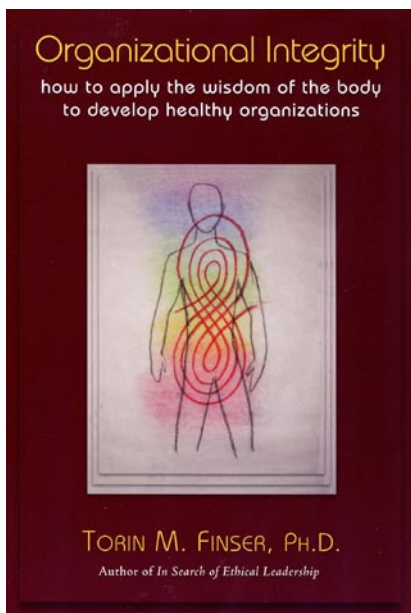


Out of Anthroposophy

What the Human Body Tells Us about Healthy Organizations

BY RONALD KOETZSCH, PhD

Torin Finser is one of the leading figures in the worldwide Waldorf and anthroposophical movements. His most recent book is called *Organizational Integrity: How to Apply the Wisdom of the Body to Develop Healthy Organizations* and is interesting and valuable in two ways. It presents in a clear, concise manner many of the basic ideas



of Anthroposophy about the human being. Then it applies these ideas to the effort to create healthy organizations, including healthy Waldorf schools. This book is an example of applied Anthroposophy, using the insights of that worldview to solve some of the problems that confront human beings in everyday life.

Finser's exposition of anthroposophical

essentials—such as the fourfold and the sevenfold structure of the human being; karma and reincarnation; the evolution of matter out of spirit; the four temperaments and the seven planetary types of human being; and the twelve senses—is cogent and accessible. Yet it is still challenging reading, especially for persons unfamiliar with the vocabulary and concepts of Anthroposophy. The challenge derives not from the presentation but from the ideas themselves. Steiner's understanding of the human being is based on a spiritual worldview, antithetical to the materialistic point of view that prevails today in Western society and to which most of us, consciously or unconsciously, subscribe. We are not used to looking at the world the way Steiner does.

For example, while we are all familiar with the five physical senses of perception, Steiner describes twelve senses. In addition to sight, hearing, taste, touch, and smell, he refers to the life sense, the self-movement sense, balance sense, warmth sense, language or word sense, conceptual or thought sense, and the sense that perceives another person's "I" or essential Self. These last seven senses, responding to more ethereal stimuli, lack a definite physical organ of perception, but for Steiner they are just as real and important as the first five.

The concept of the "I" or "Ego" brings its own difficulties. In common parlance, the ego is usually associated with our narrow and selfish individual identity. In Freudian terms, it has another connotation. But for Steiner, the Ego is the undying spiritual essence of the human being, that higher part of us that moves from incarnation to incarnation, subject to the laws of karma, in a process of individual evolution.

Moreover, Torin Finser delves into aspects of Anthroposophy not necessarily familiar to all Anthroposophists, but which are important to his purposes. He goes deeply into what might be called "esoteric physiology." Rudolf Steiner described three discrete organ systems in the human body: the nerve-sense system, centered in the head and associated with consciousness and thinking; the metabolic system, consisting of the digestive organs and the limbs, concerned with nutrition as well as action and will; and the rhythmic system, including the heart, circulatory system, and lungs, representing the realm of feeling and serving as the mediator between the two other systems.

Finser then describes the function of each major organ and its significance in the soul life of the human being. The liver, for example, is the organ that can transform an idea into action, a thought into a deed. And the lungs, part of the mediating rhythmic system, are related to our consciousness and mood.

Dysfunction in the lungs can result in a dreamy, fantasy-prone, escapist frame of mind or in a fixed, overly rigid way of thinking.

A very interesting chapter discusses the various metals and their relation to different qualities of soul. Iron, for example, is the carrier of strength, energy, and courage, and “gives us presence of mind, the capacity to do things in a practical way.” Copper, malleable and warming, brings people together, encourages communication, and creates shared human warmth. Torin Finser then relates the metals to different types of leadership and organizational patterns. Iron leadership is assertive and important in the building up and consolidation of a school or other community. Iron-poor or anemic leadership can lead to a lack of direction and failure to implement decisions. Copper, in contrast, is associated with a more inclusive, cooperative leadership and organizational pattern. Finser also discusses the special properties of silver, lead, mercury, tin, and gold and the importance of assimilating the positive quality of each of these metals into our individual and collective lives.

These insights into what lies at the basis of human physical and soul health are what Torin Finser uses to analyze human organizations, including the modern Waldorf school. A school community is a human being writ large, with its own heart, lungs, liver, and organ systems. Problems in the organism of the community can be understood, diagnosed, treated, and healed by applying our understanding of the miracle and wonder that is the human body. ☺

Organizational Integrity was published by SteinerBooks, Great Barrington, Massachusetts, in 2007: www.steinerbooks.org
This book will be very helpful to those seeking a deeper understanding of Anthroposophy, especially as it relates to creating healthy organizations and communities.

Interview

Torin Finser on Parenting, Waldorf Teaching, and Anthroposophy

Torin Finser is a graduate of the Green Meadow Waldorf School. He trained to be a Waldorf teacher at Adelphi University and then was a class teacher at the Rudolf Steiner School in Great Barrington, Massachusetts, from 1978 to 1990. His 1994 book, School as a Journey, describes his eight years with his class and is one of the most popular books describing Waldorf Education. The book has been translated into Thai, Korean, and Chinese. Torin Finser has been director of the Waldorf Teacher Education Program at Antioch University New England for the past eighteen years and is a founding member of the Center for Anthroposophy, an organization

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