

Anthroposophic Treatments

Principles | Spectrum | Application



Anthroposophic Treatments

Anthroposophic medicine is still regarded as an "alternative" form of treatment. Unfairly so, since it doesn't seek to replace conventional medicine, it is an extension of it, dealing not only with physical but adding soul and spirit. Founded in science, it draws on everything modern medicine has to offer in the way of useful findings, techniques and preparations. Moreover, approaching the individual from a spiritual science perspective means it also supplements the above with various special forms of treatment. These include naturopathic medicines, modified physical and palliative treatments involving baths, compresses, bandages and special (rhythmic) massages, as well as artistic forms of treatment such as sculpture, drawing and painting, music therapy, elocution and eurythmy therapy.

The aim of all artistic forms of treatment is that the patient stimulates the internal healing processes of body and soul under guidance from the therapist.

This proactive and creative approach often leads to a restoration of health. Getting actively to grips with clay, wood or stone, with colour, form, sound, language, and movement encourages new ways of perception, of hearing, seeing and feeling. Patients learn to appreciate the environment and the world within themselves from new and creative perspectives, which in turn help overcome physical illness and mental problems.

For this artistic treatment there is no need to possess certain talents. The idea is not to give a perfect recital or create the perfect drawing or sculpture. The focus is on experiencing the artistic process, one's own creativity and the dialogue this produces between the internal and external, between proximity and distance. Even those who consider themselves unmusical or lacking artistic talent can achieve this.

Frequently the enthusiasm for artistic forms of treatment grows as the individual becomes actively involved. Once any initial fear has been conquered, the realisation of just how liberating, uplifting and strengthening creative activity can be grows through the experience; in the long-term repetition of artistic pursuits many patients discover significant reserves of health, not to mention ways of coping with their ongoing existence.

Anthroposophic medicine, with its synthesis of natural and spiritual science, links the conventional pathogenic approach (focusing on the illness) to a salutogenetic medical perspective (focusing on health). This produces a holistic appreciation of health, illness and treatment – and that's exactly what modern humanity needs.



For sculpture (left) the active involvement of the patient is required. On the other hand, the patient is the passive recipient of bandages and compresses (right).



Therapeutic painting and drawing (left), music therapy (right) and rhythmic massage (far right) are just some of the wide range of anthroposophic treatments available.



Physical and palliative treatments

Baths, bandages and compresses aim to stimulate or boost the vital functions of the human organism – breathing, circulation, digestion, metabolism, and the production and distribution of heat – while simultaneously resolving any tension. Processes that have ground to a halt may be reactivated: weak peristaltics, sluggish blood and lymphatic flow, shallow breathing.

These methods are underpinned by the addition of essential or fatty oils, essences, tinctures and ointments. At the outset the patient is cast as passive recipient; the various treatments, however, soon stimulate active, individual reactions in the patient, which support and promote the process of self-healing.

Rhythmic massage is based on traditional healing massage, yet it also includes other grips and techniques – and its aim is very different. Traditional massage squeezes, taps, flexes, and kneads tense muscles

and connective tissue in order to bring about relaxation. Using sucking and rhythmically undulating, stroking movements, rhythmic massage also stimulates the flow of fluids through the body, releasing unhealthily rigid and compacted structures to make them flow once more. Reminiscent of lymph drainage, the benefit of rhythmic massage is not however confined to the lymphatic flow or to any one body fluid – it targets the human organism's every fluid. Rather than simply aiding lubrication, massage oils developed specially on the basis of anthroposophic medicine act as carriers of healing substances.

Using a unique sucking massage grip, rhythmic massage enables everything that has become sluggish or compacted, or that is even perceived as sluggish or compacted, to flow easily again. The approach takes its inspiration from the effect the sun has on plants: fluid is sucked up through the plant's stem and leaves by its light and warmth.

The plant stands tall, is more pliable and full of vigour.

Rhythmic massage lightens body and spirit, making them more attentive and alert. It warms and deepens breathing, and may also alleviate insomnia, tiredness, exhaustion, pain, tension, congestion and many other bodily malfunctions. A different perception of the body develops: there is a feeling of being reconciled with what is actual, of being one with the body – with all its faults and flaws.

A course of treatment is generally made up of eight to twelve one-hour massage sessions, which if possible should be attended twice a week. To ensure maximum benefit is derived from the treatment, the massage concludes with an obligatory 30-minute rest period. Rhythmic massage was developed at the beginning of the last century by two female doctors – Dr. Ita Wegman and Dr. Margarethe Hauschka.

