



Philosophy Of Freedom Study Course

COURSE OBJECTIVE

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The objectives of the Philosophy Of Freedom Study Course is given in the opening of *The Philosophy of Freedom*. In Chapter 1, The Goal of Knowledge, Rudolf Steiner gives the two necessary practices for his path to freedom: orientate your life in the direction of the principles within *The Philosophy of Freedom* and practice pure conceptual thinking:

"I am under no illusion as to this characteristic of my time. I know how much automatism, devoid of individuality, prevails. But I am also just as aware that many of my contemporaries seek to **orient their lives in the direction that I have suggested here**. I would like to dedicate this book to them. It is not supposed to lead to the "only possible" path to truth but to describe the path taken by one for whom truth is central."

"This text leads first through abstract regions where thought must draw sharp outlines if it is to reach clearly defined positions. But the reader is also led from arid concepts into concrete life. I am certainly of the opinion that **one must also lift oneself into the realm of concepts** if one is to experience every aspect of existence. Someone who knows only how to enjoy use of the senses does not really know the sweetest part of life. Oriental sages have their students first spend years in renunciation and asceticism before they share with them what they know. The West no longer requires pious exercises or asceticism to attain knowledge, but it does demand the willingness to withdraw oneself awhile from the immediate impressions of life and **enter the world of pure thought.**"

The first objective of the study course is learning the principles of freedom given in Steiner's freedom philosophy. Obviously, you cannot apply these principles to your life without knowing them. The other course objective is preparation for deeper study of *The Philosophy of Freedom*. Just by reading the text one enters the world of pure thought and practices conceptual thinking, but to further

deepen reading experiences it is always the case that the task consists of improving basic reading comprehension of the text. George O'Neil describes deeper study of the *Philosophy of Freedom* in this way,

To achieve this living in thought we must first become **master in the highest degree of content**, utterly eliminating the arbitrariness of personal preference and emphasis. Says Goethe: *To have the whole thing in your heart, you must have conned its every part.* To which Rudolf Steiner has added: *First read for substance, then read again for form.*

In contemplating the totality of a living thought-organism, correspondences and symmetries previously unseen, begin to emerge, each illuminating the other. Meanings come forth, never before expected, revealing interdependence and mutual support. The whole is experienced as weaving interplay of single thoughts, each reflecting the whole as experiential from its single aspects.

Part I Free Thinking

Part I of the study course begins with the principles of individuality and freedom and then becomes an in-depth study of the principles of cognition with chapters on thinking, perception, conception, mental picturing, and cognition. While Part I is usually experienced as dry and abstract, with proper study it becomes the *"sweetest part of life"* if one is experiencing the flash of intuitive insight, or as Rudolf Steiner said, rather than reading strings of words the reading experience is more like *"the striking of steel on flint"*. The thought-structure of the book is intended to produce this result though it needs to be read with the inquisitive questioning and effort that brings *"inner shocks, tensions and resolutions"*.

Part II Free Action

Part II of the study course covers the principles of living life as an empowered ethical individualist, imaginatively expressing freedom in action.

In the first decade of the 20th century, August Ewerbeck got word that there were intimate circles in which Rudolf Steiner gave special esoteric training to those admitted to them. So he asked his teacher whether he too might be allowed to attend, and received the astonishing reply: *"You don't need to! You have understood my Philosophy of Freedom!"*

Asked which of his books he would most want to see rescued if catastrophe should come upon the world, Rudolf Steiner replied without hesitation: *The Philosophy of Freedom.*

In a conversation with Rudolf Steiner in 1922 Walter Johannes Stein asked, "What will remain of your work in thousands of years? Rudolf Steiner replied: *"Nothing but the Philosophy of Freedom,"* and then he added: *"But everything is contained in it. If someone realizes the act of freedom described there, he finds the whole content of Anthroposophy"*.