. Speech has its seat in the astral body, and receives from the etheric the possibility to shape. The ‘I’ has the task to come into relationship with itself, with God and with the surrounding world by means of this instrument, in order to become a speaking being.

Accordingly, we have three characteristic traits in regard to the finer bodies:

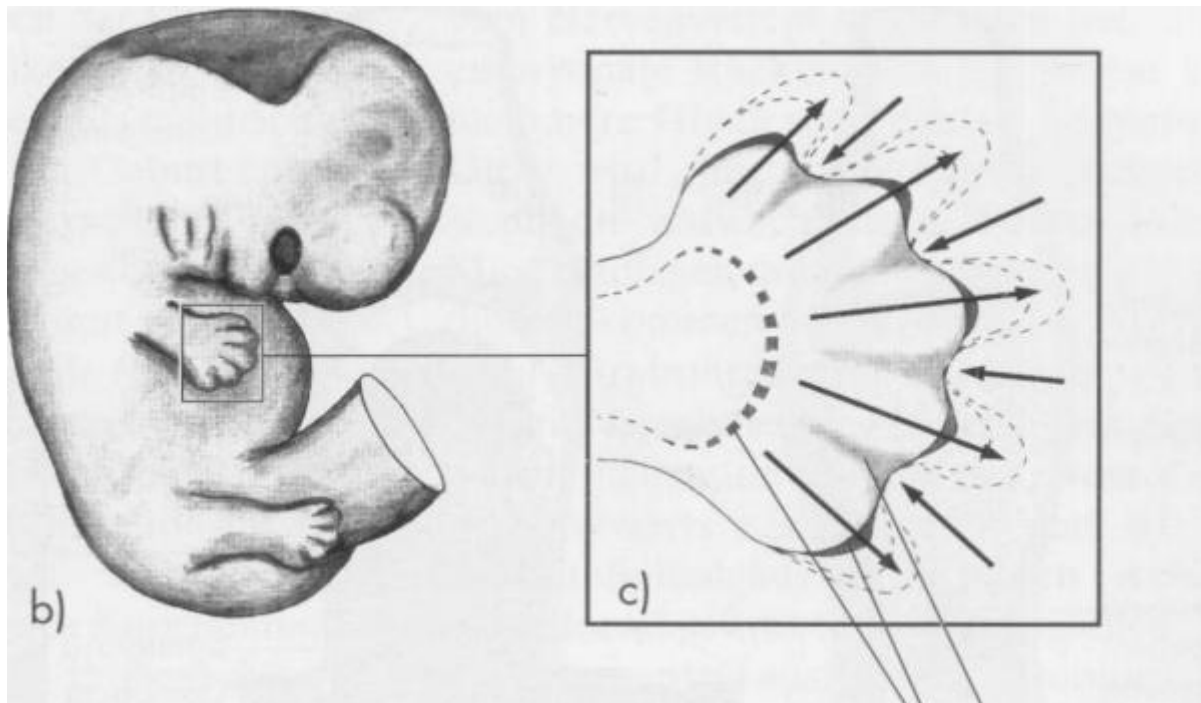
- The capacity to recognize and form larger connections – with the danger of mixing up specific details and not correctly cognizing them because one can't analyze. (Ether body)
- The capacity to clearly structure and analyze, thereby creating word- and sound-connections; i.e. the ability to create and recognize small combinations and relationships, right down to fragments and syllables. (Astral body)
- The capacity to coordinate the whole in such a way as to deal with it as an instrument at the disposition of the 'I'. It is an enormous job for the 'I' to hold sway without being "bothered" by the lower finer bodies' too strong tendencies of their own.

These three "building sites" are ongoing throughout our development.

Polar Growth of Nerves and Limbs

Embryology provides us with a "read" on the formative growth gesture of the limbs-pole and of the nerve-pole. At the beginning of the fifth week of embryogenesis we have the beginning of the development of the limbs. We see something like tiny bulges or buds sprouting and pushing themselves out. Then small invaginations begin to form from the periphery, which dig deeper into the limbs that are pushing themselves out, until the hand has formed itself. Then comes the lower arm; following this, the upper arm is slowly formed, and at the end of the second month the entire arm is there. Hands and feet, arms and legs – all grow from the outside inward. The first thing to appear is at the periphery, not yet structured, purely etheric. This is followed by a differentiating impulse: the fingers become articulated, and finally the parts are integrated into the whole, creating an instrument that fits the body.





Ectodermal ridge Necrotic zone
ridge

Illustrations: Development of the hand, starting with a plate-like beginning, whose ectodermal thickened edges induce the development of the fingers. The inter-digital necrotic zones have been marked (wedge-shaped, shaded areas).⁸

The forming of the nervous system takes place in a fashion that is polar to these three formative gestures: The nervous system forms itself from the inside outward, in an evagination process. By contrast, the hands and feet appear from the periphery inward: the distal aspects are the first to appear, while the proximal aspects appear later on.

