

L4: Phase 3 (14 -21): Independent Soul Life and the Teacher as Guide.

By Dr Robert Rose

Phase 3 of Steiner's child development theory concerns the 14 to 21 years stage. For him, the young adult here begins to attain **independence** of "soul" which he also referred to as the "Astral Body". As we have discussed in module 1, this means that he considers young people of this age to start to develop independence in **thinking**, **feeling** and **willing** and with which education of this age is concerned. If you recall, Steiner **identifies** the soul or astral body with these three spheres together with **memory**, **fantasy** and **perception**. The soul is the integrated unity of thinking, feeling, willing, memory/fantasy and perception. For those especially interested in this age phase, a reading of chapters 5 to 8 from "Education for Adolescents" by Steiner would be valuable. Elements of this phase can also be found in "Soul Economy" and intermittently elsewhere.

If we recall from lectures 1 & 2, Steiner was of the view that each of the phases is divisible into three “One can recognize these seven-year periods throughout the entire human life, and each again can be seen in three clearly differentiated shorter periods.” Steiner, R (1922/2003): Soul Economy, Anthroposophic Press, p. 107. As we have seen, he outlined these sub-phases for the first two major phases. Concerning phase 3, however, he largely discussed the development of thinking, feeling and willing not in terms of **phases** but as developmental **spheres** (**thinking, feeling and willing, etc**) and pedagogical **activities** that could happen anytime during this phase. In light of this, the sub-phases are more implicit than explicit, so we will focus on the **spheres** and **activities** as such.

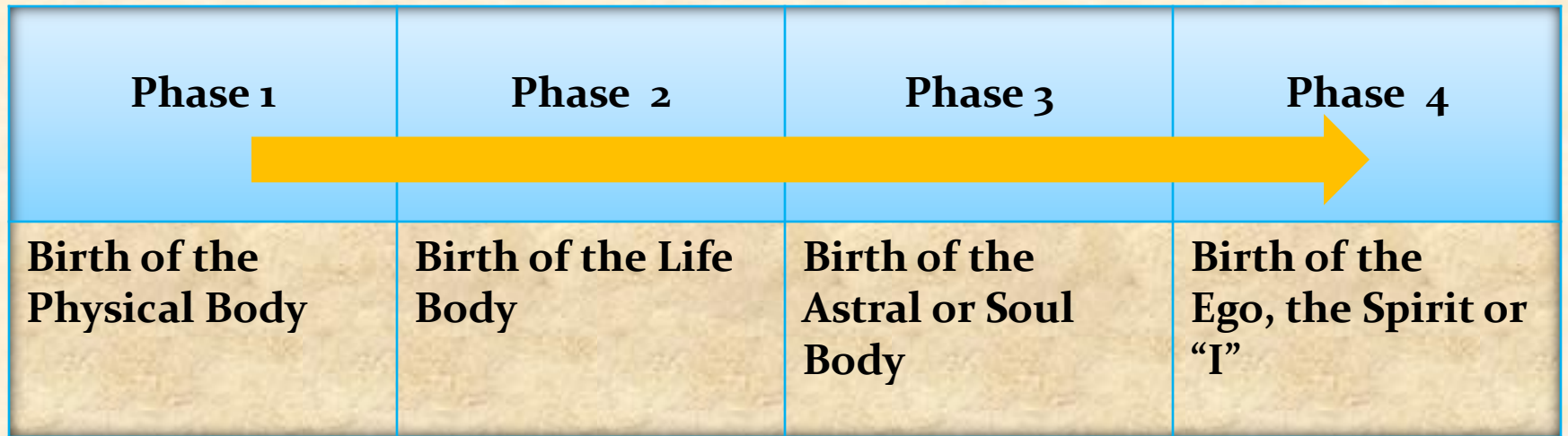
The Phase 3 Ontogenetic Change

In the context of education, Steiner characterised this ontogenetic phase in the following way:

*“Today we shall take a look at the characteristic features of fourteen- and fifteen-year-old children... We know from our anthroposophical studies that the **astral body is born at this age** - that it comes into its own at this time. Just as the physical body is especially active from birth to the seventh year, and the etheric body from the seventh to the fourteenth or fifteenth year, the astral body (strongly connected with the ego) is active from the fourteenth to the twentieth or twenty-first year, when the ego can be said to be born.”* Steiner, R (1921/1996): Education for Adolescents, Anthroposophic Press, p. 73. (My bold)

