

# Philosophy Of Freedom Observation Exercises

The following 62 observation exercises are edited excerpts from Jügen Strube's *The Observation Of Thinking — Rudolf Steiner's "Philosophy of Freedom" As a Path to the Knowledge of Formative-forces* (English translation by Jeff & David Martin).

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### **1 – Forward**

As a teenager I was put on this path when I formulated the question of where thoughts come from. It seemed clear to me from my own observation that while I give impetus to, and the occasion for, thoughts to occur, I do not, in the same sense, create them myself. Since I could not imagine that others before me had not entertained this question about the emergence of thoughts, I then sought out literature that could suitably clarify my question. My search was unsuccessful at first. In the works that I found later the question of human knowledge was dealt with as an abstract formulation of information theory, which was interesting in itself but did not touch upon my actual question. Finally, I turned my attention to Steiner's "Philosophy of Freedom". It addressed what really interested me: "[However we approach the matter, it becomes more and more clear that the question of the nature of human action presupposes that of the origin of thinking](#)". POF 2-12\*

This book impressed me with its clarity and logic. It made no philosophical presuppositions, but was based on observations.

During subsequent repeated studies of the "Philosophy of Freedom" in working groups, the question arose as to whether the facts that were represented there conceptually could be illustrated by specific examples. It also became clear that it is not always easy to match what you read with your own inner experiences. In this book I thus offer a set of practical, easily executable exercises that I hope will facilitate the reader's own, direct experiences.

Dipperz, December 2009  
Jürgen Strube

\*Note: The *Philosophy Of Freedom* quotes are followed by topic reference numbers from the *Philosophy Of Freedom Study Guide*.

[ ] Brackets in text indicate added material. The exercise names and numbers were also added to Jürgen Strube's *The Observation Of Thinking*

## **2 – Man And The World**

The real world ordinarily appears as that which is given to us as perception through our senses. This world appears to be objective and outside us, whereas we experience our thinking within ourselves as subjects. Thus our thinking about reality is dependent on ourselves and seems like something we add to perception. Usually we are neither fully aware of this normally existing separateness from the world (which will be seen later as mere appearance), nor of the problems that this separation entails. This separateness may strike us when we simply realize that while we continuously observe all kinds of events unfolding around us, we do not often know how they actually come about. We think of reasons and hope that they are correct. Whether they actually match reality, is not always clear. Aside from a scientific understanding of nature; we generally strive for a deeper understanding of the world we live in today. We want to reach an understanding about ourselves and our place in life. It is not enough for most of us today to just live in a state of faith; we want to experience the truth with our own thinking. With an increase of experience we also want rationality. We want to maintain the same critical, transparently thoughtful approach that we value in science.

On the one hand it is clear that we only bring light into the darkness of our questions when we think. On the other hand, we know our thinking to be subjective and prone to error. How can

we find a solution to this? If we try to merely think about our thinking we turn unavoidably around in circles, thus a solution does not seem possible.

Anyone who occupies themselves even only initially with thinking, may have noticed that although we are always thinking, the way thoughts arise in us is by no means clear. Such uncertainty and ignorance with regards to the thinking activity is, on sober reflection, disproportionate to the otherwise enlightened times we live in. When dealing with thinking it is no use to turn to scientific hypotheses and theories in order to find out how thinking comes into being, because that would only be thinking about thinking again. Instead one should go directly to the observation of the facts that we find within the phenomena of thinking, or, in other words, thinking, like anything else, must be known through direct observation. This is possible because reality does not only confront us from the 'outside', but we can also look inward to realities.

### **Introspective Observation**

Being carefully aware of inner experiences is what Steiner calls "soul observation". To observe an inner reality, something must take place within us. In order to investigate this something we will turn to an approach common to science; the experiment. We will 'arrange' something and see what happens in us. To illustrate, let's immediately begin such an experiment.

As a scientist, as well as in real life, one is used to first watching things happen and then afterwards seeking to discover an explanation for the relationships involved. To raise awareness of these simple facts, the reader can imagine a possible experiment with two balls that roll differently, as described below.

**Exercise #1 Urge To Know:** Imagine the following situation as realistically as possible, as if you were experiencing it now yourself. At the top of a completely flat, but inclined surface (for example, a slightly sloping wooden board) two balls of equal size and of similar appearance (brass) are released. One ball rolls down the slope quickly after being released and rolls to a stop at the bottom. The other ball moves slowly a few centimeters and then stops on the slope. After a few seconds, it rolls very slightly backward with a jerk and then rolls a few centimeters further forward and then stops still again on the slope. This type of jerky motion continues until this ball finally reaches the other ball where they both lie still. What happens in you during or after you imagine such an event?

**Result:** If you imagine the facts before you, you can notice that the question arises as to why the balls are so different. Perhaps you entertain all sorts of considerations as to what the cause could be. In addition, you may have noticed in yourself a moment of brief surprise and a desire for an explanation.

Steiner formulates it thus: "[Nowhere are we satisfied with what nature spreads before our senses, we look everywhere for what we call the explanation of the facts.](#)" POF 3-0 What was

hopefully effective in the above exercise was what Steiner called the basic human drive for knowledge. You can certainly see, theoretically, that we do not remain satisfied with merely what is given to our senses. This is not a theory but a fact. This becomes clear when you observe in yourself the appearance of surprise or questioning dissatisfaction that arises in moments of not being able to know something. No one other than oneself can make this observation. What is the cause of my dissatisfaction and my questioning? It is the simple fact that what I can observe in an event or process does not contain what I want to know, namely, as in the case above, how the difference between the rolling actions of the two balls comes about.

Steiner expresses the usual consequence of this situation with these words: [“The fact that what we seek in things exceeds what is directly given to us in them, splits our entire being in two parts; we become conscious of our polar opposition to the world. We confront the world as independent beings.”](#) POF 3-0

Perhaps you have already noticed: once the fact that the balls roll at different speeds is realized, once this becomes a perception for me, this realization is immediately insufficient. There is something in me that yearns for complete insight. With this desire for insight I stand over against the world as given and am thrown continually back on myself. I can see the balls and wooden board, they appear in front of me. The reason for the difference in their rolling movement is not found there. For this I must think. I experience thinking as my own activity. Even if someone else gives me an explanation, I must think about their thoughts, either immediately or through reflection, in order to understand them.

One can think of several explanations for the different rolling movements of the balls. To discover the truth, you could cut the balls open and examine their interiors. You could also look under the sloping board for hidden devices or, according to the theories you might have developed, make predictions of their movements under different conditions. Even if such predictions could be objectively substantiated, this also could only come about through thinking about something observed. Does this mean that one thus only makes a subjective picture, or representation, of the world in order to understand it, while its real essence is inaccessible? If so, it would seem that we have not really advanced any further on the road to knowledge. However, we have still not observed our thinking but have instead only noticed that the odd ball led us to wonder and that prompted us to think.

If we want to get to know thinking, it does not help, as already mentioned, that we just produce thoughts about it. Why should thoughts about thinking offer us more security than thoughts about anything else? The problem is solved, however, if we proceed scientifically and first observe the facts. Perhaps, in this apparently unending circle of inquiry, there is something in the activity of thinking that can arise as a new fact for our perceptual attention. We must find out if it is only we, ourselves, who create what thinking is, or if there is something contained in this process over which we have no influence, something objective that belongs inherently to the world.

[\[“Only when we have transformed the world-content into our thought-content do we recapture the connection which we had ourselves broken off.”](#) POF 3-0]

For such an investigation, what is needed is "soul observation following the scientific method," as Steiner put it. Instead of "soul observation" we could also say 'awareness of our own inner

experiences'. I must observe what occurs in an interior space available only to me.

The fact that this is an investigation that I carry out on my own 'self' and not on another person, may lead to the concern that we must here abandon the sureness of a scientific endeavor and fall into subjectivity again. What does one do in order to proceed "according to the scientific method"? As a scientist, you would give a description of the facts you have observed and specify the conditions under which they occurred. Others could then, on the basis of this information, repeat the investigation, observe the facts that occur and compare them with your report.

Whether, and to what extent, the observed facts require explanation, will be decided according to the specific circumstances. However, it is not inherent in the scientific method to demand that the facts presented must necessarily have a physical explanation. Such a demand for a physical explanation is the unfounded requirement of a *belief*. As well, the exclusive reliance on another person's account (for example, the exercise results described here) without examining it also violates the methodological rules of science, since the accuracy of the report would only be believed.

I create an obstacle for myself if I categorically dismiss what I perceive within myself as a delusion. In this case I would incorporate an unfounded presupposition that would only be justified if I could observe the process of delusion and distinguish it from other such processes that are not delusional.

In relation to the topic discussed here, the proof of its scientific basis can only be determined through self-observation. The 'laboratory' for this analysis is the 'space' of inner experience; that is, the inwardness of the examining subject. The knowable facts arise objectively. What does 'objective' mean in this context? An object is that to which I can focus (in this case inwardly) my attention. In the context of ordinary, outward-looking sense perception, these are the visible, audible, tactile objects outside of my body. My body itself (eye, ear) I see as part of my subject. If I look at my eye in the mirror, it becomes an object to me. If I turn my capacity for sensibility towards my eye to see how it feels, this sensation is also an object to me. If I become conscious of my anger and turn my attention to it, this will also become an object for me. In short, everything that I can direct my attention to can become an object for me. The question of whether, for example, anger is subjective or objective, is not suitably formulated. Anger is an objective fact (as long as it occurs). It arises within what I experience as *myself* and is thus part of my subject. If I can assume a point of view from which I can look at it from a 'distance' and as a researcher remain unaffected by it while I observe its appearance and disappearance, then a part of what was previously the subject becomes an object. This is possible because the knowing 'I' is capable of rising above inner experiences.

["We erect this barrier between ourselves and the world as soon as consciousness first dawns in us. But we never cease to feel that, in spite of all, we belong to the world, that there is a connecting link between it and us, and that we are beings within, and not without, the universe."](#) POF 3-0 Is it not surprising that Steiner maintains here that we build the border between the world and ourselves? If it is not nature-given, but depends on me, I must be able to change it.

The further presentation of this book can also be viewed in the light of changing this boundary. Things will become conscious that were previously as if held behind an inner

threshold, as the focus of our attention is directed specifically to the inside. Gradually, a previously unrecognized layer of one's being is uncovered.

**Summary:** The human being can perceive his environment and also himself. These perceptions do not include the reasons why the world exists and unfolds the way it does. Man does not find what he seeks there: an explanation of the relationships. He must add these through thinking. He thus appears to be separated from nature, although he feels a part of it. It must be investigated through self-observation whether our thinking has in it something that belongs inherently to the world and not to the thinker. Thus there would be a possibility of overcoming the separation.

### 3 – Thought Pictures

Steiner expanded the concept of 'thinking' in the development of his "Philosophy of Freedom" and left it to the reader to notice this. He directly expresses this need to expand our concepts only once in the text, where he calls for an extension of the concept of 'perception'. A serious reader of the "Philosophy of Freedom" will see relatively quickly that one is required to clarify what one usually connects with the term 'thinking'.

Colloquially, 'thinking' as a generic term is used for everything that goes through one's mind, especially what one calls mental pictures or representations, which also includes memory images and fantasy. In the course of this presentation we will attempt to provide examples of the various forms of 'thinking' and to arrive at a differentiation.

**Exercise #2 Free Flowing Chain Of Thoughts:** Recall what thoughts occurred to you this morning at breakfast. Please do this first, and then read further.

**Results:** Depending on how long ago the event occurred and whether any special features define it or not, it will probably be difficult or impossible to remember all the thoughts one had. What is essential here is to try to bring to mind the flow of everyday thoughts as they unfolded.

The following chain of thoughts could have occurred during someone's breakfast: *This bread tastes very dry. It was really good at Grandma's last time. When was that? Well, she bakes it herself. You have to have time to do that. Lunch break is going to be short today there's a meeting at one. The best thing is to get a pizza. I should also fill the tank ...*

One generally does not actively contribute much to such a chain of thoughts; they just flow along. The instigation was perhaps a feeling of dry bread, and then they just ran on. One could have interrupted them, but that would have required a small inner jerk, if one doesn't, then they flow on, as they will.

If one inquires how such a chain of thoughts actually proceeds, in what manner they concretely arise, one will find something like this: These thoughts appear mostly in linguistic

and pictorial form. It may be a passive listening, but also something like a fine inner speech could be involved. In addition memory or mental images bob along in this flow of thinking. Sensations, like perhaps the scent of the bread, can also be involved, but usually they are so weak they are hardly noticed.

Such thought-chains can occur for a variety of causes and with a variety of topics. Relationships mediate between each arising element ('bread' to 'Grandma bakes'). These become apparent when one subsequently asks oneself how one got from one thought to another. Usually, however, such thought-chains are quickly forgotten. During the course of such a chain of thought one can move to active thinking at any point.

What is the essential characteristic of such flowing thought-chains? What does it mean specifically 'to move to active thinking'? Obviously the free flow of a train of thought results from not giving any direction or theme to one's thinking. It assumes any, random content, as in the above example where the dry bread started the chain; this means they are not based on a previous decision that one voluntarily executes. One goes over to active thinking as soon as one wants to pursue a particular question, be it self-generated or coming from others. With active thinking you define the 'theme' and deliberately stay more or less close to it. This does not mean you do not lose it again at moments when your concentration wanes. Whether one can stay on a topic is also a question of attention. But once it is noticed that one has left the theme, it is not too difficult to return to it again.

Thinking that is not directed consciously and deliberately can exist in the form of free flowing thought-chains, as in the example above, but also in other forms, such as involuntary occurring memories and associations, or as thoughts that one associates out of habit or education with perceptions, or also as dreamlike fantasies. It is crucial that these forms of thinking, which Steiner describes as "thought pictures", can be differentiated from others that are deliberately utilized to realize a theme and to hold one's attention, or return one's attention, to it.

**Summary:** Associative representations and thought pictures arise and flow involuntarily, without being sought or guided deliberately by one's 'I' being.

#### 4 – Perceptions and Representational Thinking

**Exercise #3 Filling Gap In Chain Of Perceptions With Thinking Assumption:** Imagine that someone is describing to you the following scene: *A person was sitting opposite me about three meters away, so I could only see her from the front. She held out an eraser in her right hand; her left hand, which she also held out, was empty. She put both hands behind her back, transferred the eraser from one hand to the other, then brought her hands back in front of her again and held the eraser out now in her left hand, her right hand being empty.*

**Results:** The observant reader will have noticed that this description does not actually separate what was perceptible from what could only be assumed by thinking. If one could see

the person only from the front, then the accurate description must be the following: *A person was sitting opposite me about three meters away, so I could only see her from the front. She held out an eraser in her right hand; her left hand, also held out, was empty. She put both hands behind her back and then brought her hands back in front of her again and held a similar eraser out in her left hand, her right hand being empty.* Such an account provides only what one was able to perceive. To formulate *transferred the eraser from one hand to the other* was a supposition of thought only.

It is essential for a scientist, and can be helpful as well in any situation, to be able to differentiate various perceived elements, in short, differentiate the perceptions from the imagined elements attached to them through reflection.

Thinking has created here a mental version of what is assumed must have happened when the person's activity was invisible behind her back. Thus the observer, during his present recollection of past events, actually uses these mental pictures from memory to treat the unobservable action as if it were a perception. It could be, of course, that the eraser was passed behind her back from one hand to the other, just as it was pictured in thought. One could also perhaps have thought (in words and/or pictorial forms) that it was all a trick and that one eraser was actually exchanged for another. One could elaborate on these mental pictures and graphically imagine how behind her back she had a similar, second, eraser hidden that she picked up with her left hand as she hid the first with her right.

If the scene described were actually performed before a group of people, probably no one would have suspected anything concerning the invisible part of the action. This demonstrates again the instinct to process perception with thoughts that Steiner calls "the basic impulse of science." We seek constantly to explain that which is not contained in perception.

Unlike the flow of those thought-chains that are dependent on the randomness of events, this is an example of how a gap in the cognition of perceived events is quickly closed by a mental supposition of the most likely case. This means that more than one possibility could have been considered. A feeling was also involved, namely the urge to conceptually complete the imperceptible part of an action.

Try to observe this same urge in yourself at the moment of its occurrence in a similar situation. If you can learn to notice it, then later it will become easy to voluntarily override it in chosen moments. In the above example with the eraser it was sufficient for one's understanding to insert an image of a probable action into the moment when no action was visible.

