

# I

## THE GOAL OF KNOWLEDGE

### Journal

**What is this chapter about?** *Principles of individualistic life and truth.*

**What is its value?** *These principles are for those who strive to be free individuals, rather than conform to norms. They have value when they are understood and applied to life.*

The pursuit of individualistic life is driving dramatic cultural changes around the world. The leaders of traditional institutions struggle to maintain their authority with the increasing recognition that each individual has value and something worthy to offer.

Truth, also, is now a matter for the individual. We no longer seek the wise one who will bestow wisdom upon us. Conviction and empowerment only comes with the truth that appears within each one.

The pursuit of individualistic life and truth is the last stage of human development. Nature develops the automatic behavior of natural urges and instincts; society develops law-abiding obedient behavior; but these transitory stages can be overcome by a free individual.

Rudolf Steiner, while having been born a clairvoyant, was not born a free individualist. He had to strive toward freedom like everybody else. The pious exercises and ascetic practices of past cultures are no longer suitable for today in the age of science. Steiner's training was in mathematics, science, and philosophy leading to a doctorate in philosophy. Trained as a scientist and philosopher with a love of truth he found a new path to freedom suited to our age and then described his inner experiences in *The Philosophy Of Freedom*. Steiner's path is clarity of mind, not vague mysticism, through the practice of pure thinking and living according to the principles of freedom.

The study of mathematics and philosophy are examples of the practice of thinking that requires entering the realm of pure thought. Immersing yourself in the study of *The Philosophy Of Freedom* is a training in pure thinking, so expect the mental challenge faced by a university science or philosophy student. While studying you can decide to read attentively and struggle to understand, judge, and apply the material, or you can let your attention wander. You may half get some points, awaken again with effort, then lapse into partial focus. At each moment you are deciding whether to think or not.

The *Philosophy Of Freedom* is not a guide to imitate Rudolf Steiner, but rather a guide to find your own self. Part I of the book is about the KNOWER, beginning with the principles of individuality and freedom, then examining the processes of cognition with chapter discussions on: knowledge, thinking, perception, conception, mental picturing and cognition. Part II opens out into the expression of freedom as the KNOWING DOER, living life as an ethical individualist.

# Study Topics

## principles of individualism

### Principles Of Individualistic Truth

#### **1.0 Culture Of Individuality**

Today, all human interests tend to center in the culture of human individuality.

#### Principles Of Individualistic Life

##### **1. Free Oneself From Authority**

An energetic effort is being made to shake off every kind of authority.

##### **2. Individual Validation**

Nothing is accepted as valid, unless it springs from the roots of individuality. Everything which hinders the individual in the full development of his powers is thrust aside.

##### **3. Leaderless Striving**

The saying "Each one of us must choose his hero in whose footsteps he toils up to Olympus" no longer holds for us.

##### **4. Individual Selection Of Ideals**

We allow no ideals to be forced upon us.

##### **5. Individual Worthiness**

We are convinced that in each of us, if only we probe deep enough into the very heart of our being, there dwells something noble, something worthy of development.

##### **6. Rejection Of Conformity**

We no longer believe that there is a norm of human life to which we must all strive to conform.

##### **7. Perfection Of Each Individual**

We regard the perfection of the whole as depending on the unique perfection of each single individual.

##### **8. Unique Contribution**

We do not want to do what anyone else can do equally well. No, our contribution to the development of the world, however trifling, must be something which, by reason of the uniqueness of our nature, we alone can offer.

##### **9. Creative Expression**

Never have artists been less concerned about rules and norms in art than today. Each of them asserts his right to express, in the creations of his art, what is unique in him.

##### **10. Dynamic Language**

There are dramatists who write in dialect rather than conform to the standard diction which grammar demands.

##### **11. Striving Towards Freedom**

[2] No better expression for these phenomena can be found than this, that they result from the individual's striving towards freedom, developed to its highest pitch.

##### **12. Independence**

We do not want to be dependent in any respect, and where dependence must be, we tolerate it only on condition that it coincides with a vital interest of our individuality.

#### **1.1 Conviction Of Inner Truth**

Truth will be sought in our age only in the depths of human nature. Conviction attaches only to what appears as truth to each of us in our own hearts.

#### **1.2 Truth Empowers**

Truth alone can give us confidence in developing our powers. He who is tortured by doubts finds his powers lamed.

#### **1.3 Comprehensible Truth**

We no longer want to believe; we want to know. Belief demands the acceptance of truths which we do not wholly comprehend.

#### **1.4 Knowledge Starting From Individual Experience**

Starting from the facts nearest at hand, our own immediate experiences, we ascend to a knowledge of the whole universe.

### **1.5 Individual Drive To Know**

Nowadays there is no attempt to compel anyone to understand. We claim no agreement with anyone whom a distinct individual need does not drive to a certain view.

### **1.6 Strive To Live According To Individualistic Principles**

Many of my contemporaries strive to order their lives in the direction of the principles I have indicated. To them I would dedicate this book.

### **1.7 Exercise Pure Thinking**

The Western world no longer demands pious exercises and ascetic practices as a preparation for science, but it does require a sincere willingness to withdraw oneself awhile from the immediate impressions of life, and to betake oneself into the realm of pure thought.

### **1.8 Knowledge Is A Self-Governing Organism**

Abstract thinking attains concrete, individual life. Ideas become powers of life. We no longer have merely a knowledge about things, but have made knowledge into a real, self-governing organism. Our consciousness, alive and active, has risen beyond a mere passive reception of truths.

