

Education of the Senses out of the Environment

Living & Learning with Nature

Adolescence a Descent into Matter

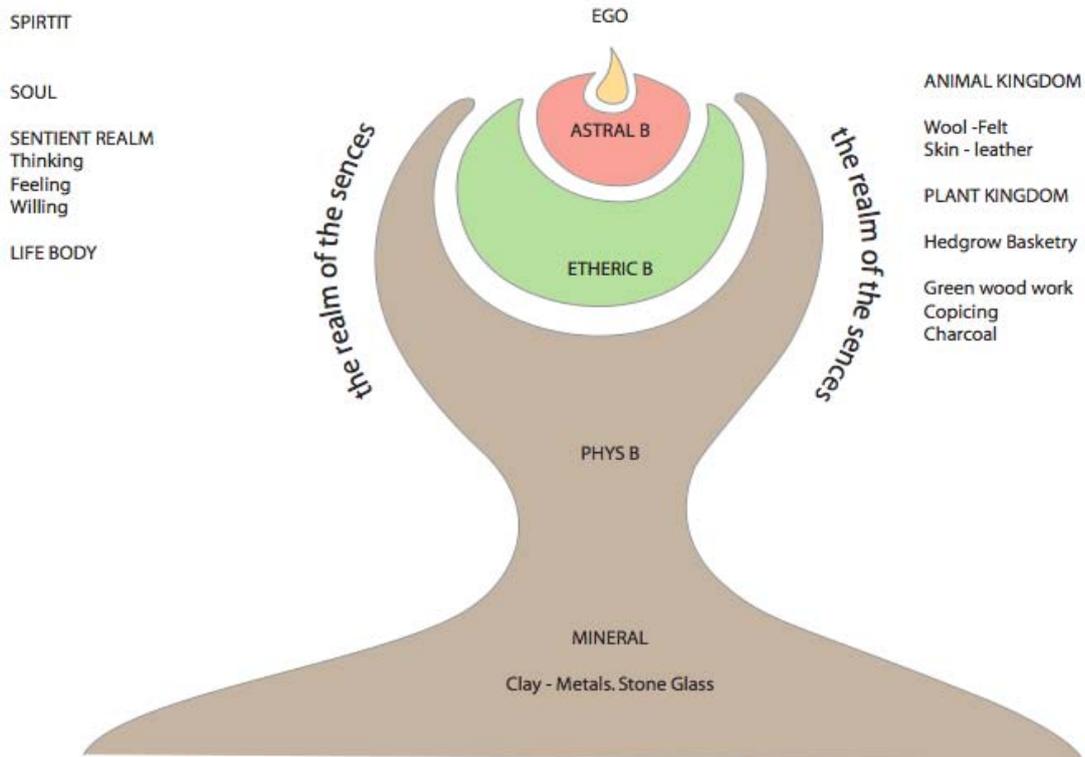
At the start of this course we are focussing on our 'senses' and how through 'Living and learning with Nature' and the practice of traditional craft work we can assist their 'education & development'.

But first we need to have a picture of the Human Being in front of us and then ask, how does this Human being relate to the World and to the 'Self'

Q. What is the make up of the Human Being – how can we differentiate the different aspect of man's make up? Let us do this out of our observations

1. 4 Fold Man- Phys Body – Which we share with the rest of nature , especially the Mineral Kingdom. It is the body, the vessel, the Chalice if you like.
2. The Life Body – the physical Body is maintained by the Etheric or Life Body. This body or organism we share with the Plants.
3. Man is a 'sensing' being having experiences in response to outer & inner stimuli . He experiences an inner and outer world he experiences Pain & Joy. Man can 'Think' and he can implement an idea through his actions. In part we share these abilities with the rest of the Animal Kingdom. With the exception of Thinking & Self consciousness This organism we refer to as the Soul or Astral Body which is also differentiated - Thinking ,Feeling & Will
4. Unlike the animal He can also achieve various degrees of 'Self consciousness' because he has a unique Individuality & potential. This we refer to as the 'Ego', which belongs to the Spiritual domain of man's existence. The Ego wishes to express itself, grow & mature.