The assumption that the eraser passed from one hand to the other was transparent because the interruption in the experienced (or imagined during reading) chain of perception was satisfactorily closed by it. It is usually the case that we effortlessly produce mental pictures to complete such actions. Probably a very clearly observable act of thinking took place when you considered the possibility of a second eraser instead of the obvious and simple transfer of only one from hand to hand. We do not usually notice, however, that we are already thinking when we recognize a chain of perceptions as a continuous action. We carry out this kind of thinking almost effortlessly as it unfolds in us as a matter of course – but in what way? In the above example it is done by the automatic assignment of the concepts 'person', 'sit', 'Hand', 'Eraser', etc. to perceived impression, and in the further 'mapping' of the concepts of 'to be the

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same' and 'to be similar'. In this way, for example, it is possible to be certain that at the end of the action the same person is sitting there as at the beginning, and that the eraser is similar, though not necessarily the same. Such statements are possible because the same concepts continually correspond to the variously perceived impressions and the concept of 'continuity' is brought into connection with the whole chain of perceptions. In some moments this continuity is applicable and in others it is not. Where it is not apparent we are stimulated to produce further thoughts.

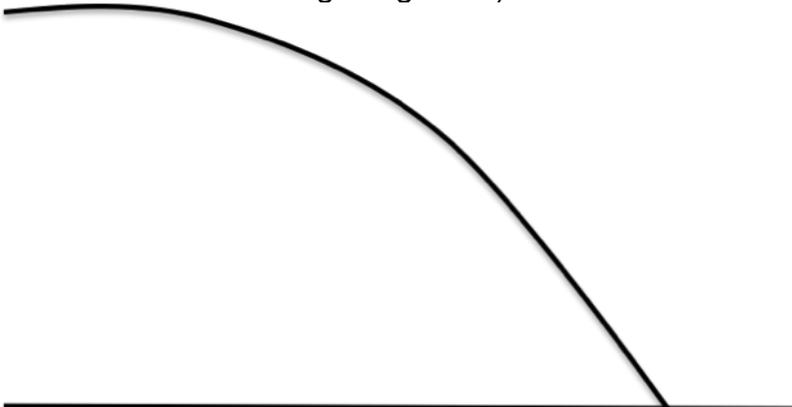
**Summary:** We can perceive different kinds of thought content in our consciousness. Through representational thinking gaps are closed in chains of perceptions. These simple thinking processes are naturally available as a matter of course and usually go unnoticed.

## 5 – Conceptual Thinking

Despite our generally existing urge to think we in no way explain everything. Many things we take in easily, some appear to us to be too complicated, and others are not interesting at all or, although they might have interested us in other circumstances, we now pass them by with reduced attention. We usually pose the least questions about the obvious facts of our inner life, for example about seeking explanations.

A fairly simple search for an explanation was involved in the above 'eraser' example. The differently rolling balls are somewhat harder to explain. For someone that doesn't already know the answer, finding an explanation will probably take some time. Before the puzzle of the rolling balls is illuminated, let's look at the way in which such solutions are even possible. One could of course provide an explanation to the enigma using mental pictures that can be combined with those learned in a different context. But if we remain only in this realm of object-based representations, the possibility of the self-observation of the part played by our conceptual content could easily escape us. The following example can first help bring clearly into consciousness how a more conceptually oriented thinking can become engaged and the possibilities it enables.

**Exercise #4a Distinguish Perceptible Part From Thinking Part:** Imagine the following, or even better do it yourself: a small object (such as a chestnut) is as accurately as possible thrown horizontally forward from a certain height. After traversing a specific path through the air it will hit the ground. The figure below schematically describes how the trajectory of a horizontally thrown object over and onto a flat horizontal surface proceeds (without its continuation after hitting the ground).



Now answer the following questions: What is perceptible in this situation and what is the part I think? Why did the chestnut follow such a curve? Why didn't it fall down vertically? Why didn't it continue on at a constant height?

Even if you know the answers, it is important to formulate these answers as precisely as possible, as if you are explaining the facts so that someone else could understand them. If you have the impression that you can't explain the process properly because you don't know enough physics, just try to anyway. This exercise doesn't depend on the accuracy of the explanation, but rather on *how* one gives such an explanation. You should also resist the possible temptation to read ahead now in order to give a more detailed answer.

After you have tried to come up with a detailed explanation of the facts yourself, and maybe made some notes, go on to the following exercise.

**Exercise #4b Attention Focused On Perceived Event:** Now answer the following question: Where was my attention focused when I was trying to deal with the previous exercise? You can also make notes at this point for a comparison with what follows.

**Result:** If one looks at the above situation with the thrown object, firstly, from the point of view of perception and thinking, we can be clear about this: the perceptible part is the trajectory. This is true whether you only look at the curved line of the sketch in this book or if you have actually seen the object flying through the air in its trajectory and remember it. If I would at first refuse to think further, I could still follow or imagine the entire process in its course, however the inner connection, why the object moves in a curve, would still remain unintelligible for me. [Note: In practical terms the situation of pure observation hardly ever occurs. Remembered experience is also likely to combine many thoughts, such as in this case; with a stronger thrust the object flies further horizontally and that without thrust it will fall vertically.]

Whether and how I reflect further about the above facts depends on me. Through my thoughts I want to achieve an understanding as to how the trajectory comes about. An explanation of the path of flight could be given for example, in the following manner: *The object would continue to fly in a straight line, if it were not for the attraction of the earth. The object would fall perpendicular to the ground, had I just released it, rather than thrown it horizontally. I imagine the actual flight path as a combination of a horizontal component (moving forward) and a vertical component (falling to the ground), which both take place simultaneously. Were the horizontal and the vertical velocity constant in each case, then an oblique, but straight-line trajectory would result from the combination of the speeds. In fact, there was a curved trajectory toward the earth. This can happen through the fact that the*

*falling velocity increases continuously, or that the horizontal velocity decreases. I know that the rate of the fall increases with the duration of the flight, because the pull of gravity acts constantly. The slowing of the object due to air resistance, and possible irregularities due to the rotation of the object, I assume to be negligible in this case.*

**Exercise #4c Addition Of Concepts To Observation:** What has been achieved by thinking through such an explanation? What is different afterwards than before?

**Result:** I have added something to the observation (which is here the image of the throwing process and the flight path). I have added a description using concepts such as 'speed', 'constant', 'increase', 'component', 'superimpose', 'gravity' and 'drag', in order to make the connections transparent. I have actually 'seen' into the process, while I considered the fundamental reasons themselves. Here I have as if played the process through a second time. It has arisen in my mind through the application of the appropriate concepts. I had insight because this conceptual description took place in me as I thought it. I understand the connections of the concepts with each other because I enacted them myself.

It may seem trivial to attest that I added something to the observation (knowledge to perception). However, that is what makes this everyday operation decisive; namely my understanding of the process. If I actually possessed nothing but the observation, I would understand nothing. By means of the concepts I could inwardly disassemble the horizontal and vertical speeds in order to be able to understand the visible results. Because I can then merge the concepts and harmonize the resulting whole with what is perceived, I can cognize the relationships within the action.

Something special is achieved through conceptual thinking in that I can now use the above concepts to predict how the trajectory will change with the conditions, for example, by throwing the object with more force. I can estimate the influence of an additional wind force. If a part of the flight path becomes obscured to my view, I can still explain to myself how it must unfold.

With the above concepts the example could be adequately explained. It would also be possible, and is common in physics, to refine the conceptual explanation further. A detail that was used here simply as an empirical fact such as *The object would continue moving forward in a straight line*, can itself again be understood by using further concepts. With this level of thinking, which is conceptual thinking, Steiner begins the 4th Chapter of the "Philosophy of Freedom."

**Summary:** In spite of the urge to think it depends on me whether I actually think actively. I can do without it, but if I do think actively I can achieve a clear view of inherent relationships. I recognize the relationships while I repeat for myself the external process as a conceptual process. The conceptual process contains the principle and thus encompasses more than just the perceived event; I can now predict the impacts of changed circumstances.

## 6 – Observation, Thinking and Consciousness

So far terms like 'perception', 'observation' and 'thinking' have been used and hopefully the reader has thereby been appropriately led to what the author wanted to express by them. *Perceptions* usually appear to me from without, through *observation* I become aware of them and *thinking* is something I produce. [The word *observation* is ambiguous; it can denote both the process as well as the given objects of observation.]

**Exercise #5 Observation Of Imagined Event:** Recall the above description of someone sitting with an eraser in her hand. Where was this person holding up an eraser?

**Results:** She did not actually sit in front of me, but the scene was imagined. Perception is clearly then not limited to mean only sensory perception.

This brings to awareness once again that not only external perceptions, but also mental pictures and other internal impressions can be observed. We would know of no feelings if they could not be perceived. A perception can be described as that which is available to our observation.

Every observation requires some attention. It can be focused on both external and internal impressions. To focus attention on something means to *expect* that something is there, or coming into existence, which I want to know more precisely so that I can grasp it with concepts. It does not matter whether it is a visual, auditory or any other kind impression.

I can direct my attention at will. Any object of perception, often those that occur strongly or unexpectedly, such as movements or sounds, or impressions that elicit feelings, can also attract it. Wherever my attention is directed, there I observe. If one can generate enough attention, one can hold it on multiple objects at the same time. This is done most easily, with a kind of over-awake attention, when one pays attention only to changes of already familiar things. On the other hand, if one tries to explore something in detail, one usually has to bring an increased concentration of one's attention to it. One can even increase concentration to such an extent that unwanted effects (distractions) are no longer noticed.

Careful observation thus provides us with what we then know is given. This 'is' at first what has resulted from the initial observation. In fact, we cannot always immediately grasp it without turning the attention to, or awaiting, something else with which, through thinking, we can establish a relationship. And we may then make further observations that complement or deepen the previous observations. Thus it also depends on us whether, and to what extent, something becomes known. Further observations increase the scope of what we know. The nature of what is observed does not change through the fact that it is observed, that is, through the fact that its content receives a determination. Because this is so, someone else can make an observation with the same result, provided the observational circumstances do not change.

The concepts I link with the observation depend, however, on which concepts are available to me or that I can produce and, of these, which ones appear suitable to be connected with the observations. If I lack the appropriate concepts or they don't come to me, I cannot explain, for example, how it can happen that the balls in the above exercise roll differently.

I find the content of observation before me as a given. I then define with my thinking which concepts to use and how to connect them so as to bring order to the observation. I can neither completely replace observation by thinking, nor thinking by observation.

On this view of the relationship between observation and thinking Steiner writes: "As regards observation, our need of it is due to the way we are constituted. Our thinking about a horse and the object "horse" are two things that for us emerge separately from each other. This object is accessible to us only by means of observation. As little as we can form a concept of a horse by merely staring at the animal, just as little are we able by mere thinking to produce a corresponding object." POF 4-0 In addition to externally observable things I can also observe internal experiences such as my hunger, joy and memories, otherwise I would not know of them. "Everything that enters the circle of our experience, we first become aware of through observation. The content of sensations, perceptions, contemplations, feelings, acts of will, dreams and fantasy imaginations, mental pictures, concepts and ideas, as well as illusions and hallucinations, are given to us through observation." POF 4-1

Even thinking, once it has run its course, can be observed. We have already made repeated use of this, for example, when discussing what we thought could explain a trajectory.

We have used the word 'conscious' a number of times along with the terms perception, observation, attention and thinking. Apparently it means that I presently know of something specific. But what precisely does it mean that I am 'conscious' of something?

**Exercise #6 Conscious Awareness Of The Addition Of Concepts To Objects:** Direct your attention to something that you have not previously considered carefully, and consider it now. This can be, for example, looking closely (perhaps through a magnifying glass) at the fabric of a tablecloth, or looking at the grain in a wooden picture frame, or choose any other object. Then reflect on what you have just done.

**Results:** In the tablecloth example, one can see many, repeating, thin line-like elements that one associates here with the concept 'threads'. These threads have regular 'swellings', which, because one combines the concept 'woven' with the tablecloth, one sees as a consequence of the hardly-visible mesh of the fabric. Between these swellings are slight depressions through which the tinier cross-threads run.

To have something in consciousness apparently entails that I am presently, perhaps acutely, aware of what I am observing and what concepts I bring to meet this observation.

Steiner formulated it thus: "Human consciousness is the stage upon which concept and

observation meet and become linked to one another. In saying this we have in fact characterized this (human) consciousness. It is the mediator between thinking and observation. In as far as we observe a thing it appears to us as given; in as far as we think, we experience ourselves as being active. We regard the thing as object and ourselves as thinking subject. Because we direct our thinking upon our observation, we have consciousness of objects; because we direct it upon ourselves, we have consciousness of ourselves, or self-consciousness. Human consciousness must of necessity be at the same time self-consciousness because it is a consciousness that thinks. For when thinking contemplates its own activity, it makes its own essential being, as subject, into a thing, as object.” POF 5-2

The investigation of the content of my consciousness demonstrates that everything that appears within it belongs in one of two possible categories: observations or concepts. In my remembered experience I can also differentiate between observations and their thoughtful elaboration with concepts. Communications from other people are no exception since there, as well, observational and conceptual components can be distinguished. Other means of knowledge than observation and thinking are ultimately not available. Steiner writes: “Whatever principle we choose to lay down, we must either prove that somewhere we have observed it, or we must enunciate it in the form of a clear thought which can be re-thought by any other thinker.” POF 4-0

“Observation and thinking are the two points of departure for all the spiritual striving of man, in so far as he is conscious of such striving.” POF 4-0

“Human consciousness is the stage upon which concept and observation meet and become linked to one another.” POF 5-2

**Summary:** One can describe perception as that which is available to observation. Observation requires attention. It can be directed to outer as well as inner impressions. To direct one’s attention to something means to observe it or expect it’s coming-into-appearance; one wants to know the object of attention in detail and grasp it with concepts. To have something in consciousness means to know it in the present moment. Through thinking observations are associated with concepts in consciousness and recognized.

## **7 – Observation of Thinking**

It is basic and common practice for scientists to examine their own thought processes and to go over them again and again. This is often accomplished by re-thinking a particular problem with regard to its content, context and relationships. One may thereby be recalling a previous train of thought in exactly the same way again, (such as a teacher may do when repeating the same lecture). In contrast, a true review of one’s own thinking process itself is usually an exception.

Unlike ordinary thinking, where one has a presently created content in consciousness, a review of one’s own thinking process involves bringing an already-past thinking process back into consciousness and considering it. Even if the memory is often pale, our past thinking activity does not disappear entirely without a trace. There is, at least for a short time, something left behind that we can remember. Upon this capacity we can build the observation of thinking.

Steiner writes: "For even thinking we must get to know first through observation."

"Whereas observation of things and events, and thinking about them, are everyday occurrences filling up the continuous current of my life, observation of the thinking itself is a kind of exceptional state."

"We must be clear that when we observe thinking the same procedure is applied to it that we normally use for the study of all other objects in the world, but that, in the ordinary course of that study, is not usually applied to thinking itself. " POF 4-1

With the formulation "observation of thinking" one can have the expectation that one must be able to see thinking in the inner space of perception in the same way as one sees objects with one's eyes. Since such a thing is not possible, one might falsely assume that one is not in a position to observe thinking. However, "observation of thinking" will mean to be able to remember one's own past thinking. The previous exercises, without mentioning it specifically, have repeatedly encouraged us to reflect on our own thinking; to observe it.

To become familiar with this retrospective observation of thinking, practice the following exercises.

**Exercise #7a Recall A Thought Process:** Recall your explanation of the trajectory. Try to remember it as accurately as possible.

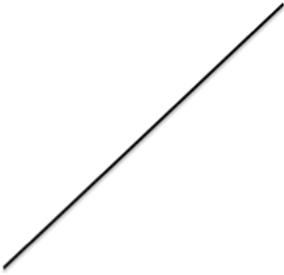
**Results:** You may recall the various considerations you engaged in to explain the process.

**Exercise #7b Study The Recollection Of A Thought Process:** Now examine how you went about the above exercise. Did you simply remember or did you begin to re-think something similar to your earlier train of thought?

**Results:** One often begins with the memory of an easily accessible reference point such as some basic element, the original question or a specific occurrence, and then begins, in connection with this, to remember more. Once one retrieves a certain amount of detail though, one often begins a new process of thinking about the contents. It can, for example, be noticed that one has chosen a somewhat different way to think about the problem. It may also happen that one knows *now I am thinking differently* without having the details of the previous path before the mind's eye.

Further opportunities for the observation of thinking, that is, to initially describe our past thinking and representations, are offered by the following exercises. These exercises are also

intended to help the reader become more acquainted with the difference between representational thinking on the one hand and conceptual thinking on the other.



**Exercise #8a The Illustrated Line:** What does the figure above represent?

**Results:** First, in order to be able to give a correct answer, you probably wondered what the purpose of this exercise is. There are many possible answers: A stick, a symbol of ascent, an ordered collection of printer's ink on white paper, the graphical representation of a mathematical function without its coordinate axes, and, among all these, the drawing illustrates a geometrically straight line.

