

Here is the final chapter in Rudolf Steiner's book *"Truth and Knowledge"*. It holds an idea of freedom to be expanded upon in *"The Philosophy of Freedom"* which was the next book written by Steiner.

Truth and Knowledge

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Practical Conclusion

The aim of the preceding discussion has been to throw light on the relationship between our cognizing personality and the objective world. What does the possession of knowledge and science mean for us? This was the question to which we sought the answer.

Our discussion has shown that the innermost core of the world comes to expression in our knowledge. The harmony of laws ruling throughout the universe shines forth in human cognition.

It is part of man's task to bring into the sphere of apparent reality the fundamental laws of the universe which, although they rule all existence, would never come to existence as such. The very nature of knowledge is that the world-foundation, which is not to be found as such in objective reality, is present in it. Our knowledge, pictorially expressed, is a gradual, living penetration into the world's foundation.

A conviction such as this must also necessarily throw light upon our comprehension of practical life.

Our moral ideals determine the whole character of our conduct in life. Our moral ideals are ideas which we have of our task in life, in other words, the ideas we form of what we should bring about through our deeds.

Our action is part of the universal world-process. It is therefore also subject to the general laws of that world-process. Whenever something takes place in the universe, two things must be distinguished: the external course the event follows in space and time, and the inner law ruling it.

To recognize this law in the sphere of human conduct is simply a special instance of cognition. This means that the insight we have gained concerning the nature of knowledge must be applicable here also. To know oneself to be at one with one's deeds means to possess, as knowledge, the moral concepts and ideals that correspond to the deeds. If we recognize these laws, then our deeds are also our own creations. In such instances the laws are not something given, that is, they are not outside the object in which the activity appears; they are the content of the object itself, engaged in living activity. The object in this case is our own I. If the I has really penetrated its deed with full insight, in conformity with its nature, then it also feels itself to be master. As long as this is not the case, the laws ruling the deed confront us as something foreign, they rule us; what we do is done under the compulsion they exert over us. If they are transformed from being a foreign entity into a deed completely originating within our own I, then the compulsion ceases. That which compelled us, has become our own being. The laws no longer rule over us; in us they rule over the deed issuing from our I. To carry out a deed under the influence of a law external to the person who brings the deed to realization, is a deed done in unfreedom. To carry out a deed ruled by a law that lies within the one who brings it about, is a deed done in freedom. To recognize the laws of one's deeds, means to become conscious of one's own freedom. Thus the process of knowledge is the process of development toward freedom.

Not all our deeds have this character. Often we do not possess knowledge of the laws governing our deeds. Such deeds form a part of our activity which is unfree. In contrast, there is that other part where we make ourselves completely at one with the laws. This is the free sphere. Only insofar as man is able to live in this sphere, can he be called moral. To transform the first sphere of our activity into one that has the character of the second is the task of every individual's development, as well as the task of mankind as a whole.

The most important problem of all human thinking is: to understand man as a free personality, whose very foundation is himself.