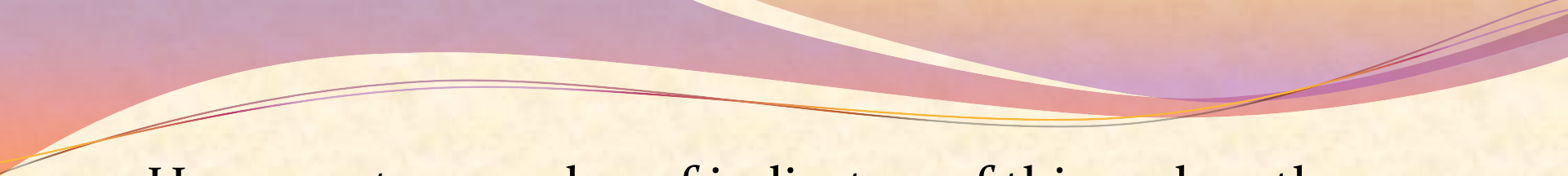
*“With the age of puberty the astral body is first born. Henceforth the astral body in its development is open to the outside world. Only now, therefore, can we approach the child from without with all that opens up the world of **abstract ideas, the faculty of judgement and independent thought**. It has already been pointed out, how up to this time these faculties of soul should be developing — free from outer influence — within the environment provided by the education proper to the earlier years, even as the eyes and ears develop, free from outer influence, within the organism of the mother.”* Steiner, R (1909): Education of the Child in the Light of Anthroposophy, pdf. (My Bold)

We have come across this idea several times before:



Steiner points to a developmental (ontogenetic) change in phase 3 in which the “liberated soul” tries to find a new relationship between inner and outer, the subjective and the objective. Correlated to this, the “I” and the soul on the one hand, and the life body and physical body on the other, come into a new set of relationships.

“During the transition at sexual maturity, the adolescent now relates his or her subjective life—the ego and the astral body—to the objective sphere, to the etheric and physical bodies. In this transition, the inner (soul) life is affected quite differently than it is during the transition at the change of teeth... During the transition at puberty, the physical and etheric bodies remain as they are, and the astral body and ego remain as they are, but there is now, in a certain sense, a different interaction between the two pairs. The physical/corporeal and the etheric bodies, on the one hand, and the astral body and the ego, on the other hand, participate in this transition with equal strength: The inner subjective qualities of the human being participate directly in this process. The nature of this process accounts for the dramatic changes in character after puberty.” Steiner, R (1921): Education for Adolescents, Anthroposophic press, p. 74.



He presents a number of indicators of this such as the growing awareness of Self in relation to the World. The ontogenetic shift here is from **awareness of the World to awareness of Self in relation to the World:**

Subjective

I
&
Soul

**World
Relationships**

Objective

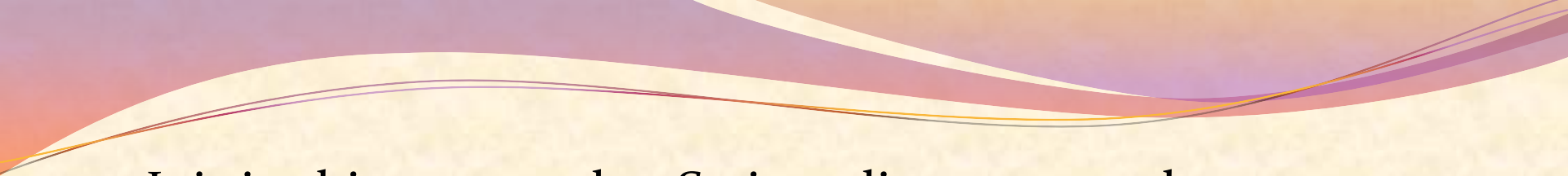
Life body
&
Physical body

In general, what this means is that, for Steiner, the teenager seeks to find their own **independent connection to the World (including other people) in how they think and feel about it and also act on it:**

“Then again, at puberty the children begin to feel that they can now **make judgments themselves**, but they still want to be supported by authorities of their **own choosing**: “This person may be listened to; I can accept his or her opinions and judgments.””

Steiner, R (1921): Education for Adolescents, Anthroposophic press, p. 121.


A typical phenomenon as a part of this process is the rejection of outer authority for its own sake. This can be seen as a necessary consequence of the process of becoming independent. “Doing their own thing” may be seen as a motto for the young person of this age. Another instance of this might be a growing awareness of how they and others look: self consciousness is directed at the aesthetic appearance of their own physical body and that of others. This is of course also connected to their peers of this age; so self consciousness is directed also to social consciousness of the same age phase.