III. The Nervous System – an Organ of Perception

These connections are of fundamental importance for our understanding of the nerves.

According to Rudolf Steiner, all nerves are sensory nerves, even the so-called motor nerves. Neurological science says that the nerve is what makes the movement take place. And this is true: If one would sever the nerves in my arm, I would of course no longer be able to move it. So how can there be no motor nerves?

Rudolf Steiner elaborates: The 'I', the musculature, the blood – these are all about movement; they bring about movement. And we are able to move consciously and skillfully only because the nervous system perceives on the one hand the movement of the blood and muscles and on the other hand my intention to move.

The human being forms himself from two directions – from the periphery and from the center... from the destiny aspect, of which we are not aware in our daytime consciousness and in our self-aware ‘I’-being, and from our self-aware daytime consciousness.

- The “social human being” of the higher self or ‘I’ works in from the periphery via the limbs as the destiny-being that is unconscious to our daytime consciousness and self-aware ‘I’-being, and guides us through life.
- The nerve-supported human being that works from the center reflects and attempts, to the best of its ability, to harmoniously bring together self-consciousness on the one hand and world-consciousness and destiny-consciousness on the other.

The nervous system serves as an organ of relationship between these two “people”, the unconscious peripheral will-person and the conscious, central nerve-person. The nervous system forms itself out of the dual activity of guidance from the periphery and reflection in the center. For this reason, our understanding of the higher ‘I’, of social life, of the night side of existence is closely related to another understanding of the nerves – to the recognition that the nerves always serve perception: sometimes for impulses from the periphery and sometimes for impulses from the center. These polar directions of perception have it seem as though some nerves are sensory nerves and others are motor nerves. In reality, both are sensory nerves, because both of these polar directions serve perception.

This is incredibly significant for therapy.

IV. Speech and Language Development in the First Three Years

Given the background that has been presented, it is understandable that in the first year of life the child concentrates all of his forces, his entire nerve activity and sense activity, as well as his capacity for relationship, on one thing: on the perception of his own body in relation to the surrounding space. He concentrates totally on the formation of the right hemisphere and its characteristics. This results in ongoing bodily activity in order to become aware of oneself as a totality and bring oneself into uprightness, and to be able to make the brain the crowning of this verticality.

In the first year of life, the most dramatic development of the nerve cells takes place. The processes of development, elaboration and configuration take place most quickly in this first year and then become increasingly slower. Brain development is first and foremost connected with the achievement of verticality of the human form and with the awareness of all of the organs that, due to this verticality, acquire a new position, function and relationship to each other. The first step is the integration of all of the organs into the upright human form. What kind of a formative, structuring gesture is this? What does it have to do with the spoken word?

Verticality and the Foundation for the Spoken Word

This first developmental stage is the foundation of speech development. All of the organs first develop and then attune and adjust to each other. The larynx must first become totally free and in place, so that it can come into relationship with all of the other organs and be in coordination with them. It is for this reason that we are able to heal organ-based illnesses by means of therapeutic speech. The foundation for this consists of the developmental connections in the first year of life – the forming of speech by the human being who has come to uprightness and whose organs have come into relationship with one another. Before this has taken place, speech is not possible.

The preliminary stages of speech development that we hear during the first year of life – speech sounds, sound gesture – are all formative gestures that build speech. They are not yet speech, yet from the very beginning are highly intelligent and holistic. Research shows that already right after birth children live in holistic, intelligent interconnections of reaction and meaning. Right after birth the mother's or father's laughter is already imitated. As a formative gesture this is a highly intelligent communication process. One has always wondered at the fact that when children begin to play with objects during their first year, they use building blocks to build vertical towers. It would certainly be a lot easier to build horizontally. Researchers are amazed at these towers and don't know what to make of this phenomenon of vertical construction. In his creativity, the child does what his body is doing. In his formative processes, he is oriented entirely toward coming into verticality.

Horizontal Gesture of Speech Acquisition

After verticality as the foundation for speech development now comes the next step: the horizontal gesture of speech acquisition. Speech acquisition depends primarily on the quality of hearing. Whoever observes a child learning to speak can see how the child sometimes listens for days – only listens. Sometimes one also sees how the lips move in imitation of movement, but the child doesn't yet speak. He hears, listens, imitates and practices. Speaking develops entirely out of hearing. Speech acquisition builds upon learning to hear.