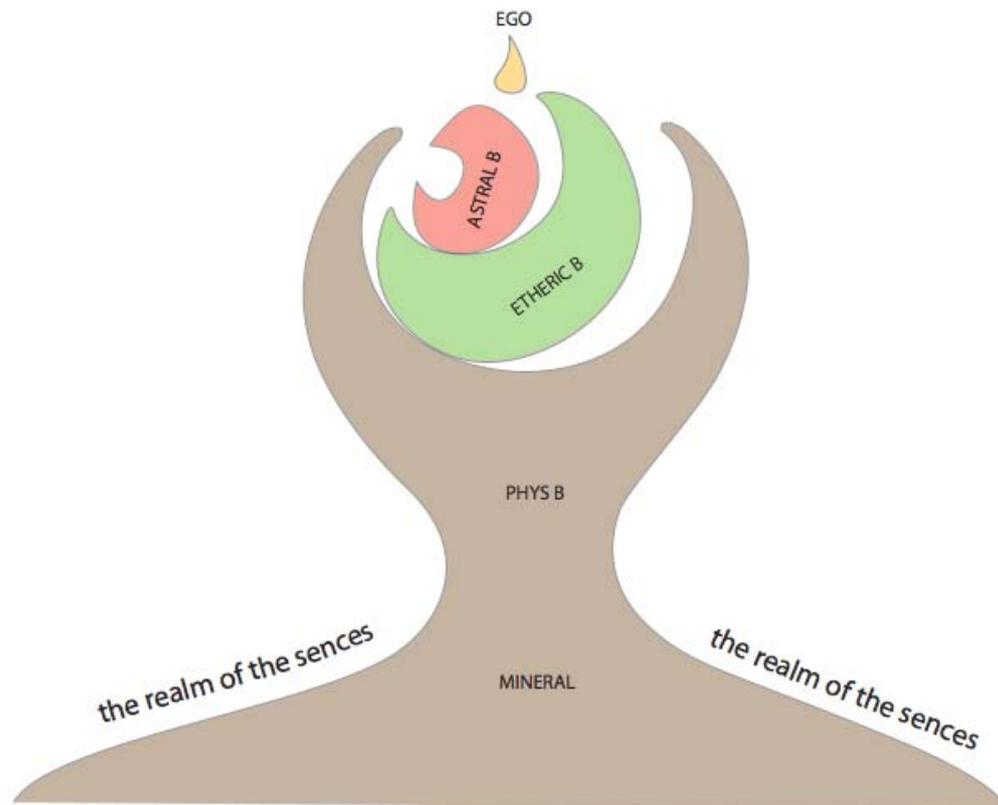
MAN AND THE THREE KINGDOMS OF NATURE



MAN AND HIS ARCHITYPAL RELATIONSHIP WITH THE KINGDOMS OF NATURE

This is the ideal Picture – a healthy incarnation Process. But we are often confronted with individuals where we can observe that the different Members are not quite fitting harmoniously together.

DISTURBED INCARNATION



This may call for a 'Therapeutic Intervention –adjustment' to assist strengthening and anchoring these members.

Man's Interface with the World

Then placed within the 'Boundary' of where we meet the world are placed the 'Senses'

Q. How do we describe the Senses & what do they provide for us?

The Senses are our 'Gateways into the world and the means whereby we take in the world into ourselves and begin to make sense of it.

Q. What environment is best suited to Learning?

One in which the senses can 'Breathe' in a healthy way

How true! Yet it is becoming more difficult for the modern child to engage fully with the natural world.

The Senses are under attack, from all directions

Where can we gaze on beauty, our ears are filled with all manner of jarring sounds; children are not touched held in the right manner, perhaps even abused.

The 'Sense's Experience' is often shrouded, making it more difficult to experience the truth & reality of the world.