It is in this context that Steiner discusses gender differences in terms of this ontogenetic change:

“Girls between the ages of thirteen or fourteen and twenty or twenty-one develop in such a way that their egos are strongly influenced by what goes on in their astral bodies. We can see how the ego of a girl is, one could say, gradually absorbed by the astral body, with the result that during her twentieth and twenty-first years there is a strong counter pressure, a strong effort to come to grips with the ego.

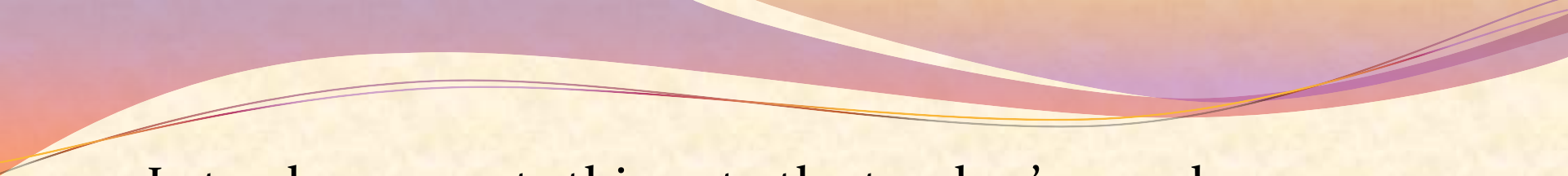
The process is essentially different in boys. Their astral bodies do not absorb their egos so strongly. Their egos are more concealed, are not as effective. The ego of the boy between the ages of thirteen or fourteen and twenty or twenty-one remains without the strong influence of the astral body. Because of this, because the ego of the boy is not absorbed by the astral body and yet lacks independence, boys at this age are less forward than girls. Girls are freer at this age, more at ease in their outer confrontation with the world than are boys. We can notice in those boys especially endowed with these qualities a reserve, a withdrawal from life, the result of this special relation between astral body and ego.”
Steiner, R (1921/1996): Education for Adolescents, Anthroposophic Press, p. 75/6.



Whilst Steiner points out these gender differences, and that there are some differences in the way they behave and learn, he makes the case that this is a reason for co-education: the two genders can learn from each other and bring about a “balancing” within themselves and which will bring healing to society.

From a pedagogical perspective, there are a number of implications following this ontogenetic shift. As the young people are striving for independence, in Steiner's view, they would naturally challenge authority. This arguably derives from the fact that to be an independent Self requires, at least to some degree, to assert oneself against others. So the teacher's task here is to find a new kind of relationship to them: to **respect their independence**. Pedagogically the shift here is from the teacher as a natural authority to the **teacher as a guide**. But this is not any kind of guide, there is a social/moral element to it, something which the young people will naturally want to emulate because, he argues:

“While the child during the first seven years imitates naturally, **the teenager does so consciously**... All this expresses his (or her) wish to make contact with the World outside.” Steiner, R (1921/1996): Education for Adolescents, Anthroposophic Press, p. 81. (My bold)



Later, he connects this onto the teacher's moral relationship to the teenager as well as their Ideals relationship to the World:

“If, however, our interest in the students is honest and not egotistical, we shall educate and teach with exactly these possibilities of their feelings in mind. And this will lead to a free relationship to them”. Steiner, R (1921/1996): Education for Adolescents, Anthroposophic Press, p. 135.

For Steiner then, the teacher's task is to take a real, honest and non-egotistical stance towards the emergent **independent** feeling, thinking and willing of the young person. **Pedagogy then is encompassed by the teacher's altruistic attitude.** In that sense, for Steiner, the teacher becomes something worthy of voluntarily imitating or emulating. It is in this sense that Steiner thinks that the teacher may be a moral guide.

Steiner describes the general inner state of adolescents in contrast to prior to the shift, i.e. the movement from phase 2 to phase 3:

“Previously [in phase 2], they had not experienced the spiritual world consciously, but they nevertheless found it possible to live in harmony with it. Their inner being felt attuned to it and prepared to cooperate freely with the soul-spiritual realm. But now, conditions have changed, and the external world no longer offers such possibilities. It presents all sorts of hindrances that, in themselves, create a desire to overcome them. This, in turn, leads to a tumultuous relationship between adolescents and the surrounding world, which lasts from fourteen or fifteen until the early twenties.” Steiner, R (1922/203): Soul Economy, Anthroposophic Press, p. 218.