Let's choose the last option. In this case we need to remember the difference between a geometrical line and a graphical illustration of it. A geometrically straight line has no thickness; it is infinitely thin, and a printed line must necessarily have a certain width. A geometrically straight line is infinitely long; a graphic illustration has to come to an end somewhere. In order to get to know more precisely the nature of a geometrically straight line, which is in fact a concept, we have no choice other than to leave the limitations of the objective world behind us in the process of mentally representing it.

**Exercise #8b Imagine Geometrically Straight Line:** Imagine a geometrically straight line, that is, an infinitely long, straight line, which can be oriented anywhere in space.

**Exercise #8c Distinguish Representational Content From Guiding Lawfulness:** Now assume the 'exceptional state' (observe past thinking) and direct your attention to the above imagination and describe it.

**Results:** The mental image of the line appeared to the inner eye as if highlighted in brightness (light, black or color) in a representational area. For a straight line that extends into the geometrical infinite, one could really only imagine a section of it. In fact the instruction to imagine an infinitely long line was not realizable. At some point the image gets blurred, one abandons trying to visualize it and just *thinks* it with something that could be formulated as

'and on and on'. Even though the image was unable to continue it was totally clear what was meant. If in doubt, repeat the exercise and check the results described.

The results of such an analysis demonstrate that the geometric law of a straight line is knowable but not imaginable. In place of a continuous image one lets a thought intervene ('and on and on') that indicates how the image would have to continue without forming it concretely. This thought follows the law of the straight line, however the actual guiding lawfulness of the line (the concept of a straight line) is not itself visible.

This exercise makes it evident that there is a representational content in thinking that is visible to me, and another content whose lawfulness I can know but not visualize. Thus we can distinguish between a representational part of thinking and a non-representational part (conceptual thinking). This exercise does not yet demonstrate precisely how conceptual thinking takes place. What is clear, however, is that the line does not have any particular form, but rather corresponds to the concept of a straight line. The concept corresponds to all possible realizations of 'straight line', regardless of their positions in space. If this were not so, one would have imagined something else.

Representing a clear mental picture before the inner eye is not always achievable by everyone. Its actual appearance, that is, its position with regard to the one who is representing, the power of the appearance, the color and background are quite individual. If one has no clear picture, then one probably has at least a shadowy impression. This is, according to experience, initially sufficient in order to carry out the exercises that will be proposed further on.

You can also pick a mental picture that arises arbitrarily and study it; you will find that this leads to a corresponding increase in your ability to focus on them for longer and with more clarity.

In implementing the above exercise, it can happen that the mental picture does something of itself as you watch, for example, that it moves or changes form without your willful intention. Instead of being self-active, you have gone into a kind of dreamy state. This state of a numbing of your thinking-will is not what is sought. In such a case it might be necessary to start again after a pause. What we are after here is doing something one consciously intends to do and turning our inner eye to the experiences that arise.

Depending on individual circumstances, in practice these observations do not take place in that we form a mental picture once and then remember it, but phases of picturing and phases of observation alternate, perhaps very closely together in time and appearance, or one has the impression of observing in the very present, i.e., one is acutely aware of what one is doing and which phenomena are occurring. This does not mean one cannot, as well, call these events up in memory and subsequently observe them again. One may notice in retrospect something that one did not notice the first time around.

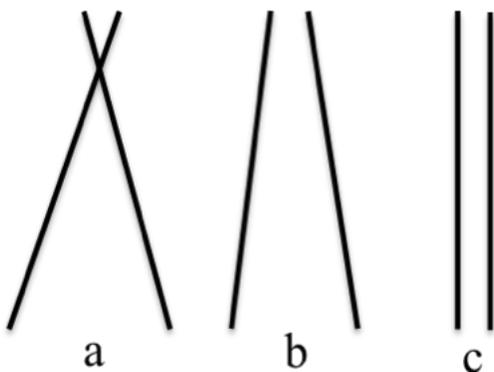
**Exercise #8d Imagined Impression Of Lawfulness:** How does the experience which was characterized above as *one abandons trying to visualize it and just thinks it with something that could be formulated as 'and on and on'* actually occur in consciousness? In order to observe this, just repeat the last exercise.

**Results:** Visual and/or emotional impression, singularly or together, are accompanied with internally heard speech and perhaps other impressions. It may be that you had an imagined impression similar to a kind of quick momentum forward or of something letting go that was inwardly seen or felt, or a disappearance in something nebulous. Another possibility is the sensation that you could just go further out to some far remote location and there start again to continue imagining the line. It may also be that one inwardly speaks the lawfulness of the line and/or at the same time some kind of speaking is heard. This is not easy to observe, and the results can also vary according to the individual.

**Summary:** A mental picture or representation is something we can all look inside ourselves and see. This may involve a memory image or something created by thinking or through a thought up fantasy. We cannot always imagine everything we can think about. Representational and conceptual thinking can be distinguished. With a representation, a concept works as an organizing principle in the background without being visible. Both what we represent and conceive let themselves be remembered. One can, as well, repeatedly distance oneself from the content and focus instead on this activity and its inner 'events'.

**Further exercises for observing thinking:**

The following exercises are designed to help make the relationship between representational and conceptual thinking more immediately apparent to self-observation.



**Exercise #9a: Rotate Intersecting Lines To Parallel Position According To Conceptual Thinking:** Imagine two lines that intersect, similar to figure *a.* above. Now let the imagined intersection move ever further from its original position so that the lines are rotated and the angle between them becomes smaller, as in figure *b.* Continue in this way until, as in figure *c.*, the lines are parallel to each other.

**Exercise #9b The Law Of Crossing Lines According To Representational Thinking:** Imagine these figures again and now try to bring them together (from an intersecting to a parallel position) as one continuous movement, and assume the 'exceptional state' and observe what you do and what happens.

**Results:** It is not possible to make one continuous movement with the intersection until the lines become parallel without breaking the law of either parallel lines or crossing lines. It is easy to imagine the lines coming very close together with a very sharp point as their intersection. But how can one imagine an intersection on parallel lines? Does it become one long, completely shapeless blur? In that case straight lines are not ideally straight, because they should not really have any width. If one keeps to these lawful conditions then the imagined intersection can only move outward as a never-ending point of contact between two straight lines. It is possible for thought, but not for representation, for the lines to extend so far out that they become parallel. In which case the intersection moves ever further away until it is infinitely far away. The representation of the intersection is finally abandoned, through a thought like 'and further and further out', in favor of a representation of the parallel positions. It is also possible that the picturing splits up. In the first phase you see the intersecting lines, then there is a gap, after which there is a second representation with parallel lines. To this second picture one adds the thought that these lines now stretch into the infinite; between these two phases, in the gap in consciousness, there is an endless distance. It can in fact be very striking the way these thought elaborations occur. Perhaps one has the sensation when looking into this distant space between the two representations of something like an immense extension or void, or the experience takes on a linguistic form.

If the above exercise is somewhat modified, we come to a different result.

**Exercise #9c The Law Of Parallel Lines According To Representational Thinking:**

Imagine two parallel lines in a plane similar to figure c. above. Now try to extend them out as far as you can in imagination. Then answer to the question: Can these lines ever intersect?

**Result:** If you stay strictly to the above situation and not let yourself be influenced by the previous exercise, then the only answer is: no. The thought that posits the 'and further and further out' does not seem to allow an intersection to appear. Why should it?

Both approaches to straight lines and their intersection have been historically pursued in geometry. Thus various forms of geometry can be established. The last example belongs historically to an older, Euclidean geometry.

A series of numbers also demonstrates the relationship between representational and conceptual thinking.

**Exercise #10a Symbolic Representation:** Consider the following sequence of fractions and think about its meaning.

$1/1, 1/2, 1/3, 1/4, 1/5, 1/6, \dots 1/n$

Now use the 'exceptional state' and bring to consciousness what you thought.

**Result:** You can recognize here the pattern of an increasing sequence of positive integers in the denominator. Perhaps you have continued the results a bit further by inwardly speaking the next fraction or even imagined it written down in sequence. At some point you will have stopped, having already realized that you will never come to an end. Similar to the bit of straight line, only a limited portion of the sequence of fractions is imaginable. There is also a 'and on and on' in this transition.

The last fraction in the above series of fractions is the limit 'one divided by infinity'. It is conceivable but not imaginable. This leads to an apparent contradiction. How can something be written, and thus seen, but that defies imagination? The solution is that a written fraction is not itself a fraction but merely a symbol for it.

["The products of thinking are concepts and ideas. What a concept is cannot be expressed in words. Words can do no more than draw our attention to the fact that we have concepts." POF 5-0]

Even the symbol '∞', for the infinitely large number, is not the thing itself. However, this answer leads to a new question.

**Exercise #10b Individual Representation Of Concept That Corresponds To Its Lawfulness:** What 'is' a fraction?

**Results:** The meaning of a fraction, an insight into what it is, is found in the realm of your own thinking. Only when you have thought the thought of a fraction at least once can you know the meaning of the symbols. How one actually inwardly represents these depends on the individual, on how far one has delved into a clarification of the concept of a fraction. In considering a fraction one may notice that the concept 'fraction' implies and includes other concepts. 'Fraction' combines with concepts like 'unity' or 'wholeness' with 'divide in equal parts' and with a specific whole 'number', which determines it. Observing the way one brings 'fraction' to consciousness, it is possible to become aware of inner processes as well as the above mentioned concepts. For example, it may be that a geometrical representation arises, something like the form of a circular segment (pie piece), which represents the desired fraction. It may be that instead of an object-like representation, a more or less dynamic suggestion of a splitting or separating process appears. Perhaps you can also observe that a feeling for the equality of the parts is significant for the result. Or one has the impression that one performs a dividing action. Such sensations and impressions go beyond the usual conceptual knowledge of what a fraction is. However, they are not arbitrary; they correspond

to the lawfulness of the fraction; that is, to its concept.

Through thinking one can thus extend the initially known portion of the concept of fraction. Through observation of how thinking unfolds and what occurs through it, one becomes aware of more events within oneself that contribute to the clarification of the concept fraction and thus can be regarded as belonging to, and broadening, its content. On the other hand one may regard feelings related to the concept of a fraction as belonging to a personal level that is not, at first glance, usually included in a concept.

**Summary:** Even one's own thinking can be observed. This is unusual and is normally an exception. The observation of thinking brings to consciousness events that come about through thinking itself. These observations can be made as if one were standing opposite the event and looking back on one's previous thinking. During a present thinking act, one switches more or less quickly between the actual intellectual content and an observation of the way in which this content – its creation and potentiality further events – appears within.

## 8 – Observations in Thinking

Based on previous observations, we should now become aware of some particularly characteristic properties of thinking.

**Exercise #11 Thinking Attention On Factual Content:** Let's assume you had worked somewhat intensively to produce an explanation of the processes that resulted in the trajectory of a thrown object. Bring this mental effort to memory. Then answer again the question of where your attention was directed during the activity of remembering this effort.

**Results:** While you tried to solve the problem, your attention was already directed to the factual content described in the exercise. In hindsight, you can notice that you probably did not pay any attention to yourself and your activity as such. In case you did not notice this, simply test it with the following exercise.

**Exercise #12a: Rotate 'Representation' Intersecting Lines To 'Representation' Parallel Position:** Imagine again the intersecting lines and test if you are able to merge the 'representation' of intersection with the 'representation' of parallelism.

**Exercise #12b Thinking Attention Not On Yourself:** Assume the 'exceptional state' to see where your attention was directed in the immediately previous exercise.

**Results:** While you are thinking about such facts, you usually forget about yourself; your own activity. The extent to which one can become conscious of the manner by which thinking occurs, depends on having already acquired the retrospective skill of entering the exceptional state to study one's past thinking.

That one is wholly engaged with one's thought-content during ordinary thinking and not with one's thinking process itself or the part it plays, is usually overlooked. Steiner clearly draws attention to this relationship between our thinking and ourselves:

“The peculiar nature of thinking lies just in this, that it is an activity which is directed solely upon the observed object and not on the thinking personality. (...) In saying, “I am thinking of a table,” I already enter the exceptional state characterized above, in which something that is always contained — though not as an observed object — within our mental activity, is itself made into an object of observation.

This is just the peculiar nature of thinking, that the thinker forgets his thinking while actually engaged in it.

What occupies his attention is not his thinking, but the object of his thinking, which he is observing.

The first observation that we make about thinking is therefore this: that it is the unobserved element in our ordinary mental life.

The reason why we do not observe the thinking that goes on in our ordinary life is none other than this; it is due to our own activity. (...) While I am thinking I pay no heed to my thinking, which is of my own making, but only to the object of my thinking, which is not of my making. I am, moreover, in the same position when I enter into the exceptional state and reflect on my own thinking. I can never observe my present thinking; I can only subsequently take my experiences of my thinking process as the object of fresh thinking. (...)

There are two things that are incompatible with one another: productive activity and the simultaneous contemplation of it.” POF 4-3

That which Steiner calls an exceptional state and what we have already attempted to establish, is no different than the activity we apply to the study of the rest of the world: one thinks and represents something in consciousness. Its special feature is in its content: the object of observation is one's own past thinking.

One not only focuses one's attention on what is commonly known as the content of thinking, but also, as additional content, the nature of its occurrence. More is now revealed than the observed content of thinking. Attention shifts from the actual content, to its properties, its manner of appearance and one's own participation in the act of thinking. Once one is aware of the possibility of such an extension of observation, one can then practice it and gradually

acquire a certain skill. Nevertheless, the statement remains valid that: "I can never observe my present thinking; I can only subsequently take my experiences of my thinking process as the object of fresh thinking". For even what I observe in connection with thinking, I must quickly reflect on, in order to again conceptualize before continuing the experiencing. This switching from conceptualization to reflection and visa versa can be accomplished in more or less frequent intervals. The 'exceptional state' will then soon no longer be so exceptional but ultimately become so familiar that it can be produced at any moment.

At first it may take some considerable effort to pass from common thinking, the knowledge of thought content, to the observation of how this content actually arises and presents itself. One way is to repeatedly look back (in the 'exceptional state') and ask how the content presented itself. If you do not know or remember, simply think anew and review this thinking. One will notice that through renewed thinking one already brings more attention to the process because there is now, as well as content, the question of the manner of its appearance. It may be, however, that one must now slow the thinking process down, because one has more to accomplish by switching the attention between the various elements.

### Insight and Recognition

If one wants to attain full insight into why the chestnut would travel along the trajectory observed or imagined, one must actively occupy oneself with the question. 'To have insight' indicates an inner activity whereby one brings to consciousness those concepts and connections, meaning lawful relationships, which render the content of a perception understandable.

["Thinking contributes this content to the perception out of the human being's world of concepts and ideas. In contrast with the content of perception which is given to us from without, the content of thought appears within one's mind. The form in which thought first appears in consciousness we will call Intuition. Intuition is to thoughts what observation is to perceptions. Intuition and observation are the sources of our knowledge."]

"An observed object of the world remains unintelligible to us, until we have within ourselves the corresponding intuition which adds that part of reality which is lacking in the perception. To anyone who is incapable of finding intuitions corresponding to the things, the full reality remains inaccessible. Just as the colour-blind person sees only differences of brightness without any colour qualities, so the mind which lacks intuition sees only disconnected fragments of perceptions." POF 6-10]

To have insight one can dispense with all external activity, but not with one's own thinking. The following exercise can help bring to awareness when one attains insight and when one does not.

**Exercise #13a Making Knowledge Your Own:** Suppose someone tells you that  $24 \times 59$  is equal to 1406. How do you know whether the result is correct?

**Result:** Assume that you do not know the result by heart, nor do you have a ready memory of this number from the multiplication table. You also refrain from using a calculator. If, given these conditions, we do not want to merely believe what we are told, but want to know it for ourselves, then we can hardly avoid doing the math ourselves.

**Exercise #13b Explanation Of Answer:** When you have completed the calculation, ask yourself how you made the decision that the answer was right or wrong, and how you represented all this activity in consciousness.

If you were too busy with the computation and could not satisfactorily observe what was going on in consciousness, simply try it again with the addition of this further task.

**Exercise #14 Chain Of Thought-Elements Leading To Solution:** Now, without any external aids, multiply  $21 \times 49$  (If the task seems too difficult, use appropriate numbers for which you must still do the multiplication.) Then assume the exceptional state and observe what you experienced.

**Results:** The content of observation in the exceptional state could have included something like this:

I know I have calculated  $21 \times 49$ . This was 1029. I calculated this in three different ways:

- a) I multiplied  $21 \times 50$ , where  $20 \times 50 = 1000$ , plus one more  $50 = 1050$ , then, because it was 49 and not 50, subtracted 21, which made 1029.
- b) I multiplied  $20 \times 49$ , where  $20 \times 40 = 800$ , plus  $20 \times 9 = 180$ , which is 980, then added another 49, and again the answer was 1029.
- c) I multiplied  $21 \times 40 = 840$ , and  $21 \times 9 = 189$ , adding together makes 1029.