For Children & many young people today the 'Nature environment' is not their natural home. They are born into a man made world of 'plugins' and PCs with the world of 'Virtual reality' often preferred to the real world.

Recent research confirms the distance the modern child has from the Natural environment.

"85% of Primary school children can use a key board but only half that number can cut carrots"

UK Craft Council

I think it is true to say that we generally no longer have a sense of being embedded in the Palm of Nature, supported and nourished by her and this has had far reaching consequences.

THE OLD LAKOTA

The old Lakota was wise:

He knew that the heart of a human being

Became hard when he is not connected

To the natural world.

He knew that this lack of connection

And respect for living things results in

The lack of respect for ourselves and our fellow beings.

Therefore he made sure that his children

Were brought up living with the gentle influences of

And in harmony with nature.

Today we experience ourselves as very separate from Nature, but this has not always been the case.

Through our emancipation from Nature in pursuit of personal comfort, material wealth and Personal & Independence we could ask are we better off?

Possibly like no other time we are globally challenged to provide for our children & those we care for, an environment in which the 'Senses' can be allowed to breath in a healthy way.

An environment which enables the person to connect the world of the senses with the 'inner world of Soul & Spirit.

This is the challenge for all of us – we are challenged to provide an educational process – or a training programme that addresses the needs of the whole Human Being.

I believe that Craft work is a way in which, with dignity we can give an adolescent and adult the opportunity to engage in the world.

Craft work provides an educational opportunity that helps support the General Incarnation Process by offering support to The Etheric Body & The Astral Body sit more comfortably within the Physical Body.

Craft work essentially offers an Education of the 'Will' and it is this Will activity that lays the Foundation for our 'Thinking'

RS Steiner Study of Man'The Healthy Development of Thinking is foremost as far as possible through the will.... Activity!

Basic education is a Process of 'Learning by doing'.

This is backed up by modern research

MODERN RESEARCH SHOWS:

Biologist have discovered that neural pathways between left & right brain hemispheres can become coated with a layer of substance called **Myelin** .

Healthily developed neural pathways have a correlation to our ability to 'Think' and use our cogitative capacities creatively.

However that the neural pathways develop in a healthy manner depends on the child's use of its hands and limbs in the early years of development than developing academic skills.

'The brain discovers what the fingers explore'. Matti Bergstrom

According to one neurologist Matti Bergstrom, if children do not use their fingers they are in danger of becoming 'finger blind'. And the rich network pathways of nerve tissue atrophies. Thinking then becomes so as to speak, 'wooden'.

Capacities of Thinking, Feeling & Will belong to our inner Life, and constitute our Soul - Astral body make up.

The 'soul life' of course has its nourishment via our sensory experiences.. therefore the quality of their experiences are of Primary importance in education & Life.

The Realm of The Senses

Now what are the senses? How can we describe them? What do they provide for us?

The senses are the **gateways into the world**, they can be recognised as separate senses, taste, sight etc with their individual organs but at the same time working together and there is an integrated relationship between them.

On coming to our senses, our Senses bring us to Earth and to an awareness of ourselves – in inhabiting our bodies and surveying our surrounding world.