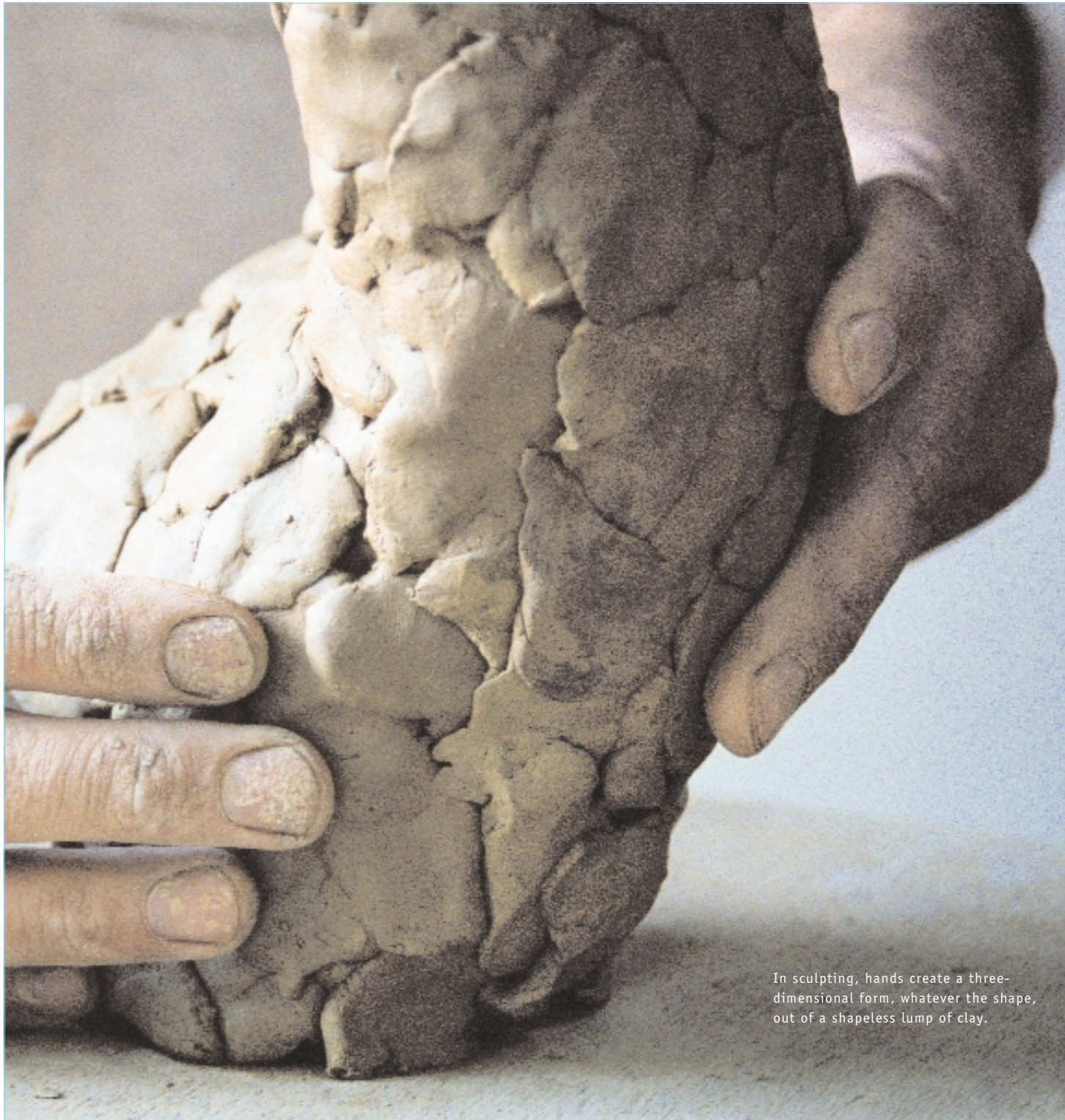


Bandages and compresses using oils, tinctures and essences have to be carefully prepared at the right temperature. Rubs and rhythmic massages are designed to stimulate specific bodily functions.



Rhythmic massage, with its sucking and rhythmically undulating stroking movements, is used to release blockages and restore the flow of fluids through the body.

Sculpture



In sculpting, hands create a three-dimensional form, whatever the shape, out of a shapeless lump of clay.

Sculpture is used to help patients acquire physical experience by getting to grips directly with the material in question. Pulse and breathing changes, heat is generated. At the same time, sculpting provokes new thoughts and emotions. **Materials used include stone, soapstone, wood, clay, beeswax, plasticine and sand.** The choice of material is based on the patient's physical condition and on the time available for treatment.