Due to the fact that hearing is being practiced, we notice that the left hemisphere attains a first stage of basic maturation. In hearing, the child now learns to differentiate individual speech sounds and individual intervals. It can happen in this first phase of speech acquisition that children regress in regard to the development of the first year: that they become clumsier and fall down more easily again because they are now concentrating entirely on hearing and on acquiring speech, at the cost of what they have already attained. Their entire attention is dedicated to differentiating, to assimilating what has been heard, to speech acquisition.

The Integrative Gesture of Speaking

The third stage stands under the sign of integration. What matters here is the bringing together of the spatial forms with all of their relationships, speech acquisition and the forming of speech, the fact that everything that exists in space 'speaks' to each other, and that everything has been

configured and shaped, has a physiognomy, is supplied with forces – to bring this together with the imageless, analytical acoustic world of the individual speech sounds and isolated meaning-connections.

How does one bring these two worlds together in such a way that now a third step becomes possible: speech that is based on communication with oneself in thinking? How can the child form words out of thinking, and create thoughts from words?

The three primordial gestures of development presented at the beginning also correspond to the three essential stages of development of the child during the first three years. In the lectures mentioned, Rudolf Steiner describes the incredible wisdom that brings it about that the child is able to concentrate on coming into uprightness, able to learn to listen into the communicative horizontal level, and able to lift itself beyond time and space and thus awaken in pure thought consciousness and to notice: I am thinking. Earlier, the child also has thoughts, but knew nothing of this. Earlier, the child also had words, but could not utter them. Only when the child knows of its own existence, and begins to consciously reflect and slowly acquire control of its movements and actions, does conscious speech acquisition begin. Suddenly these two developmental streams merge: the one that issues from self-consciousness, and the other that is purely the result of the will and of unconscious spiritual guidance, and which is the impulse for the developmental events of the first three years. The latter becomes pushed back more and more in order to increasingly make place for the centered, reflecting human being.

V. Understanding Various Speech Disturbances

Following on the formative gestures that have been described, three kinds of speech disorders need to be distinguished in the first three years of speech development.

- **Speech production disorders:** Here the underlying causes are to be found in an organic malformation of the speech organs or incomplete development and reforming of the speech organism following the process of coming into uprightness.
- **Speech acquisition disorders:** In the case of an acquisition disorder, the situation is entirely different. The speech organs are normal, but there is a communication disorder: The child wasn't allowed to learn to hear. The child wasn't allowed to practice; one didn't listen to the child; he wasn't allowed to finish what he was saying – he had no possibility of practicing. When one observes the speech development of children in their second and third year of life, one can see how susceptible this phase is to disturbances: how children sometimes go mute, withdraw, suddenly say nothing for days on end. But one can also observe what gets them to speak and to practice. Thus this is a completely other kind of disorder.
- **Loss of speech:** In the case of loss of speech, there is the question as to the degree to which the 'I' is able to take hold of the body as its instrument and bring about a relationship between itself and the world. For people who have lost their speech capacity through trauma, accident or stroke, the potential for recovery is thanks to the fact that the mind is still intact. This is where one must begin, with all optimism and

courage, with everything that one knows, for example: that nerves regenerate lifelong; that large hemorrhages can recede; that it's about practicing consistently, keeping at it, and using the capacities that one has. One should tell the person: The brain is an organ that is about relationship. Take up this spiritual relationship, live and practice with what you have; then much can be rebuilt.

Translator's note: The German word 'Sprache' can be translated as 'speech' or as 'language', depending on what is meant. In this lecture, it refers primarily to 'speech', except where otherwise noted. In the verse that follows, 'language' is the more encompassing term, which is here understood to include the spoken word.

To one who grasps the sense of language
The world reveals itself
In image form.

To one who hears the soul of language
The world unlocks itself
As being.

To one who lives the spirit of language
The world bestows
The strength of wisdom.

To one who can love language
Language gives
Of its own power.

So will I turn my heart and mind
Toward the spirit and soul
Of the word;

And in my love for it
Now feel myself Complete.

Rudolf Steiner

¹ Lecture given at the conference for Therapeutic Speech, held in Dornach on October 27, 2011. Reworked by Claudia McKeen and Eveline Staub Hug, while retaining the style of the original oral presentation.

² From the notebooks of Leonardo da Vinci.

³ Study of Man (German bibl. no. 293)

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Anthroposophy (A Fragment), p. ?? German bibl. no. 45.

⁶ The Forming of Destiny in Sleeping and Waking (German bibl. No. 224). Published in The Golden Blade, 1973.

⁷ The Cosmic Word and Individual Man (German bibl. no. 224). Published in The Golden Blade, 1951 from a shorthand report unrevised by the lecturer.

⁸ Illustrations from: J.W. Rohen/Elke Lütjen-Drecoll, Funktionelle Embryologie [Functional Embryology], Schattauer-Verlag, Stuttgart, 2006. Not translated into English.

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