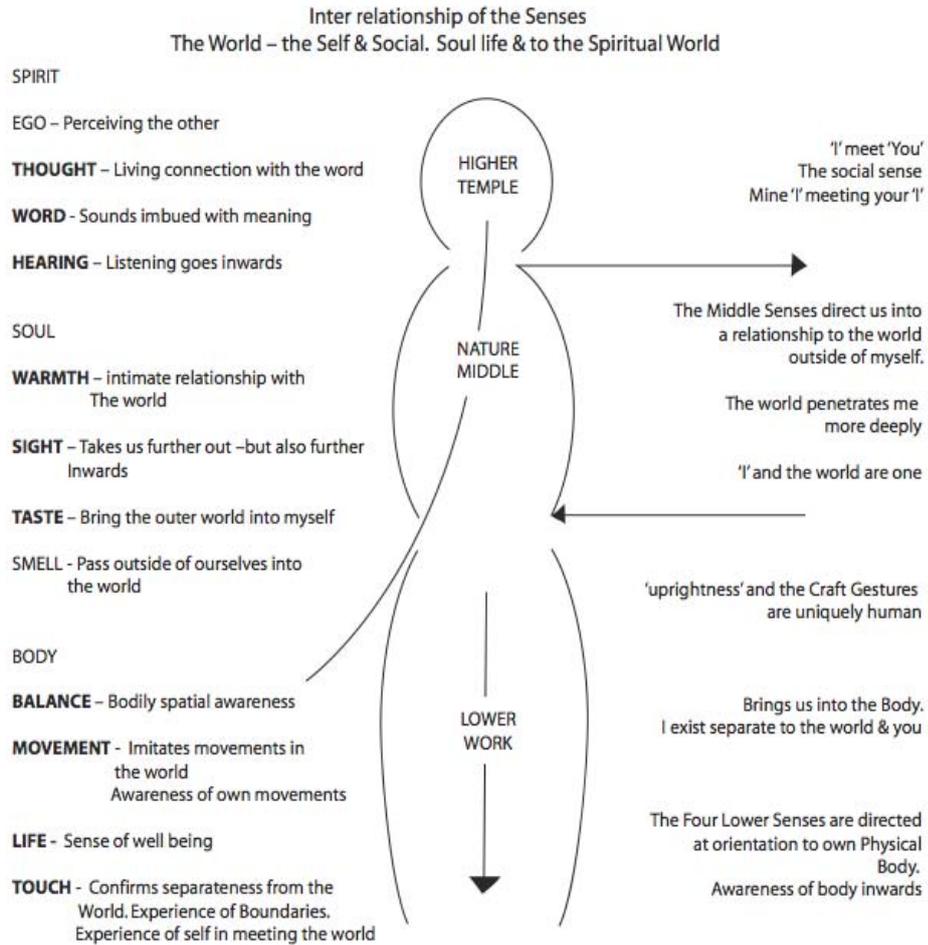
Our 'sense experiences' direct us towards how we engage in a 3 fold way with the world; we are directed towards

1.thoughts 2Feelings & 3.actions. The whole person is engaged

In essence what is happening is .

1. Memories are evoked, comprises past experience.
2. Senses demand satisfaction; this in the main is very subjective. Self discipline & Schooling is required if we are not to be driven by our desires.
3. Skills depend on the development of the 'Bodily senses '
(Touch, balance movement &life)