Thus I am now certain that  $21 \times 49 = 1029$ .

To achieve this calculation I resorted to simpler calculations that I had already previously comprehended and whose results I could remember with certainty. I could have also gone through it all once again just to be sure, but that was unnecessary.

["it is necessary to isolate certain sections of the world and to consider them by themselves. Our eye can seize only single colours one after another out of a manifold colour-complex, our understanding only single concepts out of a connected conceptual system." POF 6-6]

Perhaps you noticed even more. Your account could, for example, have included something like the following: The numbers I calculated were written in white on a dark background in front of me. I heard them at the same time, as if spoken. For the intermediate results I told myself *you must remember this* and I imagined writing it down. Nevertheless, it seemed that the numbers faded or I forgot them, and had to calculate some of the steps again. When my first two calculation attempts both led to the same result, I was already sure that 1029 was right. I only calculated it a third time to be able to observe something more. I remember wondering, when I was unsure at one point, if I had taken note of all the numbers correctly. Because of this feeling of uncertainty, I did the calculation again.

The sure feeling of being right (or wrong) comes about usually only during the present execution of computation, that is, in a currently happening process of insight. It has its relation to a current content of thinking activity. With an increasing distance of time the feeling weakens. Later I only have an echo of this security, which is a memory of the previously experienced security that the result was correct. If the next day I cannot remember exactly how I went about the calculations, and someone swears with great conviction to a different result, I must do the math anew in order to be sure again of the correct result.

[“The reason why it is impossible to observe thinking in the actual moment of its occurrence, is the very one which makes it possible for us to know it more immediately and more intimately than any other process in the world. Just because it is our own creation do we know the characteristic features of its course, the manner in which the process takes place.” POF 4-5](#)

I cannot reflectively contemplate my present thinking because I am inwardly entwined within it ("[intimately](#)" says Steiner). The relationships within my thinking are immediately and transparently evident as they unfold.

In the exceptional state we observe our previous thinking. In so far as this is possible, it is available to us through memory. Thus the memory content is the given. However, memories are often pale. As already mentioned, it happens easily that one starts with this memory content but then generates new thoughts instead of actually remembering the old ones. It is relatively easy to remember moments or events that touch one emotionally, as, for example, the effort to master a difficult task, noticing that one has made an error and having to start over again, the joy of finding a simpler way to go about the task, etc. When one manages to remember something, one's current thinking is now dealing with this memory and thus stands over and against this former experience. During this current thinking it is different though. I recognize the thinking-activity content, it is clear to me. To this I combine more elements so that they relate to each other and form a chain that leads to the solution.

It is sometimes argued that calculation is really not thinking. One has learned the basics and just remembers them by heart. This is true at least for basic arithmetic. One should bear in mind, though, that one has already had an insight into, for example, why  $6 \times 7$  results in 42. But even if this were not necessarily true, one has, in any case, learned this fundamental relationship by heart and remembers it. This memory, however, does not in itself alone lead to a result. Instead, for a complicated problem where the result is not known, one has to apply the relationships one has learned. To arrive at a solution one proceeds in an ordered way according to relationships intrinsic to the problem and which must be cognized in advance before being able to solve it. The cognition of inner relationships is, however, what we call

thinking.

["The objects which, in observation, appear to us as separate, become combined, bit by bit, through the coherent, unified system of our intuitions. By thinking we fit together again into one whole all that perception has separated." POF 6-10]

One could argue that it is only obvious that the thought-objects and relationships which one needs for an understanding of geometry and arithmetic could only be comprehended in a thoughtful manner. With real objects though, it may be different because the objects themselves show one what they are. However, we are also dependent on discovering the right concepts with every attempt to understand a particular relationship in the realm of objects. This was already demonstrated with the example of the thrown chestnut.

["Thinking alone links all these perceptions to one another and shows them to us in their mutual relationship. We cannot speak of anything existing beyond what is directly perceived except what can be recognized through the ideal connections of perceptions, that is, connections accessible to thinking." POF 6-11]

The question may then arise as to whether concepts are abstracted from repeated experience, or whether they are first grasped by thinking and then deemed appropriate or suitable for the given observations.

["The content of a concept corresponding to an external perception appearing within the field of my experience, is given through intuition. Intuition is the source for the content of my whole conceptual system. The perception shows me only which concept I have to apply, in any given instance, out of the aggregate of my intuitions. The content of a concept is, indeed, conditioned by the perception, but it is not produced by it. On the contrary, it is intuitively given and connected with the perception by an act of thinking." POF 10-0]

It would hardly be possible to remember how, as a child, one became familiar with the concepts one uses in everyday life. When first encountering new, unknown events or occurrences, however, one can be aware of how this comes about. Perhaps one can remember what it was like the first time one walked through a door that opened automatically. Thoughts like *Was that a coincidence?* or *Was someone watching me and pressed on a button?* or *Did I cause that?* could have occurred to one. In order to further explore why the door opened, one had to perhaps look around, found no one attending the door and then went back to test whether the same thing happened again. It opened as before, and one had the thought *That's exactly the same distance, something must be here*. In fact one spied a glass lens to both one's left and right and when a hand was held in front of one of them, the door opened. One assumed a beam of light was the cause, and in fact one could then see a faint glow in the lens. Later, someone called switching devices such as these 'light barriers'. With such findings the process of automatic door opening is not yet fully understood. They are sufficient, however, in order to assume a chain of cause-effect relationships from the interruption of the light beam through to the activation of a mechanism that finally opened the door. One adds the concepts to the perceived elements. With a purely thoughtful approach, relationships were assumed and their validity verified in connection with the perceptions. Through thinking one forms concepts within, or during perceptual processes. Through the addition of concepts one discovers what is perceived. The appearance of questions within us is the inducement for thinking. Our questions may be different, but what they have in common

is that they are focused on something that perception itself does not contain, or previously did not contain or until now has not been discovered by us.

Even with the differently rolling balls previously mentioned, mere perception does not satisfy our thirst for knowledge. The question of why two equally sized balls of like appearance rolled differently after being released down the same inclined surface can only be answered by conceptual thinking. The fast rolling ball did not pose us any problem, it appeared 'normal', that is, it corresponded to our previous experience with the way balls roll. In comparison, we were surprised that the other ball rolled slowly after being released, only moved a few centimeters, stopped for a few seconds, then, with a little jerk backwards, rolled forward a few centimeters again and then stopped again, continuing in this strange way until it reached the end of the inclined surface.

**Exercise #15 Enliven Inanimate Objects:** Imagine that you had never seen a ball before, had never had an experience of one and cannot remember anything like a ball or which you can associate with one. Now you see the two balls act as described in exercise #1. What would you think?

**Results:** There are certainly many possibilities. One possibility would be that you would think: *These things are similar to people: one runs fast, like someone who has a goal, the other slowly, like someone who is visiting a museum.* For some, these thoughts would perhaps be sufficient and they would ponder no further. Such an explanation is less far-fetched than one might think. In the 18th Century it was still quite usual to explain processes in inanimate nature with something one knew of from animate beings. This still happens today. Perhaps some readers remember words like these from chemistry class: *these particles, like to bind themselves with those particles.*

Let us now turn to the practical solution of the rolling balls problem. We usually suppose a specific cause for the difference in movements and then look for the corresponding perception. There could have been something like a series of electromagnets under the inclined board which all switch on and off in an appropriate manner. In the case in question, however, there were no influences from external devices.

**Exercise #16a Explanation Using Concepts and Mental Pictures:** Assuming no external influences, think about what the cause could have been for the difference in the way the balls rolled in exercise #1.

**Results:** You may have considered it and found no solution. Perhaps when you had already let go of the problem, or almost forgotten, it came to you that it could roll like a raw egg. This appeared like spoken words, and was accompanied by a picture. In your considerations, you

might have been misled by assuming that, because of their brass surface, the balls were solid brass. If only one of the balls was solid metal and the other, like a raw egg, had a non-uniform, viscous interior, perhaps the difference in rolling movement would be understandable. The center of gravity of this ball must be similar to an egg yolk, which is off-center, and thus positioned towards one edge. If so, the ball would also make a pause without rolling smoothly down an inclined plane (tilted board) if the inclination were not too steep. Then the center of gravity would have to shift inside the ball and it would roll on. This could be possible if the ball were hollow and filled with a viscous substance within which a smaller, heavier ball could slowly move. This would thus gradually shift the center of gravity of the entire structure on an inclined plane. The outer ball would roll down a little until the inner ball, which moves slower, was displaced so far back and above the outer ball's point of support on the board that its weight would counteract that of the outer, rolling ball and bring it to a brief halt. Then, when the inner ball slowly rolled far enough down the inside surface of the outer ball, its weight would now set the outer one in motion again. It would thus continue this way to the bottom.

The jerky movement could arise if either the viscous liquid is slightly lumpy and the inner sphere must slow down to push past these lumps in the liquid and then speed up again, or that the inner ball, due to the viscous liquid, gets a little stuck on the inner wall of the outer ball and then moves a little faster once it has become unstuck from the wall, or that the outer ball first has to overcome resistance on the inclined board caused by small irregularities in the board's surface – but once it rolls free, it finally reaches the momentum required to overcome any other small obtrusions.

After having thus considered possible explanations with representations and concepts (including ball, viscosity, center of gravity, point of support, mass, rolling resistance), you could try to find balls like these to test if they actually roll differently, and in accord with your expectations, under changed conditions, for example by increasing or lessening the inclination of the board, or changing the smoothness of its surface, etc. One could also cut the ball open or scan it in some way, to determine what its inner structure is actually like.

In principle, one chooses explanations of already known events in order to form mental pictures of those events where observation is not possible, and then seeks to elaborate these concepts further.

In the "Philosophy of Freedom," Steiner used the example of lightning and thunder. "I do not know off-hand why, for perception, thunder follows lightning, but I know immediately, from the content of the two concepts, why my thought connects the concept of thunder with that of lightning. It does not matter for my argument whether my concepts of thunder and lightning are correct. The connection between the concepts I have is clear to me, and that through the very concepts themselves." POF 4-5

If gods belong in somebody's system of concepts who beat a celestial anvil such that visible flashes of lightning and audible rumbles of thunder ensue, the phenomena are no less explained by these concepts than for those who speak of electrical discharges, a sudden burning of the air and so on. A satisfactory explanation need only fit completely and consistently within the network of all one's previously acquired concepts. And it is not certain that one will even notice gaps and contradictions. What we regard as real is determined largely by ourselves though the concepts we apply. If we are able to expand our conceptual

system, we will be able to discover more diversity in the world through being guided by new concepts and perceptions (observable facts) that previously escaped us.

Steiner thus draws our attention to an important fact: “This transparent clearness concerning our thinking process is quite independent of our knowledge of the physiological basis of thinking. (...) What I observe about thinking is not what process in my brain connects the concept lightning with the concept thunder but what causes me to bring the two concepts into a particular relationship. My observation shows me that in linking one thought with another there is nothing to guide me but the content of my thoughts; I am not guided by any material processes in my brain.” POF 4-6

**Exercise #16b Explanation Guided By Content Of My Thoughts:** Explain to yourself once again how the balls roll. Then, in the exceptional state, check the following sentence on its accuracy: “My observation shows me that in linking one thought with another there is nothing to guide me but the content of my thoughts.” POF 4-6

Depending on your previous thinking habits, it may be that you need some help ‘getting up to speed’ until you realize where to direct your attention. It should be possible to recognize that no concept can rest in isolation on its own, but always points to others (center of gravity to mass and mass fraction, ball to contact point, etc.). If you noticed this, the extraordinary fact might also occur to you that ultimately all the concepts that can possibly exist must be connected to each other, though perhaps via many routes.

You may have already recognized that the concepts you used for the explanation of the ball exercise are connected because of their inherent relationships with each other. This discovery arose from the fact that you watched your own thinking.

“For everyone, however, who has the ability to observe thinking — and with good will every normal man has this ability — this observation is the most important one he can possibly make. For he observes something of which he himself is the creator; he finds himself confronted, not by an apparently foreign object, but by his own activity. He knows how the thing he is observing comes into being. He sees into its connections and relationships. A firm point has now been reached from which one can, with some hope of success, seek an explanation of all other phenomena of the world.” POF 4-7

Steiner then discusses the quote by Rene Descartes “I think, therefore I am” with the following words:

“All other things, all other events, are there independently of me. Whether they be truth, or illusion, or dream, I know not. There is only one thing of which I am absolutely certain, for I myself give it its certain existence; and that is my thinking. Whatever other origin it may ultimately have, may it come from God or from elsewhere, of one thing I am certain: that it exists in the sense that I myself bring it forth.” POF 4-7

In saying this Steiner points out that, as to the origin of thinking, at first nothing is certain. If, however, I wanted to doubt the existence of thinking in the sense in which I bring it forth and understand it, I could only do so by means of thinking. If I give credence to my doubts, I continue to posit with certainty that my thinking is good enough to doubt with. Thinking definitely has a special position as an absolute in our lives. Although we hardly ever notice, even when we perform the simplest arithmetic, how our thinking is accompanied by a feeling of confidence in thinking. I bring it forth myself and my conscious existence is supported thereby.

Steiner continues in respect to the phrase "therefore I am":

"The simplest assertion I can make of a thing is that it is, that it exists. (...) How this existence can be further defined in the case of any particular thing that appears on the horizon of my experience, is at first sight impossible to say. Each object must first be studied in its relation to others before we can determine in what sense it can be said to exist. An experienced event may be a set of percepts or it may be a dream, an hallucination, or something else. In short, I am unable to say in what sense it exists. I cannot gather this from the event in itself, but I shall find it out when I consider the event in its relation to other things. But here again I cannot know more than just how it stands in relation to these other things. My investigation touches firm ground only when I find an object which exists in a sense which I can derive from the object itself. But I am myself such an object in that I think, for I give to my existence the definite, self-determined content of the thinking activity. From here I can go on to ask whether other things exist in the same or in some other sense." POF 4-7

With this he then, on the basis of self-observation, flips the phrase "I think therefore I am", to one implied in the above paragraph; *I am, therefore I think*. The following exercise should help lead one to the same experience.

### **Exercise #17 Activity Of The "I"**

Go over again the exercise concerning the trajectory of the chestnut or the explanation of the rolling balls. Then answer the following questions: Who initiated the thought process? Who ensures that it unfolds? Who knowingly lives in its coherence?

**Result:** I experience myself as active. I bring forth and guide the thinking process. I observe. However, I myself do not appear as an observed object. That I can become aware of my own activity is the result of a thinking process itself, in fact one that takes as its object a previously observed thinking process. In this way thinking becomes apparent to me, it requires my 'I'; and in order to know myself, I need thinking.

Steiner says the following about this discovery:

"that it is the "I" itself which, from its standpoint inside the thinking, observes its own activity. (...) "whoever is determined to see in thinking anything other than a clearly surveyable activity produced by the "I" itself, must first shut his eyes to the plain facts that are there for the

seeing, in order then to invent a hypothetical activity as the basis of thinking. If he does not thus blind himself, he will have to recognize that everything which he “thinks up” in this way as an addition to the thinking only leads him away from its real nature. Unprejudiced observation shows that nothing is to be counted as belonging to the nature of thinking except what is found in thinking itself. One will never arrive at something which is the cause of thinking if one steps outside the realm of thinking itself.” POF chapter 4-1918 addition

Concerning the special position of thinking sited in the second half of this quote, Steiner writes elsewhere in this chapter:

“While we are observing the other things, there enters among the processes of the world — among which I now include observation — one process which is overlooked. Something is present which is different from all other processes, something which is not taken into account. But when I observe my own thinking, no such neglected element is present. For what now hovers in the background is once more just thinking itself. The object of observation is qualitatively identical with the activity directed upon it. This is another characteristic feature of thinking. When we make it an object of observation, we are not compelled to do so with the help of something qualitatively different, but can remain within the same element.” POF 4-8

The observation of thinking presupposes our own activity.

“We must resolutely plunge right into the activity of thinking, so that afterwards, by observing what we have done, we may gain knowledge of it. For the observation of thinking, we ourselves first create an object; the presence of all other objects is taken care of without any activity on our part.” POF 4-9

Unlike the rest of the world phenomena, that which we produce in thinking is special because it is completely transparent to us.