Stone for instance requires a focused, energetic, decisive and rhythmic approach, being tapped, carved, and struck over a lengthy period of time. In return it conveys strength, warmth and stability to the sculptor. **Soapstone** is quicker and easier to carve, rasp, sand, and grind. Often people who suffer from skin complaints find its smooth cool surface particularly soothing and pleasant.

Wood, depending on the type (density, colour, aroma, grain, pliability), can be chosen to suit the needs and requirements of the patient. The carving, rasping and sanding of wood releases and warms, requiring and promoting an alert and attentive spirit.

Tools are used to work all these materials. **Clay** on the other hand is generally moulded with the hands. Thanks to its damp earthy consistency, which may be wet and slimy, smooth, or slightly dry, clay promotes the realisation of a patient's own ability to shape and create. A shapeless lump is gradually formed into a three dimensional object. Clay may be added or removed as necessary until the final form emerges.

Clay can be grasped with the hand, or rhythmically pressed, squeezed and stretched with the palm or back of the hand, fingers or thumb. The activity requires calm and

concentration; many find that it warms the entire body. The surface of the clay may be scratched, smoothed, tapped, or struck using hands or tools; when dry, it may even be rasped or sanded. Clay, which by nature is cool to the touch, needs to be warmed for some patients (e.g. arthritis sufferers).

Beeswax is a naturally warm material, easy and rewarding to form, and therefore perfect for children and frailer patients. The same may be said of **plasticine**. If hand movement is severely restricted, warm **sand** in a box can be a useful creative alternative. The point of therapeutic sculpting is not to produce a beautiful, decorative result; the actual shaping of the material forms the focus, the creative process calling up new images and renewed strength in the patient. These help the patient to understand the illness better, to accept and overcome it, to approach life with renewed courage.



Knowing the aim of the treatment, the therapist uses dialogue to encourage the patient to take the work further: Is it to be a hollow or a free-form sculpture? Is the object to be mainly rounded or angular?



Therapeutic drawing and painting

In the quest to achieve inner balance, therapeutic drawing and painting serves to promote an intensive process of self-examination on the part of the patient. At the same time the patient's mental preoccupation with shapes and colours provides a chance to influence the body's vital functions.

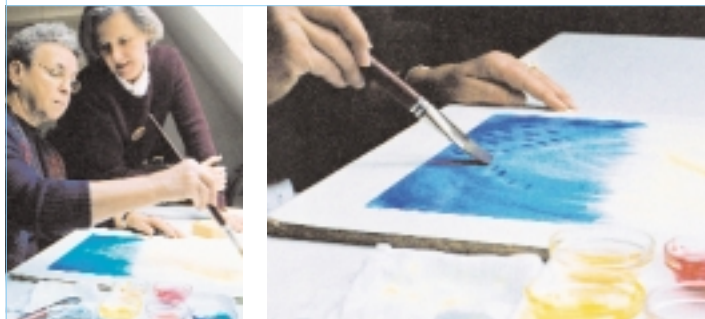
The various materials used include paintbrush and paints, chalks, charcoal, pencils and paper. A patient's memories of the past, hopes for the future, or consciousness of the present may be awakened in the creation of shapes and colours, spaces and lines, light and shade, using pastels or crayons, light or bold strokes. These are then reflected in various ways in the newly created picture.

In this instance the way is the goal. In creating a picture the important thing is not the exact reproduction of a landscape or the portrayal of an exact likeness. It's how the interplay of colour and form is perceived as a personal expression of emotions and

moods. Drawing and painting may release the artist from past experiences, yet they may also act as catalysts for things yet to be realised, which then enter the consciousness and take effect through the very activity of art.

The painted image also has a direct effect on the human organism. The following example demonstrates this effectively: A Crohn's disease sufferer with chronic diarrhoea paints a predominantly blue, free-form picture using layers of wet paint so that shapes gradually emerge. The picture is left to dry; the patient then outlines the various shapes using a coloured pen. This reinforcement of the contours adds form to what was fluid; the same process is mirrored by the patient's bodily functions: although the intrinsic state of the organism remains unchanged, the fluid contents of the intestines become firmer. Painting may therefore be seen to have a direct effect on bodily functions.

Depending on the material and the method, painting may stimulate various processes. On the one hand it promotes the imagination and strengthens the will. On the other, it's the painter who directs the paint, moving and forming it. It's a process of give and take, of compression and release, differentiation and connection, acceptance and decision, proximity and distance. Simultaneously the paint itself excites gentleness or passion, gravity or levity, courage or restraint. Experiencing these inner behavioural opposites in rhythmic alternation can help the patient recognise and solve any imbalances caused by the illness. Thus a process of self-knowledge is initiated, behavioural tendencies and patterns are brought to light, not to mention hitherto unrecognised inhibitions and blockages that may have a bearing on the patient's illness. The continuity of therapeutic drawing and painting enables established patterns to be abandoned and transformed and even trauma to be overcome (in children as well).