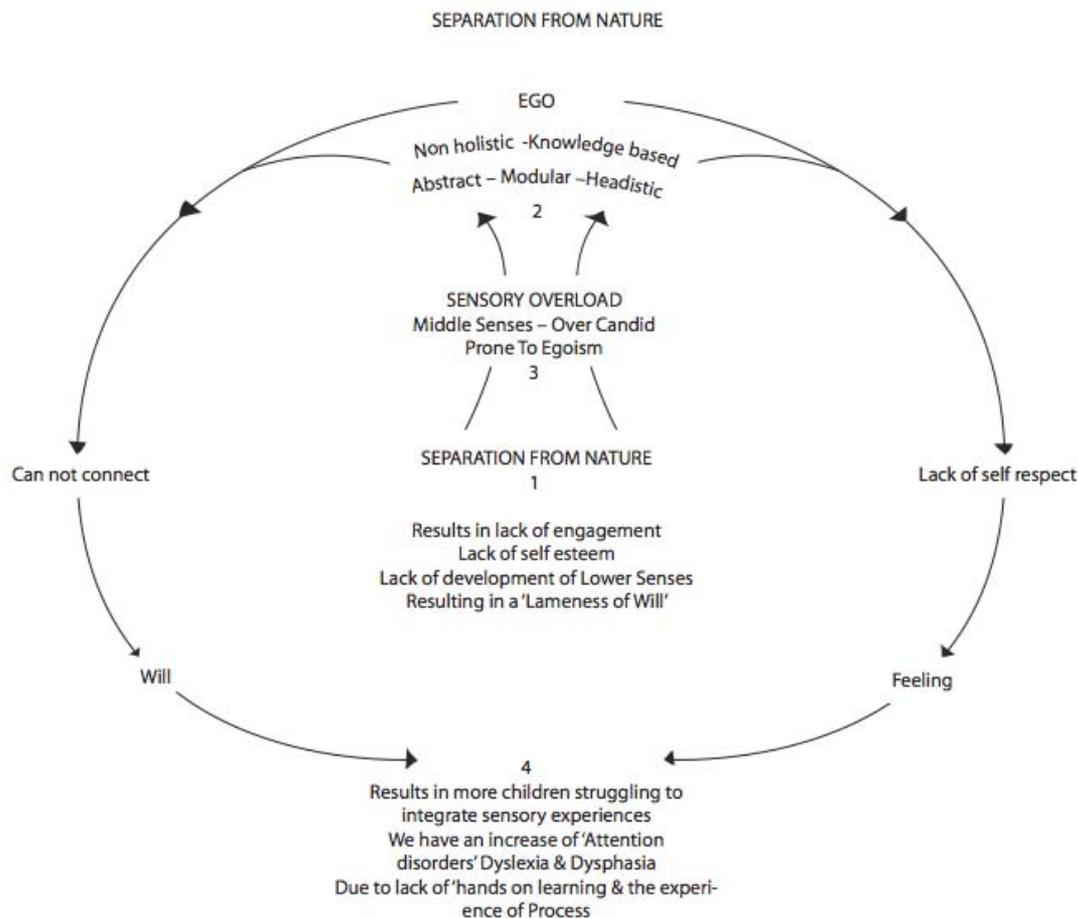
RS describes 12 senses



The Lower senses (Touch, Life, Movement and Balance,) or Body senses as they are sometimes referred to have their transformation in the development of the Higher senses (**Hearing, Word-Speech, Thought and Ego Sense**). Here we can already see the basis for how 'Movement' in the body begets the development of higher soul faculties, Thinking for instance.

The contemporary neurologist would refer to this aspect of human learning as, '**kinaesthetic education**' or as I say 'Will developed Intelligence.'

The four middle senses connect us to the world, **sight, taste, smell & warmth** along with the Body senses in education we have the opportunity to cultivate a relationship of the child to the environment.



BUT WE TODAY A 3 FOLD PROBLEM

- 1) With the increasing separation from the environment (e.g.)
- 2) and with education working with more and more abstract modules and in a headistic manner;
- 3) It is also apparent to us all that children are increasingly damaged by way of over stimulation or 'lameness' unable to bring their 'will & ego' to bear on what is brought to them.
- 4) Increasingly all children struggle to make the connections between different sensory experiences due to lack of integrated experiences. In the main I believe due to a lack of 'hands' on learning and the experience of 'PROCESS'.
- 5) We live in an age of 3 sec consciousness
- 6) Then the handicapped child has the additional burden to cope with; the cloak of destiny often veiling the child's ability to breath in an appropriate fashion through the senses

How can we start to remedy this?

One way relative to this PSTDC is by working with the environment and its materials. This can provide many situations for a healthy **'sense breathing'**, uplifting and nourishing experiences.

You may wonder what has this to do with the Craft process?

In an increasingly fragmented world, one in which an increasing number of children do not know the origin of materials one **way** in which we can heal and bring a sense of 'wholeness' connectedness, is through the 'craft process'.

In an ever increasing 'abstracted world', 'learning through doing' will; help unify the world.

This we can start to do, in as much as we can source our materials from nature and enable children and young people partake in the Primary Process of different craft activities.

(wood from real trees etc)

When we engage with Natural materials then we enter more fully into the reality of the world, than if we alone study it.