“This then is indisputable, that in thinking we have got hold of one corner of the whole world process which requires our presence if anything is to happen. And this is just the point upon which everything turns. The very reason why things confront me in such a puzzling way is just that I play no part in their production. They are simply given to me, whereas in the case of thinking I know how it is done. Hence for the study of all that happens in the world there can be no more fundamental starting point than thinking itself.” POF 4-9

It is thinking itself that makes this transparency possible.

“In thinking we have a principle which subsists through itself. Let us try, therefore, to understand the world starting from this basis. We can grasp thinking by means of itself. The question is, whether we can also grasp anything else through it.” POF 4-10

The questions of why and how it is possible for us to penetrate the world with thinking are central to the epistemology of the "Philosophy of Freedom."

“When I weave an independently given object into my thinking, I transcend my observation, and the question arises: What right have I to do this? Why do I not simply let the object impress itself upon me? How is it possible for my thinking to be related to the object? These are questions which everyone must put to himself who reflects on his own thought processes.

But all these questions cease to exist when we think about thinking itself. We then add nothing to our thinking that is foreign to it, and therefore have no need to justify any such addition." POF 4-8

After dealing with other aspects, Steiner continues:

"There are people who say it is impossible to ascertain with certainty whether our thinking is right or wrong, and thus our starting point is in any case a doubtful one. It would be just as sensible to doubt whether a tree is in itself right or wrong."

"Thinking is a fact, and it is meaningless to speak of the truth or falsity of a fact. I can, at most, be in doubt as to whether thinking is correctly applied, just as I can doubt whether a certain tree supplies wood adapted to the making of this or that useful object. To show how far the application of thinking to the world is right or wrong, is precisely the task of this book." POF 4-12

In what follows it will first be demonstrated how one can arrive in practice at a concrete experience of the observation of one's own thinking. This will then lead to an answer to the question of how it can be applied to the world.

### Perception and Concept

So far, we have focused on thinking's ability to connect individual perceptions and concepts with each other and to bring insight into their relationships. Now let's study more closely a single object and the concepts that belong to it. 'Concept' is popularly used in the sense of a definition, for example, when one asks what concept one has of this or that thing. In contrast, 'idea' is linguistically rather closer to 'ideal' and is more frequently associated with the activity of thinking than is the word 'concept'. Here concept and idea will generally be used synonymously. Steiner writes: "Ideas are qualitatively no different from concepts, they are just richer in content, more saturated and more comprehensive concepts." POF 5-0

**Exercise #18a Observe A Point:** What is a point (in the sense of a pointed object)? Is a point an object (or part of an object) or is it a concept?

Take a little time to consider this question and look at the figure below, or at the head of a pin or sewing needle, or any other sharp object as precisely as possible, possibly by using a magnifying glass to help you see.



**Exercise #18b Compare Observed Point To Ideal Point:** Consider the above question again, this time by remembering the point you have observed and compare it to an ideal point.



**Results:** A point observed with the senses is never ideal. It may actually surprise you how little a pin appears to be pointed under a microscope. The end of the tip in the above figure, when viewed with a magnifying glass, is no longer pointed. If we gave our own representation of a point such a rounded, blunt shape, we would hardly recognize it as a point.

**Exercise #18c Matching A Perceptual Object To A Concept:** Imagine what a point really looks like.



**Results:** There may possibly be readers who cannot completely imagine a point because they ultimately stop building it and instead think the concept 'and on and on'.

The observation that what looks like a pointed needle appears under a microscope to be more like something that is better describes with the concept rounded, is something that can arise in other contexts when one pays fine attention to detail. Straight edges of objects are not completely straight, circular objects are not perfect circles, and so on. Nevertheless, we recognize something in the object that is known to us as ideal form. The concept fits what we see, what we see fits the concept. By matching a perceptual object to a concept, we recognize the object.

Several concepts can apply to the properties of an object. For example, a slab may appear smooth from a distance, but from up close one sees irregularities. Which concept fits depends not only on the object of perception, but also on the observational conditions.

The word 'concept' (Begriff in German) can be interpreted as indicating that we are doing something similar to grasping or gripping something. In order to help you observe your own activity while seeking for a suitable concept for something, you can try the following exercises.

**Exercise #19a Finding Visual Impressions That Match Concepts:** Lay an arbitrary photograph in front of you, and ask yourself what you see. Go about it differently than you would usually, do not look at the whole thing right off, but start with details, make yourself aware of the simple facts.



**Results:** Despite all efforts you will probably still see, or scan, the whole photo immediately and know what it is. Now start over, begin from one white paper edge and be clear about the fact that you see points of different brightness and color on the paper. 'Brightness' and 'color'

are initial concepts for visual impressions. It can be noticed that one continues to search for any ordering characteristics, i.e. one tries to find impressions that match concepts one knows. For example, one finds that there are areas of similar color or brightness, but which are different from others. The transition from one area to another can be quite abrupt. Such transition areas can in turn be connected with each other to form a kind of line. Lines meet, interpenetrate and form patterns that come together and invite further concepts to appear in consciousness. 'Field', 'transition', 'related', 'line', 'pass through', etc. are again concepts that order the visual impressions.

If, exceptionally, a concept for the whole is not yet available because we have not been able to see, or see clearly, the defining objects, then we will still be limited to the detection of elementary structures.

**Exercise #19b Finding A Concept That Corresponds To The Whole:** In order to put yourself voluntarily in a situation where a concept for the whole is missing, ask someone to partially cover an unknown photo or unknown painting so that only a very small area remains visible. After looking at this spot, slowly remove the covering so that the whole picture is gradually revealed to you.



**Results:** In the first visible portions one, two, three or more things could be revealed. Each dark spot, each bright spot, each line etc., could be something or part of a larger whole. With each concept that manifests, we unite individual objects of perception or divide the given into objects. Only when it receives a concept does what is seen take on any kind of order, only then does it become 'something'. It 'is' not, until an appropriate concept is posited for it.

The concepts which appear true and which one then unites with what is given depend upon the context within which one already has knowledge and is accustomed. Sometimes one cannot free oneself from one's conceptual habits and will always provide answers from within their context.

“Concepts cannot be obtained from that which is observed. (...) Concepts are added to the observation.” POF 5-0 Steiner emphasized that the concept is not derived from observation. It only arises within thinking during observational activity. In the moment of knowing, it appears to me that the perceived and the concept belong together.

That concepts are not derived from observation should not be confused with the fact that an observation can be an opportunity to form new concepts. However, thinking then produces them.

**Summary:** A concept can be viewed as a organizing, formative principle or law, which connects the disjointed elements of perception into a whole.

### **Concept-free Perception**

We seldom encounter situations, as with the partially covered picture, where we do not immediately experience a familiar concept. An example of such an experience is described below.

During a walk through an area of dikes in the country, for about one or two seconds, and at approximately two hundred meters ahead on the crest of a dike, I saw a dark, brownish form that rapidly changed its outline. It very briefly took the form of a dog, then fluctuated again and coalesced into a rabbit, then transformed itself again and remained fixed in the form of a horse's head. In fact, it was the head of a horse that stood alone, its body hidden below the dike. While the form that I saw was fluctuating and in transition, this was accompanied by an unsure, searching feeling. In the intermittent, 'still-shot' moments when 'dog' or 'rabbit' were in my consciousness, they were, however, accompanied with a sense of dissatisfaction. Only with the horse's head came surety, something like: 'that's it!' The fluctuating outline and changing color impressions first appeared as a disturbance in my field of vision, in which everything else seemed normal, calm and clear. Such a situation is a rare gift that, if it occurs at all, usually comes as a surprise.

["When we perceive a tree, our thinking reacts to our observation, an ideal element is added to the perceived object, and the perceiver regards the object and its ideal complement as belonging together." POF 5-0]

The following exercise can help to intentionally bring about such a situation in which one might not immediately recognize everything.

**Exercise #20 Concept-free Perception:** Open and close a door into an unfamiliar room as rapidly as possible and glance quickly inside.



**Result:** Maybe it was possible to notice a collage of more or less bright patches of color that then quickly took on a contour. In order to recognize some objects this contouring of conscious knowledge took a little longer. This kind of observation is easier the more the contents of the room are unexpected.

You can also try to modify the situation by first glancing at only one side of the room so that the objects on the edge of your visual field are out of focus. Then, if you turn quickly and look at the other side, you can see at first that there is a small delay before the blurred, colored surfaces take on contours. One could argue that this has nothing to do with concepts, but that it is well known that the edge of one's visual field is always blurred and the middle is sharply in focus. What is meant here is not the moment of focusing, which is similar to the time required to focus one's eyes sharply into the distance, but rather that extremely short, usually unnoticed moment it takes to contour an unknown object in the middle of one's field of vision.

## Several Concepts - One Perception

**Exercise #21 Optical Illusions**

In psychological literature and forms of entertainment, so-called optical illusions are well known. There are such drawings where one, at first glance, sees what appears to be a single entity, for example a human head, an animal, a building or something else. On closer examination of the picture it soon becomes clear that several things can be seen that often contradict each other. Particularly well known are the impossible figures of M.C. Escher, there are also such designs from other artists.



*Young woman or old woman?*

One such well-known puzzle, for example, represents the head of a young woman. This visual impression is not stable though, for suddenly one sees the head of an old woman. Which impression comes first depends on the observer. It can also happen that initially only one interpretation of the image is seen and the second is seen perhaps only after it is brought to one's attention. If one has the good fortune to see only one interpretation, it is a particularly rare opportunity to be able to observe what occurs in oneself inwardly during the search for a second interpretation.

Objectively viewed, these pictures are constructed so that more than one concept can apply, or almost apply, to them so that it is variable which concept first appears to be the most appropriate. Usually one can only see one pattern of interpretation at a time, then it suddenly 'switches' and the perspective changes. With practice one can maintain a kind of stillness within the switching and thus be able to see both representations simultaneously.

Such pictures are useful because they can help clarify the relationship between perception and concept. The distribution of ink on the paper remains unchanged; the concept determines the interpretation of what is perceived and orders the perceived elements into a whole.

## **New Concepts**

New concepts are not won from perception, but are built while thinking about perception.

**Exercise #22 Extending And Differentiating A Concept:** How has your concept of thinking (more precisely, that which you know about the concept of thinking) changed since prior to reading this book to this point?

**Results:** Through descriptions of various forms of thinking, the concept 'thinking' has been extended and differentiated. Relationships were discovered which perhaps had not been thought of previously. Conversely, this refinement of the concept of 'thinking' has led to the observation of new details. If more, or more richly elaborated, concepts become available to one, then equally the number perceptions will increase. They will become new for one's consciousness.

Conscious means to be aware of what already has being. For example, you may have seen

or drawn triangles many times and still be unaware that the sum of the corner angles is constant. This fact already existed but was not known. What one knows of a thing depends upon the concepts one is able to connect with it.

Understanding is the unification of a concept with a perception. Can it be that with our ordinary way of knowing there is an inclination to overlook, to disregard, any further discovery? Once one has a term for a perceived object the thought can arise *now I know what that is*. This is usually associated with feelings of satisfaction (often hard to notice), and thus often ends the process of perception. A mental habit or mood establishes this end. It shuts one off from a deeper knowledge of the object without quite noticing that this is happening. Things or shapes, for which there are no immediate concepts at our disposal, are actually rarities that can be appreciated. They allow you to pay attention to that which can be released within you by such enigmatic objects.

### **Perception, Concept, Term**

Against the view put forward here that concepts are added to perception in order to be able to recognize objects, it could be argued that, for example, a circle is simply a property of an object that has been abstracted due to many similar encounters with such objects. These attributes are abstracted from the objective perception and can therefore be dealt with by representing and thinking independently of the perception. The concept circle only designates an abstracted characteristic. There is no reason to grant to concepts a reality independent of sensory perception.

From a real observation of thinking there is no evidence for such a view. It has to be demonstrated how this abstraction process could derive the purely ideal forms of concepts from such imperfect circular forms, pointed forms, etc., that are found on and within sense objects. Such a process of abstraction is neither perceivable nor does it arise within the domain of thinking.

In terms of visual perception, on the basis of our earlier exercises, we can conclude that without concepts simply nothing could be differentiated from anything else. Even differences in brightness in a misty environment require an initial concept in order to become aware of them, in this case the concept of 'difference'. Then any further identification of perceived objects is only possible in that the perceptual images are differentiated by concepts. One can thereby comprehend steps in differentiation that vary from situation to situation. For example many boundaries due to differences in brightness or color are perceived as 'coherent' and 'line-like', in that these concepts are connected with them. The composition of these lines in turn is recognized as corresponding to a further concept (for example, a specific form). It may be that 'edge' or 'line' itself is already the required concept, and the context of any further investigation of the object is determined by it.

**Exercise #23a Recognize Elements Of Object That Belong To Concept:** Observe a chair. What is it about this object that makes you sure that you can call it a chair? Or in other words, what elements must be present so that something is called a chair?

**Result:** You recognized those elements 'at' the object that belongs to your concept of 'chair'. For example, there is a surface on which you can sit down, post-like structures, usually referred to as legs, which keep the seat as a stable surface above the ground, also a backrest. Without the latter it would be a stool. If additionally it has armrests, then the term armchair is more appropriate. If it is heavily padded, it is a cushioned armchair. If the padded seating and armrest surfaces are wider than required, it starts to become a couch. Here the boundaries are not very sharp.

The statement *There is a chair*, in relation to the above, can be considered in a more differentiated way. Meaning merely that there is something with which one's body can come into collision. An animal could also come into contact with it, but we additionally attach the concept 'chair' to it.

**Exercise #23b Ordered Unity Of Relationships Within Conceptual Whole:** Why is it that you do not regard the ground or floor under the chair as belonging to it?

**Results:** The italicized elements '(sitting) *surface*', '(supporting) posts' and '(backrest) *surface*' take on a specific spatial relation to each other in the concept 'chair'. The words in brackets ( ) indicate that there are other relationships involved that are not at all addressed here. Through their special order these relationships are formed into a certain whole, a concept. We associate the term 'chair' with this whole. We recognize an object's full correspondence to a concept if all of its attributes conform to the concept. To each of the 'objects' within the overall content of my perception belongs precisely that which my concept encompasses. According to our concept, we decide which elements of the overall content of our perception belong to the object under consideration, or belong to something else. In a concept we thus have an ordered unity of relationships that encompasses certain elements of perception and that equally does not allow other elements to be recognized as a part of that unity.

**Exercise #24 Objects, Concepts And Terms:** Does stool, chair, armchair, couch, etc. denote objects, concepts or terms?

**Result:** The answer must be that it depends on the context. The word 'chair' is a term that can indicate both the object and the concept.

The term depends on the language. In German one uses 'stuhl' instead of 'chair'. Both terms

refer to the same concept. One can conclude that language translations require that the terms for the same concept must be known in both languages. Difficulties arise when corresponding terms refer to different nuances of the concept.

While there is only one concept that refers to the term chair, many objects can be realized which all conform to this one concept. The phrase *there are some chairs* refers to such multiple manifestations.

A concept encompasses a thing's inherent lawfulness or its design principle. It is not physically present, but can be discovered only through thinking.

A sense perceived object receives its meaning in that I add something to it through thinking. Steiner sums up this relationship between perception and concept in the "Philosophy of Freedom" in the following manner:

"Perception is thus not something finished and self-contained, but one side of the total reality. The other side is the concept. The act of knowing is the synthesis of perception and concept. Only perception and concept together constitute the whole thing." POF 6-8

**Summary:** The whole of a thing comes to us in two ways: as perceived by the senses and as conceived by thinking. We understand a thing when both harmonize in consciousness.

### **Perception of the 'Thing in Itself'**

One can get the idea that everything that has been designated here, as belonging to the perception, on closer inspection is subjective. Ultimately, what one has initially as a perception is not the object itself, but only the visual, auditory, tactile, etc. impressions of an object. At first one's perception arises out of these. In addition, for example, visual impressions can appear if pressure is applied to the eye itself or it is in other ways irritated. The color-blind see the world differently than most. Perhaps reality is completely different from what we perceive because our senses are not comprehensive enough. Whether the images that arise in us are a faithful picture of the true nature of the world, is therefore unknown. In short, true reality is actually unknowable; we can only know our own subjective representations.

Let us assume this statement is true, and then investigate what presuppositions it contains. To this assumption belongs the assertion that the sense organs, including the eyes, are real objects and what they do is real. Also belonging to this assumption is the conclusion that whatever we perceive is subject to doubt. If one is consistent, then it must be admitted that we then cannot know the true nature of our sense organs or how they function. The argument thus loses its basis. This also means that, if we argue only at the level of perception, we cannot know the nature of perception by perceiving it. This requires knowledge of how thinking interacts with perception.

The problem of the unknowable 'thing-in-itself' and the subjectivity of perception is addressed here because there may be readers who would pose this problem. It is treated extensively in the "Philosophy of Freedom." Here it was quickly dealt with because Steiner's solution to this problem was already assumed in our treatment.