The selection of colours and painting techniques – dry with chalks (right) or wet with watercolours (left) – depends on the aim of the treatment.



Chalks are applied to the paper using a broad sweeping motion, creating a picture with large blocks of colour.

Music therapy

Listening intently to the note and vibrations produced by a chime struck with a felt hammer activates the life force through music and rhythm.

Music, be it through voice, melody, harmony, sound or rhythm, opens the door to an inner world of experience. It appeals to the emotions rather than the intellect. Neither prior knowledge nor musical talent is required to participate in music therapy. The range of instruments is wide and they are all easy to play. The following are used: **Percussion instruments** such as the glockenspiel, xylophone, cymbals, wood blocks, drums and kettle drums; various **wind** instruments such as the flute, crumhorn, shawm, trumpet and alpine horn; **stringed** instruments such as the crwth (a simplified cello), violin, viola and double bass; **plucked** instruments such as the harp, lyre and kantele; the **voice** (in the case of singing therapy).

Together with the therapist, the patient improvises or maybe simply listens to melodies, sounds and rhythms. The choice of instrument depends on the patient's

individual situation, the degree of severity, and the stage of the illness.

The aim of music therapy is to open up the inner spaces of the soul, to hear and consciously appreciate stillness or sound. The idea is to activate the patient's musical and rhythmic sensibilities as a means of promoting a zest for life – after all, every rhythmic process helps stimulate, strengthen, and maintain this vigour. It contributes to a deeper understanding and acceptance of self, which in turn helps the patient develop new perspectives on life.

Music helps many patients experience and understand things that they were previously unable to comprehend or consciously put into practice. Two examples:

- **Heart attack and high blood pressure patients** are often very hectic people who are constantly under pressure. Making music immediately enables them to recog-

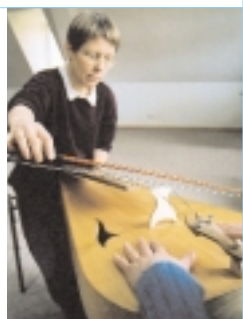
nise this. They are hardly able to sustain notes, find observing rests difficult, and generally expend far too much energy. The experience with music teaches them what it means to take things more slowly, how they can learn to take time for themselves, to find rest.

- **Asthma sufferers** are starved of air, their entire chest is tight and congested because they are unable to breathe out properly. Long notes and sustained phrases can help loosen this sense of tightness. Many asthmatics develop their own rhythm when making music, which in turn leads to a general improvement in their condition.

Music therapy is a vital component of paediatrics, as well as in the treatment of adults with internal physical and mental disorders. It has been found to have a profound effect on both the chronically and seriously ill – even those in intensive care.



Particularly in the case of seriously ill patients or premature babies, the gentle sound of a harp (left) is found to weave a pleasant veil of sound around the patient. The sensual appreciation is heightened if, in addition to listening, the patient's hands are placed on the instrument, in this case a crwth (right), in order to feel the vibrations of the resonator.



Elocution

Speech is one of the most important forms of human **communication**. But it's far more than just a vehicle for information: speech is an expression of the entire personality. Every person's voice, speech patterns, and enunciation are unique. The whole self is involved in producing every word: with the help of the voice, a person is able to express thoughts, emotions and intentions.

Palate, tongue, lips, and teeth create sounds that form the flow of air into words. Consonants give speech shape and solidity: e.g. fricatives such as F and V formed by the lips and upper teeth, ts like in "cats" and S formed by the teeth and tongue, or Y like "yellow" H like "hat". Tongue or palate is used to create the rolled R, while the tongue alone produces the liquid L. Several of the organs of speech are used to make plosive consonants: the lips form M, B and P, the tongue N and D, the palate T, G, K, NG, and H. Vowels on other hand are generally produced by the voice and are an expression of the inner self, the emotional state: A

expresses amazement, E self-contemplation, I self-assertion, O admiration, U fear, Au pain, and Ei tenderness.

All this happens as we inhale and exhale – in fact **speech is articulated exhalation**. Breathing therefore plays a particularly important role in speech.