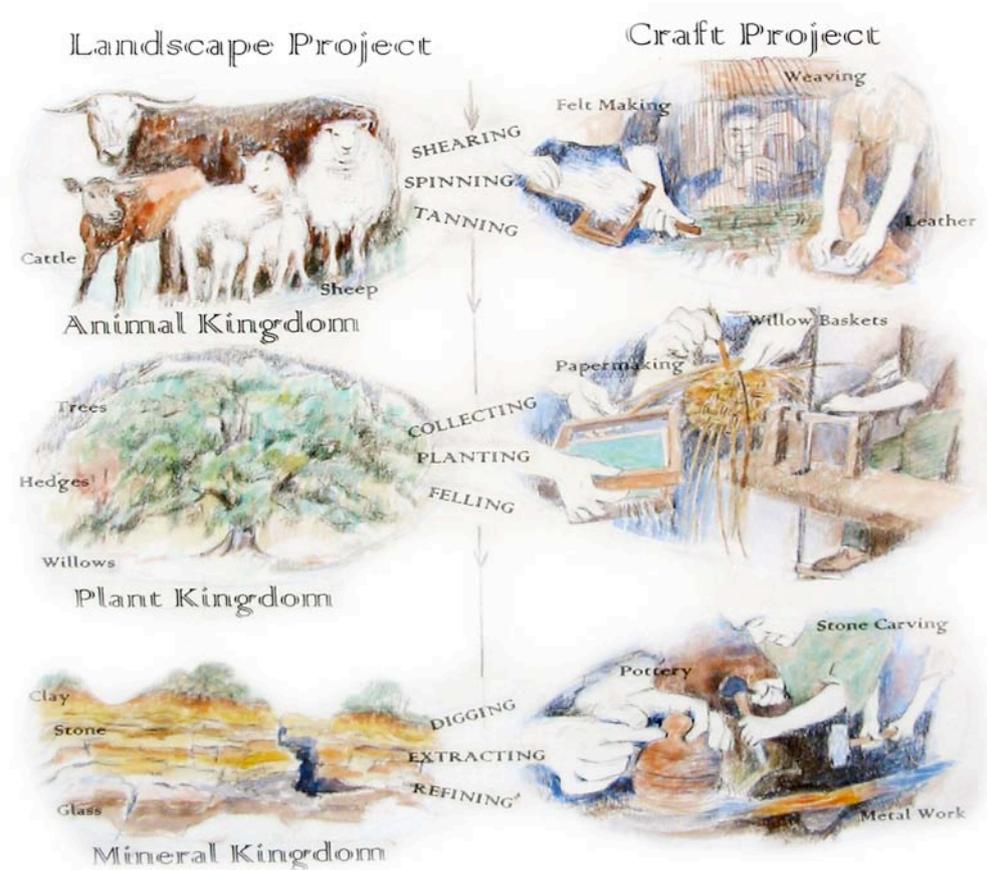
Materials from the 3 Kingdoms of Nature have a potent language and this is something that hopefully through this course we can begin to become aware of.

' A DESCENT INTO MATTER PICTURE'

If we start with the question, **'What** have materials from the Animal, Plant & mineral kingdoms to offer: then we may begin to see how they can serve to assist the child and adolescent in their respective developments.

ADOLESCENCE

A DESCENT INTO MATTER



ANIMAL KINGDOM

Taking Wool as an archetypal material from the animal kingdom – we can have the following impressions.

It is soft and gentle to the touch we could describe it as a forgiving material - one that imparts a certain warmth – it appears more alive than wood or metal.

It is this innate warmth quality that appeals to our sense of Touch, Life and sense of warmth.

Wool can be described as a material from 'spun Light & Air', it is this quality that appeals to the 'Astral Body'

Felt making; Wool can respond to a young child's ability to work creatively and imaginatively.

The activity of Felt making is suited to children.