**Summary:** In ordinary thinking, attention is focused on the content of thinking and not the thinker. One's thinking activity can be observed using the method of momentarily switching one's attention between its observable contents. This enables an understanding of thinking by thinking itself. Because it can be known through itself, it has a special position in the cognitive process. Knowledge of a thing or relationship occurs when sense impressions are united with concepts. Thinking activity unfolds for me because I deliberately bring it forth. Through thinking I can also come to know how I bring it into being. Thinking activity itself can be experienced, but it escapes memory later if I do not conceptually grasp and describe it.

## **The Act of Knowing and I-awareness**

Having already discussed consciousness as well as having touched on Steiner's description of our "inner theater", we will now return to the act of knowing, where observation and concept are united with each other in consciousness. During the observation of our thinking we glance consciously onto this inner stage.

Some of the phenomena that take place on this inner stage have already been discussed in the exercises of previous sections of this book. Without being exhaustive, these can be identified as inwardly experienced memory-pictures of outer objects, sound impressions, representations of geometric and mathematical objects (such as lines, intersections, numbers), experiences of movement-like gestures (like 'and on and on'), and other phenomena.

Also mentioned was that, as well as having a consciousness of outer objects, as soon as one directs one's thinking to oneself, one has oneself in consciousness. Steiner writes:

"The percept of myself contains, to begin with, the fact that I am the stable element in contrast to the continual coming and going of the percept-pictures. The percept of my "I" can always come up in my consciousness while I am having other percepts. When I am absorbed in the perception of a given object I am for the time being aware only of this object. To this the percept of my self can be added. I am then conscious not only of the object but also of my own personality which confronts the object and observes it. I do not merely see a tree, but I also know that it is I who am seeing it. I know, moreover, that something happens in me while I am observing the tree. When the tree disappears from my field of vision, an after-effect of this process remains in my consciousness — a picture of the tree. This picture has become associated with my self during my observation. My self has become enriched; its content has absorbed a new element. This element I call my mental picture of the tree. I would never have occasion to speak of mental pictures did I not experience them in the percept of my own self. Percepts would come and go; I would let them slip by. Only because I perceive my self, and observe that with each percept the content of my self, too, is changed, am I compelled to connect the observation of the object with the changes in my own condition, and to speak of my mental picture. I perceive the mental picture in my self in the same sense as I perceive color, sound, etc., in other objects. I am now also able to distinguish these other objects that confront me, by calling them the outer world, whereas the content of my percept of my self I call my inner world." POF 5-7

According to this self-determination, which is the result of an elaboration of observation through thinking, one can try to turn one's attention to one's experiences of an observation of one's thinking processes and its attendant phenomena.

**Exercise #25 Location Of Thought:** While reading the above sentences, I was thinking as I followed the text. - Where, in precisely what sensed place, did my thoughts arise as I was thinking?

**Result:** I have the impression that it was somewhere in my head. While I can have the sensation that my physical self extends over my entire body, a consciousness of my thinking activity seems to have its center in the head area. I experience that insight takes place there. Starting from the head outwards (which I regard as 'mine'), I seek to discover and understand the outside world.

**Exercise #26 Boundary Between Outer World And 'I':** What do I consider to be the outside world and what belongs to me?

**Results:** From my self-feeling and my overall ability for sensation, for example in impressions of touch, not only my head, but also my entire body belong to me. Physically, I consider the outer surface of my body as the boundary of myself. Likewise, I consider everything that is not part of my body, as belonging to the outer world. Initially, my experience locates that which I consider as my 'I' in my head. Because I can make the parts of my own body objects of observation, I can, from the standpoint of consciousness, consider my whole body itself as 'outer'.

For me there is therefore a bodily I-world-boundary. I apply this limit according to circumstances and in some cases I pull myself inwardly back across it.

**Exercise #27 Distinction Between Body, Personality, and "I":** When I try to experience my body as the outside world, what do I then account for as belonging to me?

**Result:** I see my feelings, my memories, my thoughts and my will, not as belonging to my body, but to my own personality. I can take a sensation of pain as an example. I can observe that the pain occurs on the back of the head and that it appears as piercing. If I can make such an observation, I am not the feeling of pain, but the observer. The feeling I experience is in me, and yet I stand over and against it. My feeling is not accessible to others; I consider it to be a part my self. This is also true when I feel anger or joy. Although I have the impression that I am the one who feels angry or happy, I can nevertheless observe what is going on, and

can even act to reduce the anger or joy. As an 'I', I can watch what appears in my personality and even stop inner psychological processes, for example, out of the fear that they would lead to an unwanted action.

One can therefore make it clear to oneself: as an 'I', I know this for sure, I am the observer; it is my 'I' that wills to observe. Inside me are realities that I can observe just as I can outer realities and that are known to me because I am an 'I' and I am able to distinguish a boundary between what happens in my personality and myself as an 'I'. As an 'I', I can voluntarily prevent self impressions from leading necessarily to actions, though this can not always be achieved completely and sometimes even unpleasantly late or not at all. Even if it is not always possible, fundamentally, as an 'I', I am capable of determining where the border should lie between the 'world' and 'I'. As soon as I know of something in the sense that I observe it, it can be 'outside' for me. I recognize my "I" as the one who wants, the one who knows of the observed, and the one who acts out of knowledge.

**Summary:** I look onto my inner stage. I know what is happening there. I do not only think, I know my own questions; I can detect self-stirrings within myself, like my astonishment, my thirst for knowledge. That means I can observe those parts that I attribute to myself. What I attribute to myself must necessarily include multiple levels. I can consider the highest in me to be that which can observe the others.

The highest possible of which one can be aware, can know most intimately, can know in the act of one's own knowing, as one's own will – will from now onward be referred to as the 'I'.

## 10 – Pure Thinking

It will now be our task to clearly understand how to focus one's attention on concepts and the appearance of their various characteristics.

### Concepts

In order to be able to follow the underlying aspects of this endeavor relatively easily, we will again use simple geometrical forms that practically everyone knows.

**Exercise #28a Imagine A Circle:** In this multi-part exercise, first imagine a circle. Then imagine another one with a different diameter and a different location. Then try to look back at your thinking to discover how these representations appeared and what was directing their formation.

**Results:** The mental picture of a circle immediately appeared, as did the second circle, as soon as you implemented the instructions. If care in addition was taken to observe how you formed the pictures, you perhaps experienced something like inscribing a circle with a compass or of drawing one freely by hand. Perhaps you clearly remembered the wording of the definition of a circle that you learned at school.

**Exercise #28b Imagine A Transforming Circle:** Imagine a circle transforming itself into various sizes, one into the other. Then alter its position, first in its plane, then its location in space. Observe if you are able to know what was guiding your imagining activity and assuring that the images were always kept in circular form.

**Results:** The circle was pictured as a circular line. You began perhaps with a circle that was almost as small as a point, and then enlarged it to the extent that it was conceivable to do so. Its size, slant and position changed continuously as each circle merged into the other. Through this you achieved a dynamically moving, transforming mental picture. How you were able to do this, what assured a precise circular formation through all this, was not clear. You just 'knew' how to do it. How you were able to 'know' it, however, remains unclear.

You can carry out further exercises of this kind and, despite applying increased attention, you will find that the lawfulness, the principle, of the circle will evade your consciousness. This is simply because your attention is singularly directed to imagining circles. In order to apprehend the concept of the circle, a change in the internal direction of view is required.

**Exercise #28c Formulate The Circle's Principle:** Try to describe what distinguishes a circle from other two-dimensional figures, and to formulate the circle's principle. Avoid, if possible, simply producing a theorem memorized at school. The goal is to work out a principle through your own thinking activity. Thinking is meant here in the sense that you gain insight into the facts. If possible, also observe how this was accomplished. If it is not possible for you to fulfill these tasks all in the first go, repeat the process and work on the sub-tasks in turn.

**Results:** The following sequence could have unfolded for you: I asked myself what do all circles have in common. I did remember however, a sentence I learned at school: *All the points on the circumference of a circle are the same distance from a single point in the center of the circle.*

To get free of this memory, I asked myself the question, what is special about this principle such that it applies to all circles. Then came the thought; its main characteristic is that it contains, and is limited to, only those relations that the elements of a circle have to each other. These circle elements are, for example, the center and the circumference. Between them there is a relationship of constant distance. Relationships are, as it were, one level higher than elements and act as their organizing principle.

This characterization was found by thinking and was accompanied by a fleeting experience; that center and periphery appeared to be 'under' that which is 'above' them and actively encompasses them as 'relationship'. Together with 'relationship' there now appears another

experience, that of a 'constant', which, strangely enough, is almost luminous. I realized that 'constancy' is a step higher than a particular distance, and further recognized that this relationship applies to all circles, without having to picture any particular one. The thoughts appeared as if spoken, but not only, for the observation described was accompanied also by something like fleeting, ordering movements.

The sequence described above can be expressed in a more concise form: The concept of a circle is formed by a relationship of constant distance between the center point and the points on the periphery within a plane.

To continue with the thinking observation work we have already carried out, one can pose a further question.

**Exercise #28d Other Principles Of A Circle:** Can you find another law of relationships, or principle, of a circle? This can be done by imagining a circle and then by simply describing it.

**Results:** The circle's circumference is in one plane and curved. This curve is one, continuous, uniform line. The curvature is always the same and in the same direction. The length of this line can also be expressed in a relationship: The line must be the exact length needed to reach its starting point. These additional rules apply regardless of the size and location of the circle, because they are again dealing with general relations, rather than specific size relations.

This truth can be summarized thus: A circle is a flat, uniformly curved line that returns to itself.

There may be other laws or principles for a circle. The two given are in any case completely understandable to me, they are transparently clear to my inner vision. You may, as happens often with exercises, have had different experiences. If so, try now to follow the results given here so intensively that they become your own. Then try to make present for yourself again the way in which you conceived this second circle principle. It was just a description. Using concepts, you described something that you had already imagined and in this way discovered a principle.

If we consider again the two principles discovered for a circle, we find that what was essential in both the nature of distance and the quality of curvature was their constancy. We can also notice that two other relationships are contained in these; those between the centre point and a plane and between the circular line and a plane. The concept of the circle thus consists of a network of relationships. Some of these relationships have their own names (e.g. Radius). No single concept can be precisely specified without generating further concepts. While the thinker is concerned with a concept, others are working in the background.

One can surmise that at least all the concepts of geometry are somehow interrelated. It is not too far to imagine a realm of interwoven relationships, from which something is brought forth through thinking.

From the idea of interwoven relationships one could expect that between two different principles which both lead to a circle, other relationships exist that relate these two together, so that the one law is transformed into the other. Such questions are the subject of geometry and mathematics.

Not only in geometry, though, can it be realized that a concept encompasses one or more relationships. When we examined the concept 'chair' it was already recognized that concepts related to objects of the sense world also reveal themselves to be groupings of relationships.

## Representations

For circles, the distance between their center and the points on their periphery is a constant. This constitutes the concept of a circle.

**Exercise #29 Distinguish Mental Picture From Concept:** With your thinking, examine what distinguishes the mental picture of a circle from the concept of a circle.

**Results:** In order to form a particular representation of a circle, you must give the radius a fixed value. If the radius changes, the result is a changing representation that turns into different circles, one after the other. Nevertheless, it is also true for this representation of a circle in transformation that the radius of any particular circle is a constant; i.e. it does not change while you are forming its periphery. If it did change, for example if it steadily increased while a circle was being formed, one would create an opening spiral. If one stays with the circle and changes the location of the middle point in a plane while the radius also changes, one is able to imagine a series of overlapping circles of arbitrary sizes. This diversity is possible because the concept of a circle encompasses all possible variations. Circular representations, on the contrary, must have fixed radial lengths.

A representation may thus be described as a particularized concept. A concept is universal in comparison to a representation. In relation to other concepts, though, every concept is itself 'particular'. 'Particular' and 'universal' are themselves relationships that hold sway between objects and are not, as such, absolute.

The representation also involves something more. A representation is created by an individual being. In this respect a representation is not only a particularized, but also an individualized concept. In this sense, memory representations, such as 'chair' or 'table', are also individualized concepts.

Steiner writes: ["A mental picture is nothing but an intuition related to a particular percept; it is a concept that was once connected with a certain percept, and which retains the reference to this percept."](#) POF 7-2

## Autonomy

Below is an exercise that should clearly demonstrate how one can discover relationships between concepts that are not determined by the thinker. At first, the thinker does not need to know anything about these concepts; this knowledge arises through his thinking. "By thinking concepts and ideas arise." POF 5-0 Steiner writes, and thus points to the creative, original essence of thinking.

**Exercise #30a Universal Application Of Concept:** Imagine a circle (as a circular line) and a straight line both in the same plane. The line extends outside the circle without touching it. Now imagine that the line gradually shifts in a direction parallel to itself so that it comes to touch the circle.

Then continue this parallel movement so that the line passes through the circle until it finally just touches it again, but on the other side, and then moves away from it. What facts arise systematically from this contact and intersection of circle and line?

**Results:** When the line touches the circle it does so at a single, common point. As soon as the line moves further it intersects the circle at two points. Immediately at the beginning the distance between the first two intersection points is zero. As the line moves, this distance grows steadily greater. When the line finally divides the circle into two equal halves the line segment reaches its maximum length and becomes the diameter of the circle. As it moves through the second half of the circle, the process takes place in reverse order. Thus relationships between the geometric concepts circle, line and intersection points are revealed which apply universally, regardless of the size and location of the circle.

**Exercise #30b Independent Reality Of Concept:** If the line is not moved parallel to itself but is rotated about one of its points, do these same lawful relationships still apply or are they different?

**Results:** The same relationships discovered above still apply, regardless of whether the line is moved parallel to itself or rotated about an axis.

If other thinkers perform the above exercises, no matter at what time or place, they will always come to the same factual results, even though they may use different words to describe them. They will think the same laws, that is to say, the same ideal relationships. Their representations will arise exactly according to the concepts of circle and line, and the relationships that are discovered will lie purely in the nature of the combination of these two concepts. Concepts have an independent, autonomous reality; they are connections or relationships over which the thinker has no influence. Steiner speaks of this fact by saying: "A triangle has only one single concept." POF 6-7 The reality of concepts and ideas can be known, but not changed. With conceptual thinking, knowledge expands in that the thinker

observes a content of concepts that he intentionally sets before himself and then describes these using additional concepts, which he then again observes.

**Summary:** A concept can be regarded as an ordered fabric of relationships. The contents of concepts and ideas are obtained only when thinking produces them. The result of thinking does not depend on the thinker, it is known through observation. The content of concepts is determined by the concepts themselves and their relationships. The content of concepts is indifferent to time and space.

### Concept Reduction

If one tries to penetrate the essence of a concept with thinking, one might not succeed at first or even as expected. It may be, for example, that you have associated a content with a word (a name) which on closer reflection makes little sense, or is inappropriate for an intended purpose. An exercise will illustrate this.

**Exercise #31 Concrete Situation To Universal Concept:** Think about the concept of 'calmness'. Try to grasp this concept as universally as possible. This is easier to do if you begin by remembering a concrete situation and then progress to the universal content expressed within this situation.

**Result:** One starts by looking for relationships of 'calmness' and recalls, for example: calm sleep, calm traffic, a calm neighborhood, calm breathing, calm waters, calm walking, calm weather, the calm before the storm, and so on. What these calm situations all have in common is that something in them does not take place anymore or yet, or happens slowly and uniformly. One can connect calmness and movement. This could be with objects that demonstrate calmness because any movement associated with them is no longer present, for example, cars that no longer move, plants not waving in the wind or water that is not flowing. In particular, living beings can be moving even when they are calm in relation to their environment; as when they change the shape of their body – such as plants growing, animals and humans breathing, and so on.

Calm breathing or walking also expresses that there is no excessive stress or urgency. Calm movements in this sense are slow and unperturbed movements. It is clear from these facts that motion cannot always be considered as the opposite of calmness. How can one get closer to the concept of calm?

The way in which something moves, especially where it is a living being, reveals to the empathetic observer whether the object is inwardly calm or agitated. Thus un-calmness appears as the conceptual opposite to calmness. Whether calmness is apparent in a particular situation depends on a personal judgment. The decision whether calmness or un-calmness exists will depend on the observer's feelings. It is also with one's feelings that one judges if water is calm. If a concept has a content, as in this case, that requires an individual judgment, it will not always be possible for different observers to come to the same judgment.

Such concepts are not appropriate to use for the purposes of physics. Thus the concept of calmness, or stillness, as used in physics is the opposite of motion. Narrowing or reducing the content of a concept makes it suitable for use in physics. To this purpose, relationships to the living and personality realms are suppressed by consciously excluding these meanings of the word 'calm'.