The consequence of this is that there can often be a struggle for the adolescent to come to terms with the World around them. This is in terms of the people they meet as well as the events and states they confront (of course there is considerable variation in this). This psychological change leads also to a complementary desire for the “Ideal” left behind in the earlier phase. Later, we will consider the role of Ideals as a pedagogical response to this desire.

Educating Independent Reason and Truthfulness

Due to this growing independence of this age, it is important therefore, argues Steiner, that the young adult is met by people of the appropriate and idealistic frame of mind, one aspect of which is the ideal of **reason** and the search for **truthfulness**:

“Teachers must get into the habit of approaching a young man or woman **rationally**. For example, think of an adolescent boy whom the spiritual world has led into this earthly world and who now becomes rebellious because it is so different from what he expected. The adult must try to show him (and without any pedantry) that everything he meets in this world has “prehistory”. The adult must get this adolescent to see that present conditions are the consequences of what went before...


From now on, you will accomplish nothing by way of authority. You have to convince adolescents through the sheer weight of your **indisputable knowledge** and **expertise** and provide **waterproof reasons** for everything you do or expect of them... And if, during this inner turmoil, they cannot find contact with someone who can reassure them, to some extent at least, that there are good reasons for what is happening in the world, then the inner stress may become so intolerable that they might break down altogether... **educators must be ready to give *convincing reasons for everything they ask of their students.*** ” Steiner, R (1922/203): Soul Economy, Anthroposophic Press, p. 218/9. (My emphasis)

It is for this reason, according to Steiner’s philosophy, that one of the things a teacher must **not** do is tell a young person of this age what they **must** think (or feel or do) in an authoritarian manner. It would have the counter effect to what was expected. The intention here is that by presenting teaching matter through good evidence and reason, this gives the young person the opportunity to exercise their own. In this context the teacher creates an environment, a space, within which independent reasoning and evidence giving can unfold in the young person.

Educating Independent Imagination

Another component to the ontogenetic shift of this age phase is the emergence of a new relationship to **creative ideas** and **fantasy** derived from a metamorphosed rhythmic element as was the case in the previous phase:

“Now, at puberty, something else becomes available for **free** activity in the soul realm. These are powers that previously entered the rhythms of breathing and, subsequently, strived to introduce rhythmic qualities into the musculature and even the skeleton. This rhythmic element is now transformed into an adolescent receptiveness to the realm of **creative ideas** and **fantasy**. Fundamentally, **true powers** of fantasy are not born until puberty, because they come into their own only after the astral body is born.” Steiner, R (1922/203): Soul Economy, Anthroposophic Press, p. 217/8.



As we have seen previously, fantasy has its starting point in the early childhood years, develops in the second phase, but here attains its “true powers”. Taking this to mean the **independent** powers of the newly liberated soul, the adolescent requires an educational environment in which they can exercise this rather than merely imitate the activities of adults or emulate them. This is time for the exercise of truly creative ideas and fantasy which the teacher can help with through creating a space the encourages this.

Educating the Independent Emotions

The education of the emotions receives some attention in the context of Steiner education due to the significance of the primary virtue of moral love in both the learning process as well as the social life generally:

“[For the adolescent phase] The changes can be seen outwardly in a matured capacity for **love**, which does not immediately show itself in its full sexual form but does show itself, in a general way, in the more intimate, inner relationships in which the children attract each other. Friendships are formed between girls and boys in which the sexual aspects do not initially play a role; rather, the **friendships** show the beginning of a more conscious development of the forces of love, of the forces needed for **relating to** and **caring for another being** at this new stage in development.” Steiner, R (1921/1996): Education for Adolescents, Anthroposophic Press, p. 74. (My emphasis)

Steiner’s concept of love here is not restricted to the sexual dimension, but includes the type that may be called moral or ethical love that is the foundation for a sustainable social existence.

“We can then see, beginning at puberty, in the outer behaviour of both girls and boys, something that often baffles their parents and teachers, something that contradicts their previous character: the teenagers’ loutish behaviour (especially in boys, differently in girls). This behaviour is caused by the **feelings** of the astral body (which encloses the not yet fully developed ego) as it struggles to experience a right relation to the physical body and, through it, to the whole of the environment. **Because of the need to discover a relation between the objective and the subjective, this inner struggle is unavoidable.** It expresses itself in a denial, as it were, of what the adolescent has so far developed. We sometimes do not recognize the teenagers—they are so different from what they used to be.” Steiner, R (1921/1996): Education for Adolescents, Anthroposophic Press, p. 74/5. (My emphasis)

It is for this reason, and others, that Steiner argues that it is significant at this age to cultivate the *moral* or *ethical feelings* in the young person through the presentation of **Ideals** in the teaching as we will see later. These Ideals are partly intended to help them overcome the inner emotional struggle Steiner is referring to.