The slow repetitive and rhythmic movements of Rubbing, rolling - appeals to the Astral body and helps it to be grounded – calmed and massaged.

The smell of Wool, the texture of wool, its warmth and the vibrant colours of naturally died wool again all stimulate the senses, *touch, smell, sight & warmth in a healthy manner.*

Taking up weaving on a loom to make clothe will also help ground the Astral body - drawing it down into the legs and feet.

ANIMAL HUSBANDRY

With the young person following Puberty and the birth of the astral Body - working with animals can help the young person 'reign in' their excess Astrality

LEATHER WORK

The adolescent can also be introduced to leather work – here more difficult techniques are required – making a Pattern; using, measuring, cutting & stitching tools

Working from the parts to the whole! Organ forming!

Where the Leather process starts with Preparation of Leather ie Skinning & Tanning –

Then the young person will have to face important issues of Life - 'Questions of Life & death its self' become conscious to the adolescent soul.

Of all materials from Nature **those from the animal Kingdom** can be transformed into useful products more easily than say Clay & metal from the Mineral Kingdom.

In working with animal materials we can experience that the elements of 'Air, Light & warmth' pervade just these elements appeal to the *Nature of the Astral Body.*

THE PLANT KINGDOM.

When we descend to the next Kingdom - the Plant world we enter the realm of Natures Etheric Household'

Here, working with plant materials **Nature** has the potential to **Nurture** The Etheric Body - The Life Body

Where we can develop **Green Woodwork & Basketry** Crafts as part of a wider woodland management programme then we can have the opportunity to nourish and support the 'Human Etheric Body'.

We can do this by working with 'Natures Seasons', the Rhythms of Nature, the cycles of Life & Death. Sowing, planting, harvesting - coppicing, seasoning wood & charcoal making – all these activities are embedded in a 'Natural Time Process'. *The Craft process becomes embedded in Natures organism*

Experiencing these seasonal activities can be beneficial to our 'Life body' (Etheric B) that in turn governs our sense of 'time' and 'Life Processes' that support 'growth & maintenance' of the physical body.

Working in Nature in the outdoors, brings us into our bodies – in particular the lower bodily senses, ***touch, life, movement & balance are engaged.***

When working outside we come up against ourselves we meet ourselves very differently – than say being in a classroom.

Sawing, Splitting & Stacking wood activity, could precede or in some cases replace the conventional 3'rs for some pupils –

Planting a small willow bed or tree nursery will give pupils seasonal work and a valuable lesson in Sustainability.

In general working in ' **Hard Wood Craft**' is only really feasible after 11/12 years of age.

To work with hard wood demands use of the 'Sculptural Formative forces' that up until the time of puberty have been working inwardly on the child's organism..

Following puberty they become available for the child to begin to sculpt materials outside of himself, like wood Stone & metals.

For the younger child it is sufficient to gather sticks – use the given forms, strip bark, saw wood etc

Working with wool, say in Felt making requires 'controlled rhythmic will activity'

Working with wood requires not only more energy but special qualities of 'Feeling and sensitivity' are required by the hand. Qualities of 'Feeling' are engendered in Basketry & Green Wood work.

The Element of Earth & Water pervade in these crafts

THE MINERAL KINGDOM

When we descend to the next Kingdom and enter the Mineral Kingdom and work with such materials as Clay, Metal, Glass & Stone then we are faced with our biggest challenge.

The transformation of these materials requires great 'efforts of will' and the use of much technology.

The mineral kingdom with its dense materials are especially appropriate and appealing for adolescents.

As the adolescent descends into his own matter, their own body, they find themselves able to consciously meet the material world, they potentially have the '**Physical strength' and Capacities of 'Thinking'** demanded by **Clay, metals and stone.**

By giving them these cold, inert & and unforgiving materials to work with they will come to realise that it is the **Element of Fire** that is needed to transform these materials.

