

The Body We Are

Stanley Keleman

We are destined to live an embodied life. This means that we grow from small to big and change our somatic shape half a dozen times in one life. Our fate, when uninterrupted, presents a parade of distinct bodies from embryo to child and from child to adult, mature, older and aged.

We are born to this task of bodying the many selves of our lifetime. Our destined shapes are always with us as we continue in the process of forming the layers of our current and future selves. The child shape waits just as our adolescent, adult, mature and aged shapes wait in the wings to take their turn at being bodied. These bodies, as our experience shapes them, form the configuration of a universal body and our personal identity.

The body is a living, creative process. It is not merely an object of consciousness, nor is it the material side of spirit. It is not a lump of flesh we carry around or something from which we must try to escape. In the most basic sense we are our bodies, and more, that our

bodies are an expression in microcosm of the creative organizing principle of the universe. Our life is continually forming and reforming, and from birth to death the shapes of our fate present themselves to be lived. The appearance of each new shape is another incarnation.

We are not just waiting to die; we are living our selves. Each distinct self has its own special feeling, needs, images, actions, and a consequent world view. Throughout our lives we form bodies appropriate to the age we are. A somatic-emotional approach offers a way to work with the feelings and challenges of each emerging shape. Somatic work begins with discovering our individual patterns of self use and the emotional body states that give us a primary reality.

With this self knowledge, we learn to grow an interior presence, to be grounded in ourselves and to sustain our process in relationship to others. Growing ourselves, then, is not a state of mind but a state of the somatic entity.