Educating the Independent Will

The education of the will in this age phase emerges more implicitly here in the sense that Steiner contrasts the overly intellectual approach to education prevalent in his day, and probably still today in some respects, with an approach based on the practical life:

“You see, this merely formalistic way of educating our high school students, this one-sidedly cognitive, intellectual approach, this is something we should not continue with in our curriculum. And in not continuing this approach we shall not sin against progress in civilization. Our curriculum should be such that it allows the children to become **practical** in life; it should connect them with the world.”
Steiner, R (1921/1996): Education for Adolescents, Anthroposophic Press, p. 83. (My emphasis)

Steiner points out here that it essential that young people grow into the practical life, arguably as we will see, this requires the education of the will, or “skilled will”:

“Our curriculum should be such that it allows the children to become practical in life; it should connect them with the World... We should also include the process that takes the **thoughts from the head into the movements of the hand**, even if this happens to be merely learned or theoretical. It must, as it were, be then a theory of the practical. It is, therefore, necessary to give the boys something that is appropriate for this age: lessons in mechanics—not only theory, as in physics, but practical mechanics, leading to the making of machines. Our curriculum for the tenth grade class must include the basic elements of practical mechanics. In regard to the girls, we must provide them with something that allows them to have clear ideas of the skills involved in spinning and weaving. Girls must learn to understand the processes in spinning and weaving, must learn how spun and woven material is produced; they must learn to recognize a material that was mechanically produced, must be introduced to the mechanical processes and learn to relate to them. This belongs to this age group... **Both sexes must participate in all these activities.**” Steiner, R (1921/1996): Education for Adolescents, Anthroposophic Press, p. 83/4. (My emphasis)

This process that goes from the head to the movement of the hands is essentially how the will is educated, i.e. by allowing thought to enter the will sphere. Steiner was convinced that this enables young people to feel a part of normal life and be connected with the rest of society which they will join in the next few years in their occupations. Even if they end up being academics, Steiner sees the value of educating the practical will:

“Above all, there are still members who do not fully accept the contention that you cannot be a real philosopher if you cannot apply your hands to anything - such as repairing your shoes - if the need arises. Those who must deal with theoretical work should place themselves within practical life even more firmly than those who happen to be tailors, cobblers, or engineers. In my opinion, imparting theoretical knowledge is acceptable only when the other person is well versed in the practical matters of life; otherwise, such ideas remain alien to life.” Steiner, R (1922/2003): Soul Economy, Anthroposophic Press, p. 123.

Education and Adolescent Ideals: Truth, Beauty and Goodness

Steiner sees the teacher's task as presenting World Ideals to the teenager for their independent evaluation. This will help them overcome their feeling of separation and inner struggle with the World. Steiner argues next:

“The effect will be the student's healthy growth into the **true** that was given to them by the spiritual world as a kind of inheritance, so that they can merge with, grow together with, the **beautiful** in the right way, so that they can learn the **good** in the world of the senses, the good they are to develop and bring to expression in their lives” Steiner, R (1921/96): Education for Adolescence, Anthroposophic Press, p. 135. (My emphasis)

These three ideals, the true, the beautiful and the good, Steiner considers as the main task for teachers to present to the teenager in a practical and real way as possible. In a sense, the Ideals are a way to direct the soul faculties of the young person in a positive direction: thinking towards the truth, feeling toward the beautiful and willing towards the good. This of course is only meant in a general sense as all of the soul faculties are involved in different degrees in all of the Ideals. In a practical sense, this Ideals-Based education he sees as being done through **real life** personalities and particular phenomena, processes, events and instances that can be presented as aspects or contents of the curriculum. For Steiner, the teacher's task here is to be a guide into these three World Ideals whilst respecting the independence, or emergent freedom, of each individual young adult. For example in a history lesson, for the young woman, this means educational elements being presented in terms of heroines and heroes, whilst for the young man examples would be given that present the purpose and aims in life. Obviously, as Steiner recommended coeducation, both of these approaches would be presented to both genders.