For sense perceptible objects there are usually a variety of properties (attributable concepts) present at the same time. For the purposes of physical mechanics one needs clear, simple concepts. Unnecessary relations to other concepts are therefore excluded by the fact that for physics a body has only a minimum of required properties. Such a 'physical body' is therefore a defined concept.

A commonly defined concept in physical mechanics is that of a 'rigid body', which has a mass and occupies space, but it is not malleable. The concept 'rigid body' can be further reduced by eliminating even the property of spatial dimension, this is the concept of 'point mass'.

### **Pure Thinking**

Imagine that one wants to build a few steps on a somewhat steep and slippery slope in a garden so that it would be more accessible. One considers the present soil conditions, the appropriate order of work, the necessary tools, material requirements, labor, time and costs. When planning, one moves forward in thinking to what should be done in the future.

In these cases thinking is oriented towards sense perceptible situations; the concepts used are associated with sense perceptions and are focused on the relationships between such facts.

If, on the other hand, one considers pure geometry, one's thinking can remain within itself. Such concepts, which do not need their contents clarified in reference to the sense world, can be described as 'sense free' or 'pure' and, accordingly, the thinking that deals with them as 'sense free' or 'pure' thinking. In mathematics and geometry pure thinking is the common practice. It aims to deduce the contents of concepts with complete accuracy, that is, to describe precisely their internal lawfulness and relationships to other concepts. For the description of a sense object, one has to base this on the observable facts in order to determine whether a particular property, which could be included in its concept, actually exists. With pure concepts one can remain within thinking; what is to be known results from thinking itself, and in the same way for every thinker.

As mentioned, through conscious reduction, the scope of the contents of a concept can be so narrowed that an extremely simple concept arises in order to use it for the world of objects. Such a concept then, on the one hand, encompasses only single aspects of a thing; yet it facilitates, on the other hand, treating an object as if it were a manifestation of a concept, which has actually been formed in pure thinking, so that it can be handled with extreme exactness. Previous examples of such concepts were 'point mass' and 'rigid body'. Physics is based on such reduced concepts. The pure thinking at work in mathematics is based on physics and is thus applicable to the reality of the objective world, because, in turn, physics's description of the objective world is reduced to those concepts that are suitable for a mathematical treatment.

A desire for comfort could have been the motive for one's thinking about the stairs in the garden. If one wants to explore a concept, it is the striving self, which exerts its will to realize an interest in knowledge.

Pure concepts can be brought into consciousness through willful thinking. How can one work practically in order to thoughtfully investigate concepts? Such an approach was already applied above, but at first without mentioning it. To grasp pure concepts in thinking, one must turn to them, one must want to know them, and one must question them. In one of the exercises above, the question was asked about the particular lawful relationships of a circle such that they apply to all circles. Then came the thought that this would be limited to the relationships that the elements of a circle have to each other. One can often observe: if the inwardly posed question fits the nature of the reply, the answer appears and one sees the connection. The insight can be so penetrating that the conceptual content stands in complete clarity and transparency in front of one. It may be, though, that this is not immediately possible and that attempts with differently formulated question will be required, or even that several attempts lead initially to only partial insights.

Sensory-based thinking is principally guided by memories of the physical world and linked to our own desires, and, at best, by the given facts. If, however, one stays with sense-free concepts, one guides the thinking process in accordance with one's own insight into this; one focuses on the concepts and their relationships with one another and can bring forth new relationships that illumine the respective theme. As soon as one has a question, then something has become questionable. It is like a transition from sleep to dreaming with regards to something previously unconscious; awakening would mean knowing the answer.

*"The something more which we seek in things, over and above what is immediately given to us in them, splits our whole being into two parts. We become conscious of our antithesis to the world. We confront the world as independent beings. The universe appears to us in two opposite parts: I and world." POF 3-0*

One can come up against these "two opposites: I and world". This can release a question like: *How is it that I appear as a contradiction to myself, why does the world appear to me this way?* These sentences can help find an answer once one really poses them for oneself: I experience myself as perceiver and thinker. Perception seems to be a reality that I cannot ultimately penetrate; I do penetrate my thoughts but they seem not to be reality. Should I lean towards the obscure reality or the understood unreality? The world seems divided into one part that I stand over against when I observe and another part that is myself as the observer. If I could see myself from outside, I would be a perception from which my thoughts would remain undetected. If the world that I stand facing were like me, it would also think itself, know itself in itself. The unity of the world should be able to be discovered when I turn my observing attention not only to the world of sense outside myself, but also to my own thinking and when I can observe thinking not only in myself but also in the world of objects outside me.

The following quote, which we will use for a final exercise, comes from Renatus Ziegler.

**Exercise #32 Pure Thinking:** Just read the following and observe what unfolds for you, both while reading as well as when you think it over. Also, consider the question: What is required from you in order to be entitled to say that you had thought the following for yourself?

*"The parts of a whole can be in a spatial or temporal relationship to each other, like pieces of a cake or the hours in a day. In both cases, the whole is the unity of the parts, which is not the same as the sum of the parts: the unity takes into account the specific composition, the specific spatial or temporal arrangement of the parts into a whole. The sum is an external gathering (i.e. without overall composition) of parts without heed to their own determinations. This becomes obvious with more complex entities like the parts of a clock or the phases of a complex movement or process flow (for example, a physical double pendulum, planetary movements, dynamics of planetary configurations, chemical processes) or examples from spatial arts (sculpture, architecture, painting) or temporal arts (music, drama, eurhythmy, ballet). Here, every part must be in its proper place - in space and / or time – there should not be too much or too little. Parts are therefore essential components of a whole; it would not be a unity without their presence and without their proper composition. The whole is a concrete composition of parts, not their mere summary or incoherent compilation. Spatial and temporal aspects do not belong, a priori, to the essential determinations for the concepts of partness and wholeness, but can be adjoined to them. Partness is the universal lawfulness of all individual parts and is distinct from them, as is wholeness from all individual wholes. Partness and wholeness stand in a purely ideal relationship to each other. Partness is neither a part of wholeness, nor a part of any whole. Its content is ideally determined as that which makes an object a part of a whole: to be a part means to be determined as an entity that has a relationship to other parts such that they form a whole. This does not exclude that parts can, in turn, be wholes with other parts, etc. Wholeness is neither the whole of partness nor a whole of parts. Its content is ideally determined as that which makes an object a whole to its parts; to be a whole means to be determined as an entity made up of parts such that they form it as their whole. What has here been developed, as the conceptual relationship between part and whole, is itself a distinct whole within which whole and part can be ordered next to each other as conceptual parts; one can call this concept something like a 'part-whole'. Thus, for full clarity of the thought process regarding the determination of part and whole, the relationship between part and whole must be applied to itself."*

**Result:** You have read and understood the text. You have thought about it. Have you thus already practiced pure thinking? This question can only be answered by oneself.

In order to move on now to (your own) independently pure thinking, one can, for example, focus on particular concepts from the text and formulate questions in the following way: *How does one obtain a part?, How can I know a whole, what distinguishes it?, What differentiates a whole from a sum? How do I distinguish a part from partness?, Which words in the text refer to objects and which describe relationships?* You should not try to find the answers in the text but, instead, you should think about them for yourself. For these and other such questions, the contents of the concepts and their mutual relationships should become so transparent that they clarify themselves. Perhaps you can also notice in what way these relationships "become transparent". And perhaps you also noticed that, in order to be able to formulate the right questions following each bit of insight, you had to unfold a constant and deliberate effort of thinking and perhaps even had to change your perspective in order to

maintain this activity.

The special quality of this active thinking only really becomes apparent when one has experienced, at least once, the high degree of clarity and transparency the contents of concepts can reveal in consciousness. One knows in the moment of discovery that the content is based on and arises out of its own necessity. Pure thinking means to observe the discovery of the relationships within the world of concepts.

In accordance with the practical orientation of this book, this chapter will conclude by mentioning two main difficulties.

Even after some experiences of pure thinking, the tendency to not fully recognize the pure existence of concepts and their autonomy can still arise. One has met a spiritual reality, it has been observed – and yet this fact is ignored. A feeling of unimportance, expressed by the words *I only think it can be*, in this case, stronger than the realization made by the 'I'. Out of habit the emotional self grabs all the attention at the cost of experiencing an intuition of the cognizing self. If one can consciously strengthen the 1. love for knowledge, the force of the cognizing self will grow. In pure thinking one immerses oneself in a world of reality. ["This immersion is brought about by a power flowing through the activity of thinking itself — the power of love in its spiritual form."](#) POF Chapter 9, 1918 addition, writes Steiner.

It is not impossible that even with a rich experience in pure thinking, inaccuracies or even error can arise. In the literature it may be noticed that even such outstanding thinkers as the mathematician Gottlob Frege have overlooked or dismissed things that the reader will wonder about later. This can lead to the supposition that 2. the thinker's own intentions and expectations for the result can narrow the discovery of relationships in such a way as to avoid conflict between what is discovered and these expectations. In itself the content may be correct in many ways, but from a broader perspective one can discover gaps or even contradictions. The results of the thinking process depend to a great extent upon the degree to which the thinker is conscious of his own intentions. Our own intentions can cause us to neglect our perceptions. Recognition of reality requires the thoughtful combination of perception and concepts.

**Summary:** In pure thinking the contents of pure concepts are known through observation. Pure thinking is an intentionally guided process that lasts as long as one is able to willfully hold the focus of one's attention within its flow of insight. The content of relationships cognized within pure thinking does not depend on the one who is thinking; the thinker creates the occasion for its appearance. Pure concepts connect each to the other and together form a self-sustaining network of relationships. The scope of connections knowable within pure thinking depends upon the plenitude of viewpoints taken and to which relationships attention is directed.

## 11 – Intuition

During ordinary thinking one's thoughts are available with a certain degree of permanence; in some cases it is even difficult to be rid of them. Such thoughts let themselves be recalled and renewed later with relative ease. In the transition to pure thinking a transformation occurs. During this thinking deeper impressions arise; one has a direct experience of the evidence of the relationship. Thinking's content stands so concretely before the mind's eye that it almost

seems as if one could touch it, or is touched by it. If one later recalls the same thoughts to memory (without repeating the act of insight), they are understandable, yet without the deep impression of knowing-clarity. Like our usual thoughts, they become incomplete or forceless. Only by making a renewed transition to pure thinking can one again achieve this former depth of knowledge. Normal thinking can be accompanied by an impression of disengagement, of not being answerable to the world for what one is thinking, an impression that this thinking is only relevant to oneself. This experience is no longer there with pure thinking. Here one experiences one's thinking content as a self-revealing reality.

This form of living-within-thought associated with pure thinking we call intuition.

Steiner writes: "Thinking offers content to the perception, from the human being's world of concepts and ideas. In contrast to a perceptual content, which is given to us from without, the content of thinking appears inwardly. The form in which it first occurs will be called intuition. It is for thinking what observation is for perception." POF 6-10

With sensory perceptions of the outer world comes the impression that one perceives from within one's body outwards. This impression changes with ordinary thinking, which, while one still feels oneself in the body, is especially experienced as taking place inside the head. During pure thinking the impressions are modified such that it is as if one were watching concepts and ideas while one is thinking. The impression can also arise that we are actually seeing with thinking. If one tries, during this, to locate one's self-experience, it can happen that one experiences oneself outside the body.

It has already been mentioned that it may be difficult to appreciate what one has experienced in pure thinking: one meets an existing content that obeys its own lawfulness. One watches this thinking. One experiences oneself consciously as a thinking 'I'.

["Though intuitive thinking is, on the one hand, an active process taking place in the mind, it is, on the other hand, also a spiritual perception grasped without a physical sense organ." POF The Consequences Of Monism, 1918 addition]

**Summary:** Through intuition one can be aware that in pure thinking one already encounters a spiritual world. The appearance of content is willed and brought into being by the thinking 'I'; the 'I' knowingly observes this conceptual content – and the thinker experiences himself as a spiritual self.

## 12 – Intuitively Experienced Thinking

The term 'intuitively experienced thinking' has been adopted from Steiner. It is used here to denote a form of thinking where the experiences that arise out of pure thinking are consciously observed.

In order to apply one's pure thinking attention to a theme, one can pose, for example, a question in the form of imagined speech. It requires some skill to formulate the question in such a way that a response can arise. Immediately after the question has been put it can be noticed that consciousness is empty for a brief moment, that is, nothing appears in it even though one is fully awake. Then the answer appears; its thought-content is observed.

At the moment of empty consciousness, attention is already poised to grasp the answer. The attention lets itself be extended in such a way that not only internally audible language is expected as a response, but also other processes such as feelings and sensations, or visible impression such as movements, colors, shapes or sound-like, heat-like or willing-like elements. Appearing in consciousness, one can come to understand these effects as the perception of the answer arising in multifaceted ways.

To be able to see that these impressions are actually part of the answer, it is essential that a thoughtful examination reveals their intrinsic connection to its content.

If intuitively experienced thinking is achieved, it will be discovered that these impressions express the same content, each in their own way. The content of thinking now reveals itself in multiple ways; its core remains unchanged while it has become richer and more diverse. What was initially viewed as side effects of thinking turns out to be another layer of thinking itself. Through intuitively experienced thinking a more comprehensive level of thinking's reality becomes conscious.

As thinking experience broadens, a previous capacity for thinking observation is adjoined and enhanced by sensitive impressions and pictorial visions (Imagination) of its content. Through thoughtful assessment, these Imaginations prove to be formative-pictures that correspond to the facts of thinking's content. Intuitively experienced thinking is a secure way to develop imaginative perception, precisely because the content of the imagination can be examined by thinking. The fact that the safe ground of thinking is not lost during Imaginative thinking, allows intuitively experienced thinking, through practice, to achieve sureness in imagination.

The appearance of impressions during intuitively experienced thinking, which on thoughtful examination are not immediately recognized as belonging to the respective thought-content, can serve as indications that the content can perhaps be extended in directions that have not previously been considered.

To experience sensations that can occur during thinking, one can, for example, bring to mind the relationship between questions and answers. Perhaps one can notice that a certain tension exists between a question and its answer. A real answer generates a feeling of relaxation; it can also bring about the impression that something lightens up.

In everyday life more distinct sensations are common to us. When a particular phrase incites a question it is not always due to a specific interrogation in the wording, but rather just because of a certain feeling of tension. *You went back home* is a sentence in the form of a statement. Depending on emphasis, however, it could be a question. While an emphasis in speech is clearly felt, sensations expressed between the parts of a sentence that is read are less apparent.

To continue an approach to intuitively experienced thinking through exercises, an already well-known example will be taken up again into thinking consciousness. Depending on circumstances, one may require a number of repetitions in order to recognize for oneself the observations described below. They are extremely delicate and fleeting, so that one is inclined not to recognize them as something real.

**Exercise #33 Imaginative Impression Of The Space Between Cause And Effect:** Examine

thoughtfully the relationship between cause and effect and observe what accompanying effects occur.

**Result:** If you can hold the purely conceptual relation in consciousness, without any representations, then, for example, a kind of division of space can be experienced, with cause on one side and effect on the other. If the attention is maintained, you can experience, within the impression described, a clear boundary between the two sides. On the cause side there is movement, perhaps in the direction of the boundary and diving under it, while the movement on the effect side is as if emerging upwards and away from the boundary.

**Exercise #34 Imaginative Impressions Of The Concepts 'Part' And 'Whole':** Think (not remember) once again the concepts of *part* and *whole*. Do not only observe the intellectual content, but also try to grasp the exact nature of its occurrence. What is a *part*, what is a *whole*? How are they related?

**Result:** If I inwardly ask the question *What is a part, what a whole?*, It sounds forth like speech. Even during or shortly after *What is a part?* has been brought to consciousness, a momentary impression of a kind of flitting movement will be noticed that does not persist. Either it is recognized in the moment of its occurrence or it is missed. With sufficient attention it can be seen that it has a 'singling out' character. Inwardly spoken, *What is a whole?*, has the accompanying character of 'a movement towards comprehensiveness'. To more clearly grasp such phenomena of consciousness, one can switch between '*whole*' and '*part*'. Apart from individual characteristics, '*whole*' can generate something which one can describe as: above, bright, brilliant, outwardly expanding, raying, pleasing, desirable, etc. Contrasting accompanying effects such as lower, darker, smaller, etc. occur with '*part*'. One does not posit these descriptions as strange mental associations. They do not occur at all in the form of normal thoughts. These impressions appear to the inner eye as movements and to one's feeling-perceiving sense as forces.