The elocution therapy developed by actress Marie Steiner and her husband, Rudolf Steiner, the founder of anthroposophy, incorporates all these elements. To ascertain where the problems of a particular patient lie, the speech therapist invites the patient to read out a text; the therapist then plays close attention to the patient's posture, breathing, voice, enunciation, degree of concentration, and comprehension. This basis can be used to tackle specific weak points:

- poor **enunciation** can be corrected, **pitch** that is too high or too low adjusted.
- during expressive speech, **breathing automatically deepens**, which is beneficial to a number of illnesses (e.g. asthma, chronic gastrointestinal ailments, arthritis).

• Furthermore, the rhythm or meter of a text also has an impact on breathing. A poem written in hexameters for instance reinforces the **harmony between pulse and breathing** in an ideal, natural ratio of 1:4 (18 breaths to 72 beats of a normal pulse), and therefore has a measurable stabilising and regenerative effect on cardiac and circulatory rhythms.

• Texts full of consonants bring **form and stability**, in contrast vowel-rich texts promote **emotional expression** leading to release and relaxation.

• **Gestures** can reinforce the spoken intention.

Owing to its fundamental intervention in the relationship between body, mind and spirit, elocution therapy not only facilitates the treatment of speech disorders and impediments, but also provides a specific approach to a wide variety of internal ailments, not to mention psychosomatic and mental disorders, as well as finding application in the field of special education.



Example and imitation: the therapist speaks; the patient then attempts to reproduce the pronunciation of the words or sounds as accurately as possible.



Therapist and patient utter a word or sound sequence together. This makes imitation easier.

Eurythmy therapy

A dialogue of four hands: in a rhythmic exchange of give and take, two beaten bronze balls are passed from hand to hand. Pulse and breathing are calmed, thereby harmonising with each other.



The term eurythmy is derived from the Greek (eu = beautiful) and means "beautiful rhythm". The "beauty" is the harmony of internal and external, of the spiritual experience and its expression in physical movement. Eurythmy was developed for the theatre, being subsequently extended for educational and therapeutic purposes.

Eurythmy therapy employs speech, gestures and music, translating them into a unique form of movement. Particular movements are thereby assigned to each consonant and vowel. Geometric shapes are attributed to the vowels: in the case of A, for instance, the arms are spread wide and stretched upwards, forwards, backwards, or diagonally downwards; for O, the arms form a large circle with fingertips just touching; for E, hands are outstretched, wrists crossed.

Consonants are generally expressed through movement: D for example is represented by a forwards gesture, R by arms rolling circles vertically downwards, G by arms stretching, pushing outwards.

On the basis of the individual's medical diagnosis, the eurythmy therapist selects a few of these sounds and gestures and practises them together with the patient in order to achieve the desired therapeutic effect. The aim is to regulate the body's powers of expression, which have been disrupted as a result of illness. **The eurythmic movements create a link between the body's external movements and the inner vital workings of the organism.** In this sense, eurythmy may be regarded as an effective and specific remedy on a par with medication.

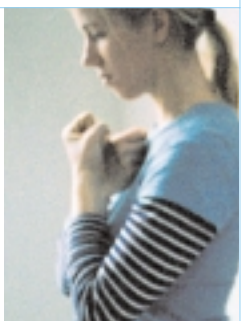
Therapeutic eurythmic exercises may involve the whole body, or combinations

such as arms and hands, legs and feet, fingers and toes; steps and leaps may also be added. In the process **the sequence of movements are adapted to the patient's condition:** eurythmy therapy can also be carried out sitting or lying down, even with severely ill patients or those receiving treatment in intensive care.

The exercises are specifically designed to stimulate, strengthen and regulate every bodily function and process. Depending on the exercise programme selected, circulation and breathing, metabolism, general mobility and balance may be addressed. As all the organs and their systems are stimulated by active movement, the eurythmic movement patterns influence the functions of specific organs, as well as the individual's emotional and mental capacity to express and experience.



Arms are crossed to make the eurythmic E (left). Three stage walking: feet are consciously lifted alternately, taking slow steps across the floor, feeling each foot roll through to the tips of the toes upon completion (right). This trains balance and stabilises rhythm. The combined gestures (far right) are an expression of inner concentration.



Imprint

Publishers Medical Section of the School of Spiritual Science, Goetheanum, CH-4143 Dornach, Switzerland **Editors** Annette Bopp, Hamburg, Germany; Dr. Jürgen Schürholz, Filderstadt, Germany **English Translation** Agenda Translations, Freiburg, Germany

Graphic Design Isabel Bünermann, BUERO HAMBURG, Germany **Photography** Nele Braas, Tangendorf, Germany

Lithography Beyer Lithografie, Hamburg **Printing** Gaiser Druck, Schwäbisch Gmünd, Germany **Circulation** 7.500; September 2004

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