Educating Independent Awareness of Humanity as a Whole


Steiner was aware that to describe differences between male and female was problematic even in his day. But he was of this opinion that this was due to an overly male dominated society that had influenced many corners of his contemporary culture, even education. He was, however, not shy in presenting gender differences as he was of the conviction that the male dominance needed to be balanced out by the genuine female element. But first he spoke of a general change in the human body as well as a shift in spiritual / psychological awareness.

According to Steiner, the ontogenetic shift in this age phase is not just about the emergence of sexual maturity, it is also paralleled by a developing **spiritual awareness of humanity as a whole:**

“And this new experience of humankind represents a spiritual counterpart to the physical capacity to reproduce. Physically, they gain the ability to procreate; spiritually, they gain the ability to experience **humankind as a whole.**” Steiner, R (1922/2003): Soul Economy, Anthroposophic Press, p. 222. (My emphasis)

But, for Steiner, in this ontogenetic / psychological shift the Ideals are also experienced differently by young women and men:

“A **woman** sees humanity as a gift of the metaphysical worlds. Fundamentally, she sees humanity as the result of divine abundance. Unconsciously, in the depths of her soul, she holds a picture of **humankind as her standard of values**, and she evaluates and assesses human beings according to this standard. If these remarks are not generally accepted today, it is because our current civilization bears all the signs of a male-dominated society... For a **man**, in his innermost being, experiences **humanity as something of an enigma**. To him it appears unfathomable and poses endless questions whose solutions seem to lie beyond his powers.” Steiner, R (1922/203): Soul Economy, Anthroposophic Press, pp. 223/4. (My emphasis)



It is for the reason of this psychological shift that Steiner recommended a unified but differentiated approach to the education of young men and women of this age. This is particularly the case in relation to the three great ideals of humanity: beauty, truth and goodness in this awakened awareness of humanity as a whole.

Implications for the Curriculum

In this age phase, the adolescent enters the upper school, classes 9 to 12, and go from the age of 14 up to 18. It is here that the curriculum diversifies into all the subjects that one would often find in schools anywhere. So this would include: Literature, Geography, Nature Studies (botany, zoology), History, Mathematics, Physics & Chemistry and many other subjects.

In the context of a Steiner School, the question would be to find the right teaching approach in order to help with the healthy development of the young person. Steiner would consider that in any subject this would require the following pedagogical elements:

- 1) Respecting the freedom of the young adult.**
- 2) Creating learning environments in which the young person can exercise their independence in thinking, feeling, willing and fantasy.**
- 3) Presenting good reasons and evidence in the education and in relationship to the three great ideals: beauty, truth and goodness and in connection with the fields of the curriculum.**
- 4) Heroines and Heroes and the Ideals. Purposes of Life and the Ideals.**

Exercise

Try now to reflect on the possibility that a teacher could:

- 1) Represent these ideals in their own being and your rationale for doing so.
- 2) Think of an example of a person, say from history, who represents an Ideal and who you might wish to present to young people of this age. Or even think of some phenomenon in the World through which such Ideals can be considered.
- 3) Consider how in a science class a teacher could create a learning environment in which they could respect the free judgement of each young person as well as provide good reasons and evidence in what they are teaching. How would you approach the question of truthfulness and rational evidence in the context of a science class?
- 4) Consider an art class and how you as the teacher might encourage an independent appreciation of beauty or of aesthetic experience or of their exercise of fantasy.

Contemplate how you might justify your examples. We will consider these ideals further in the context of the curriculum modules.

Summary

Ontogenetic Principle	Child Development Phase 3 (14 – 21)	Pedagogy
<p>The birth of the soul or astral body as the unity of independent thinking, feeling, willing, memory, fantasy and perception.</p>	<p>The emergence of independent of thinking, feeling and willing, etc.</p> <p>The development of independent powers of fantasy / imagination.</p> <p>Reproductive maturity</p> <p>Spiritual / Psychological awareness of humanity as a whole.</p> <p>Female: Humanity as standard of Values.</p> <p>Male: Humanity as an Enigma</p>	<p>Respecting the freedom of the young adult.</p> <p>Creating learning environments in which the young person can exercise their independence.</p> <p>Presenting good reasons and evidence in the education and in relationship to the three great ideals: beauty, truth and goodness and in connection with the fields of the curriculum.</p> <p>Female: Heroines and Heroes and the ideals.</p> <p>Male: Purposes of Life and the ideals.</p>