If one takes 'a sum of parts' into consciousness, it can appear to the perceiving inner glance as a comprehensive or capturing gesture. Perhaps one can also notice that the gesture actually surrounds some elements that could be described as weak 'swabs of light'. Under closer inspection, these swabs appear unrelated to each other. If one now takes up the inner question *What is the relation of the whole to its parts?*, it may be that, from an elevated and radiating glow, filament-like structures stretch a net over these swabs and at the same time clasp them into an arrangement.

Similar experiences, like those described above for a few concepts, can also occur with many sentences if during reading they are penetrated with an active thinking. In this respect, an 'impression-filled' example sentence is used in the following exercises.

**Exercise #35 Imaginative Expression Of Concepts:** First briefly recall the differently rolling balls. This situation relates to the following sentence: “The something more which we seek in things, over and above what is immediately given to us in them, splits our whole being into two parts; we become conscious of our antithesis to the world.” POF 3-0 While thinking this sentence, try to notice any attendant impressions of feeling or movement.

**Result:** It may be that, even if you do not 'see' anything, during the first part of the sentence, for example, something like a node or a loop is experienced, and then perhaps the experience turns into something that splits or divides. One senses a relationship within the sentence. If you can agree with a description of 'node' or 'loop', then the question arises as to how one can be in accord with such a description. What supports this? One placed one's attention on it. Perhaps you noticed, on repeated implementation, that to which the description of the form was directed.

If one reads the "Philosophy of Freedom" as well from the point of view of inner experience, it soon becomes clear that Steiner has written it in a way that offers opportunities for 'self observations'.

Experiences like those described may vary individually. With practice, perhaps in working with others, one will recognize common features. These arise because the observed gestures result from a meaningful characterization of the concepts under investigation, regardless of their individual mode of appearance. Individual differences may also arise in that different aspects of a concept are brought to the foreground. A verification of an impression described by another person can demonstrate that these are found as well in one's own consciousness and thus prove to be connected with the concept being examined.

Through observations like those described above, concepts perceived through intuitively experienced thinking show themselves in a wealth of diverse inner impressions. They can, for example, be perceived as forces, feelings, warmth or will impulses, but also as illuminated color moods with form and movement, or as speech or sound. It can also be that, at first, impressions of feeling are noticed and only later, with some experience, after one has brought these feelings into a certain density, are they noticeable as light-effects. The study of such impression shows that they proceed in an orderly fashion as they form gestures that take shape in coordinated relation to thinking's content, which they characterize in their own particular ways. Taken together, they bring the concept to expression and prove themselves as a property of the thinking activity. What initially appeared as another level of thinking *is thinking itself*, which has now become a perception. It brings forth concepts that we encounter in imaginative ways.

Thinking itself appears in these imaginative impressions. In their actual configuring activity, their formativeness, their specific direction of force, their special feeling sensations, etc., they are thinking's objective content.

A further development in the imaginative sphere of experience allows for a more comprehensive understanding of concepts and ideas. One can experience their way of informing, i.e. the manner in which they impart form when they are brought into effectiveness. This effectiveness does not depend on whether the person exploiting an idea has become conscious of its inner nature. The effects realized by an idea can, in the ordinary way, be known by the results. For example, consider the consequences that have arisen from the application of various technical, social or scientific ideas.

Perhaps one can thus understand what Steiner meant when he wrote: *"One must be able to confront and experience the idea, otherwise one falls under its bondage."* Certain ideas have indeed been realized, and even though their nature can be known in the usual manner, they have led us into bondage. At the stage of intuitive experienced thinking, human freedom will become universally attainable.

**Summary:** An extension of the powers of observation already engaged in pure thinking enables a transition to imaginative thinking, within which concepts demonstrate a plethora of differentiated impressions which, in their entirety, bring the respective concepts to expression.

### **13 – Imagination**

In conjunction with pure thinking one can also experience a change in one's habitual thinking. Habitual thinking orients itself, in addition to the circumstances of the world of objects, in a more or less pronounced way to one's own wishes. If, as with pure thinking, one observes and controls one's thinking with greater vigilance than before, then even ordinary thinking will more and more become liberated from personal wishes and be able to follow any given circumstance with more clarity and precision. If one can continue a practice of bringing the experiences of thinking to consciousness, then one can observe whether wishes play an accompanying role in the construction of thinking's content or whether one is dealing solely with the observed facts and their objective relationships. However, a transformation of habitual thinking will not happen of itself; in order to occur, such a transformation must be intentionally willed. It will also not take place suddenly. This requires a process of continual self-observation of one's own inner experiences and the factors that influence them.

The liberation of thinking from personal peculiarities and its increasing reliability in relation to perceptible realities, and in connection with a love of truth and knowledge, are, as one can observe for oneself, prerequisites for true and sure Imagination.

#### **[Ethical Imagination**

##### **Universal Ethical Principle Of Action Derived From Pure Thinking**

If we act under the influence of intuitions, the driving force of our action is pure thinking. As it is the custom in philosophy to call the faculty of pure thinking "reason" (...) "The highest conceivable ethical principle is one that from the start contains no such reference to particular experiences, but springs from the source of pure intuition and only later seeks any reference to perceptions, that is, to life." POF 10-4

"How can an action be individually made to fit the special case and the specific situation, and yet at the same time be determined by intuition in a purely ideal way? (...) Of course, my "I" takes notice of these perceptual contents, but it does not allow itself to be determined by

them. (...) The perceptible content is used only to construct a cognitive concept, but the corresponding ethical concept is not derived by the "I" from the object." POF 10-6

### **Translation Of Universal Principle To Concrete Mental Picture By Means Of Imagination**

"Even when the motive to an action exists in universal conceptual form (e.g., Thou shalt do good to thy fellow-men! Thou shalt live so that thou promotest best thy welfare!), there still remains to be found, in the particular case, the concrete mental picture of the action (the relation of the concept to a content of perception). For a free spirit who is not guided by any model nor by fear of punishment, etc., this translation of the concept into a mental picture is always necessary." POF 13-1

"Concrete mental pictures are formed by us on the basis of our concepts by means of the imagination. Hence what the free spirit needs in order to realize his concepts, in order to assert himself in the world, is ethical imagination. This is the source of the free spirit's action. Only those men, therefore, who are endowed with ethical imagination are, properly speaking, morally productive. Those who merely preach morality, i.e., those who merely spin out moral rules without being able to condense them into concrete mental pictures, are morally unproductive. They are like those critics who can explain very competently how a work of art ought to be made, but who are themselves incapable of the smallest artistic productions." POF 13-2]

#### **Note:**

**1. Universal Concepts (Derived From Concrete Situations) Imaginatively Expressed** In intuitively experienced thinking concepts show themselves in a wealth of differentiated impressions that are related to the factual content of thinking and which bring this content to expression in their own unique ways. The experience of these impressions together produces a perspective of the investigated object of thinking which can also appear as an overall image, and which is called Imagination.

**2. Imaginations Assessed By Thinking** As thinking experience broadens, a previous capacity for thinking observation is adjoined and enhanced by sensitive impressions and pictorial visions (Imagination) of its content. Through thoughtful assessment, these Imaginations prove to be formative-pictures that correspond to the facts of thinking's content. Intuitively experienced thinking is a secure way to develop imaginative perception, precisely because the content of the imagination can be examined by thinking. The fact that the safe ground of thinking is not lost during Imaginative thinking, allows intuitively experienced thinking, through practice, to achieve sureness in imagination.

To continue the exercises we first need to recall the observations described above. While one repeats the exercises one should attempt to extend their scope.

**Exercise #36 Educated Feelings Recognize Conceptual Characteristics In Imaginative Impressions:** Try to describe precisely the kinds of impressions that arise for you when considering cause and effect, or part and whole, and the directionality and forms they exhibit. Finally, try to be aware, in respect to the type of impressions that occur, if any of these are caused or influenced by wishes or feelings.

**Results:** Through such investigations one will discover that, with such feeling-perceptions of the facts held in consciousness by thinking, one neither has the kind of sympathy nor antipathy, nor any other emotion, that expresses one's own personal circumstances. Instead feeling facilitates the observation of the characteristics of one's current content of thinking.

["A true individuality will be the one who reaches up with their feelings into the region of the ideal." POF 7-8

"Knowledge of things will go hand in hand with the development and education of the life of feeling." POF 7-11]

It is the character of the corresponding gestures of thinking's content that is recognized by this perceiving-feeling. If attention is thus directed to the place where these feeling-perceptions arise, instead of to the conceptual gestures to which they relate, one can find the centre of this perceiving-feeling to be located in the region of the heart. Through continuous practice it will become gradually clearer that one's own faculty of feeling develops into an organ of perception during the activity of intuitively experienced thinking. For example, with the vision-like impression of a separating, dividing gesture, one can at the same time perceive with one's feelings something of an antipathetic character. Whether one personally is sympathetic to, or antipathetic against, something that separates, is a matter of one's own constitution; the observed fact is independent of this.

**Exercise #37 Opposition To Incorrect Imaginative Picturing Of Concepts:** Try with an already investigated concept (you can choose 'whole' again) to arbitrarily 'see' other gestures.

**Results:** It is possible to achieve different impressions when you generate them yourself. You can discover, however, that such self-productions, such fantasies, utilize a perceptible amount of your own force in order to change the formation of the gesture. In the case of part and whole, you can furthermore notice the following: If you try to infuse the concept of 'whole' with a divisive gesture, the imaginative picture of the 'whole' becomes pale or disappears completely. With the deliberate alteration of a gesture, the impression can arise as if something rebels against or opposes the change.

Steiner points in a general way to these feeling-like and willing-like impressions that accompany what is described as intuitively experienced thinking when he writes: "If we are ready to experience thinking intuitively, we can also do justice to the experience of feeling and of will." POF Chapter 9, 1918 addition

In our treatment of pure thinking, the interdependent relationships that concepts and ideas have to one another were already addressed. In the above example of part and whole, it is a

property of the whole to determine the way the parts are incorporated. An entity becomes part of a whole, in terms of composition, in that it is integrated into the whole. This also expresses itself in its imaginatively observed gesture, which takes hold of and orders its parts. The imaginative whole demonstrates a self-proclaiming character; it forms itself.

What initially presents itself in intuitively experienced thinking as an imaginative level, can, through continuous exercise, develop into a skill that is virtually available on demand at any moment; this plane will then, almost as a matter of course, be seen to accompany thinking. In the "Philosophy of Freedom" Steiner points to this emerging inner situation with the words:

“An attempt is made to prove that there is a view of the nature of man's being which can support the rest of knowledge; and further, that this view completely justifies the idea of free will, provided only that we have first discovered that region of the soul in which free will can unfold itself. The view, regarding these two questions (the questions of knowledge and freedom JS), to which we here refer, is one that, once gained, is capable of becoming part and parcel of the very life of the soul itself. The answer given to the two problems will not be of the purely theoretical sort which, once mastered, may be carried about as a conviction preserved by memory. Such an answer would, for the whole manner of thinking on which this book is based, be no real answer at all. The book will not give a ready-made self-contained answer of this sort, but will point to a field of experience in which man's inner soul activity supplies a living answer to these questions at every moment that he needs one. Whoever has once discovered the region of the soul where these questions unfold, will find that the very contemplation of this region gives him all that he needs for the solution of the two problems. With the knowledge thus acquired, he may then, as desire or destiny impels him, adventure further into the breadths and depths of this enigmatical life of ours.” POF 1918 Preface to the revised edition

Imaginative cognition can be expanded through a transformation of the will's direction, in such a way that it can deepen knowledge in practically every realm of life.

**Summary:** In intuitively experienced thinking concepts show themselves in a wealth of differentiated impressions that are related to the factual content of thinking and which bring this content to expression in their own unique ways. The experience of these impressions together produces a perspective of the investigated object of thinking which can also appear as an overall image, and which is called Imagination.

## 14 – Properties of Representations

While our previously focus has been on the activity of thinking, we now need to investigate in more detail the various properties of representations, or mental pictures. Although various objects will be suggested for representation exercises, one's own observations can clearly differ from the results that will be described, since the way a certain specific representation is formed varies according to the individual.

**Exercise #38 Transform An Imagined Line:** Imagine a line like the following figure. It does not represent anything specific; it is simply a line with an unusual shape.



If possible, disregard any memories that might arise of things in the outer world.

Now transform the line above through a continuous transition into a representation of an open-topped rectangular shape ( |\_\_| ). The idea is not to jump from one form to the other, but that the shape of the line depicted is gradually converged into the open rectangle.

**Exercise #39 Will To Maintain An Imagined Picture:** If the transformation is easy, if it almost takes place by itself and thus nothing further happens, try to direct your attention to how the transformation occurs, and also how the representation is held before you. How, or by what, did the transformation come about? Was any activity required? If so, what kind? How were you able to hold the picture in a clearly identifiable form for a period of time?

**Results:** The transformation of the line's shape can happen in several ways. For example, one can imagine that the inclined outer sides are first pushed up into the vertical position, or that this position is reached by pulling their outermost points upward. In a further step, the curved bottom edge of the line must be transformed into a straight line. Here again, one could achieve this by pushing or pulling on it. If one can agree to this or a similar description, then one should carefully consider whether the words 'push' or 'pull' are only used as an analogy from pottery, or if, in forming the representation, one actually had an inner experience of pressure or tension. With sufficient attention one should be able to discover that the transformation of the mental images required perceptible forces. On closer observation, one can notice that the **power to change its shape**, as well as the will to maintain its image, was sent forth **from one's own body** into the representation. Even the exact starting point of this force can be known through continued observation. However, if the exercise was difficult, especially because memories (e.g. material properties, pottery, hand movements) could not be avoided, then the following variation can be tried.

**Exercise #40 Power To Change Shape Of Imagined Picture:** Imagine an equilateral triangle as a peripheral line only. Transform the triangle into a square by a continuous process. Observe how you performed this transformation?

**Result:** In order for the triangle to become a rectangle, its shape must be changed. One possibility would be to separate two sides of the triangle at one of its points and move them apart until they were parallel. The resulting square, which is open and missing one of its

sides, can be completed, for example, by drawing a line drawn from one of the open ends to the other, or a line of suitable length can be attached there. During the gradual separation of the sides, as well as the 'pulling' or filling in the missing line, a force can be felt.

If one did not initially observed similar forces, perhaps, the above description is an indication that can help one discover these with further practice. In order to notice illusions and gain confidence here, one can repeat these exercises but modifying them by presuming other impressions. For example, by verifying if impressions of piercing, drilling or percussive forces are compatible with the above representational constructions.

**Note:** For these exercises it has been assumed that one is able to freely construct representations. However, there are people who say that they cannot form distinct representations, or can only occasionally succeed in doing so. With only shadowy or fast fading representations one still has an opportunity to conduct representational exercises. One needs only to simply describe one's impressions when attempting to represent. Once one manages to direct one's attention to the impressions while one is trying to produce a representation, then the other exercises should also be possible. Similar to ordinary thinking, during the construction of representations one's attention is usually focused on their content, not on the way they occur. In the above exercises one already goes beyond this to include the way they come into being. With the following exercise, the field of attention should be further extended in that another property of representations is grasped during observation, namely, the place of their occurrence in relation to the imaginer.

**Exercise #41 Location Of Imagined Picture:** Imagine once again, as presented above, the figure of a line. Another representation may also be chosen, but it should not be of any particular, finished memory picture. If one chooses, for example, a candle, it should thus be imagined alone and not together in a candlestick on a table in a room. After imagining it, answer to the question: Where was the representation of the candle?

**Results:** Spontaneously one might say: in the head. Such a response, on the whole, does not come from a specific act of observation, but as a vague feeling or an assumption. From actual observation one may identify the area in front of the head, in front of the chest or stomach, above the head or other places.

At first it may seem surprising that there is, in fact, a place where the picture occurs. The area inside the head is quite possible, but this position is also rare. An often-named place is the area in front of the head.

The word "representation" (this word is *Vorstellung* in German and literally means 'to place before') demonstrates rightly then that something is placed before one. Further exploration shows that one can specify a certain region of space within which one usually imagines; this space will henceforth be called the 'imagination-space'.

**Exercise #42 Imagination Space:** Try to imagine putting a representation (of any object but

not a memory) some place or other and then maintain it there. You can also choose a variant of this and try producing the representation immediately in a variety of unusual places.

**Results:** It is quite easy to slightly change the location of one's representations; but to produce them in a completely unusual place (e.g. behind the back) can appear to take some effort. A force-current may accompany the intention when one, for example, tries to place it behind them as well as perceive the imagined object. Some care is required in order not to confuse the force-current, which is employed to change the position of the representation, with the representation itself once it reaches the edge of one's familiar imagination-space. Experience shows that it is not easy to produce an image behind one's back with the same intensity that one is usually able to achieve in the imagination-space in front of the head. It appears, however, that this imagination-space can be extended or moved voluntarily.