Fire not only to transform the iron in the forge or the clay in the kiln - but that they too have an 'inner Fire' – an Astral Fire' that like outer fire needs to be controlled. Sometimes 'Quenched' and sometimes 'rekindled'

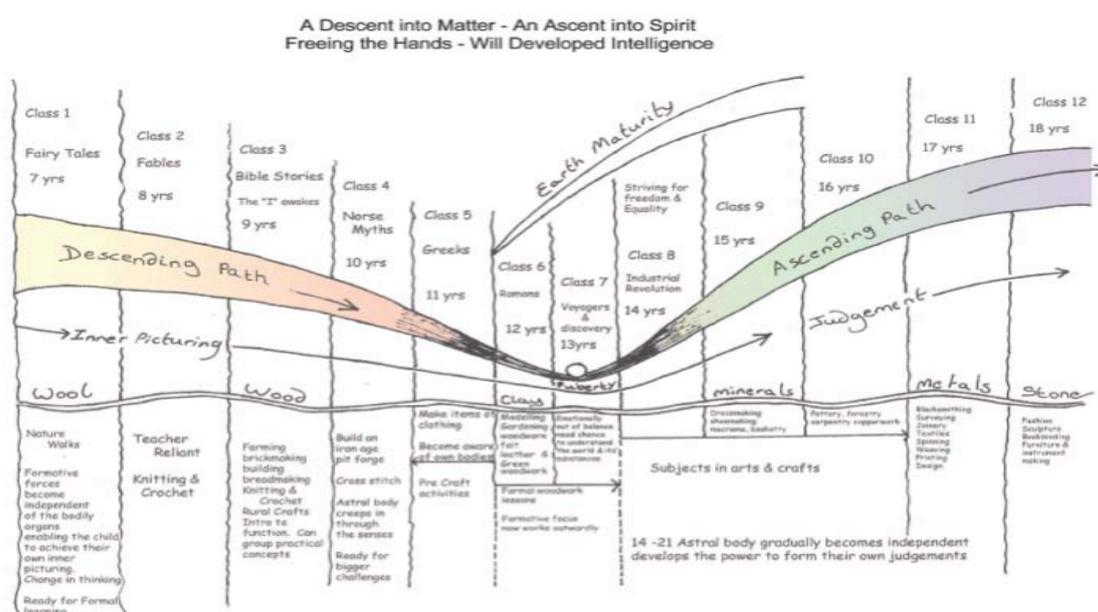
The young person will soon discover that it is the power of 'outer fire' that will transform substances but it is the power of the 'Inner Fire of the Ego' that will transform & sublimate the newly discovered 'Self' & somewhat turbulent Astrality

Materials from the Mineral World clearly demand the greatest physical challenge. A challenge that requires to be met with physical strength – but also great presence of mind.

Hence the social metaphor 'Strike whilst the iron is hot'

With these materials The Element Earth & Fire pervades.

So here we have a picture of a Possible Descent into Matter via working with materials from the 3 Kingdoms of nature. And how these materials can work both Educationally & Therapeutically on the Astral, Etheric & Physical Body that in turn can assist the Ego being descend.



‘Descent into Matter & The Kingdoms of Nature relating to the Child’s own descent & Possible Practical Skills curriculum

Conclusion

In an increasingly fragmented world, one in which an increasing number of children do not know the origin of materials; one way in which we can heal and bring a sense of ‘wholeness’ & ‘connectedness’, is through engaging in ‘Crafts’ & Practical work as described.

In an increasingly ‘abstracted & Virtual Reality world’, ‘learning through doing’ will help unify the world for the child.

For when we engage with Nature & its materials then we enter more fully into the reality of the world, than if we alone study it.

Let us not forget too that in **working with Nature, we** are also brought into an intimate relationship with ourselves as Goethe said:

‘Is not the core of Nature in the Human Heart’

And we would do well to listen to Emerson’s words when he said;

‘Nature was once our Nursery, today she is our Hospital’

Edited notes from Lecture - 2012

Bernard Graves (for study material only)