### **1.9 The Most Pressing Question Is Freedom**

How philosophy, as an art, is related to freedom; what freedom is; and whether we do, or can, participate in it —these are the principle problems of my book. These questions, in my opinion, are humanity most immediate concern.

### **1.10 The Value Of Knowledge Is Human Development**

The true value of the sciences is seen only when we have shown the importance of their results for humanity. Knowledge has value only in so far as it contributes to the all-round unfolding of the whole nature of the human being.

### **1.11 Ideas To Serve Individual Goals**

We each take possession of the world of ideas in order to use them for our own human aims, which transcend those of mere science.

### **1.12 Master Over Ideas**

We must confront ideas as master; or become their slave.

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## 1.0 Culture Of Individuality

[1] I BELIEVE I am indicating correctly one of the fundamental characteristics of our age when I say that, at the present day, all human interests tend to centre in the culture of human individuality.

### Principles Of Individualistic Life

#### 1. Free Oneself From Authority

An energetic effort is being made to shake off every kind of authority.

#### 2. Individual Validation

Nothing is accepted as valid, unless it springs from the roots of individuality. Everything which hinders the individual in the full development of his powers is thrust aside.

#### 3. Leaderless Striving

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We do not want to do what anyone else can do equally well. No, our contribution to the development of the world, however trifling, must be something which, by reason of the uniqueness of our nature, we alone can offer.

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There are dramatists who write in dialect rather than conform to the standard diction which grammar demands.

#### 11. Striving Towards Freedom

[2] No better expression for these phenomena can be found than this, that they result from the individual's striving towards freedom, developed to its highest pitch.

#### 12. Independence

We do not want to be dependent in any respect, and where dependence must be, we tolerate it only on condition that it coincides with a vital interest of our individuality.



**Rudolf Steiner**  
1861-1925

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### 1.1 Inner Truth Alone Gives Conviction

[3] Truth, too, will be sought in an age such as ours only in the depths of human nature. Of the following two well-known paths described by Schiller, it is the second which will today be found most useful:



Wahrheit suchen wir beide, du aussen im Leben, ich innen  
In dem Herzen, und so findet sie jeder gewiss.  
Ist das Auge gesund, so begegnet es aussen dem Schöpfer;  
Ist es das Herz, dann gewiss spiegelt es innen die Welt.

Truth seek we both — Thou in the life without thee and around;  
I in the heart within. By both can Truth alike be found.  
The healthy eye can through the world the great creator track;  
The healthy heart is but the glass which gives creation back.

**Friedrich Schiller**  
1759-1805

A truth which comes to us from without bears ever the stamp of uncertainty. Conviction attaches only to what appears as truth to each of us in our own hearts.

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### 1.2 Truth Empowers

[4] Truth alone can give us confidence in developing our powers. He who is tortured by doubts finds his powers lamed. In a world of riddle of which baffles him, he can find no aim for his activity.

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### 1.3 Comprehensible Truth

[5] We no longer want to believe; we want to know. Belief demands the acceptance of truths which we do not wholly comprehend. But the individuality which seeks to experience everything in the depths of its own being, is repelled by what it cannot understand. Only that knowledge will satisfy us which springs from the inner life of the personality, and submits itself to no external norm.

*we no longer  
want to believe;  
we want to know.*

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### 1.4 Knowledge Starting From Individual Experience

[6] Again, we do not want any knowledge that has encased itself once and for all in hide bound formulas, and which is preserved in Encyclopedias valid for all time. Each of us claims the right to start from the facts that lie nearest to hand, from his own immediate experiences, and thence to ascend to a knowledge of the whole universe. We strive after certainty in knowledge, but each in his own way.

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### 1.5 Individual Need To Know

[7] Our scientific doctrines, too, are no longer to be formulated as if we were unconditionally compelled to accept them. None of us would wish to give a scientific work a title like Fichte's *A Pellucid Account for the General Public concerning the Real Nature of the Newest Philosophy. An Attempt to Compel the Readers to Understand*. Nowadays there is no attempt to compel anyone to understand. We claim no agreement with anyone whom a distinct individual need does not drive to a certain view. We do not seek nowadays to cram facts of knowledge even into the immature human being, the child. We seek rather to develop his faculties in such a way that his understanding may depend no longer on our compulsion, but on his will.

*there is no attempt to  
compel anyone to  
understand...*

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To them I  
dedicate this  
book.

### 1.6 Strive To Live According To Individualistic Principles

[8] I am under no illusion concerning the characteristics of the present age. I know how many flaunt a manner of life which lacks all individuality and follows only the prevailing fashion. But I know also that many of my contemporaries strive to order their lives in the direction of the principles I have indicated. To them I would dedicate this book. It does not pretend to

offer the "only possible" way to Truth, it only describes the path chosen by one whose heart is set upon Truth.

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### 1.7 Thought Training In Pure Thinking

[9] The reader will be led at first into somewhat abstract regions, where thought must draw sharp outlines if it is to reach secure conclusions. But he will also be led out of these arid concepts into concrete life. I am fully convinced that one cannot do without soaring into the ethereal realm of abstraction, if one's experience is to penetrate life in all directions. He who is limited to the pleasures of the senses misses the sweetest enjoyments of life.



The Western world no longer demands pious exercises and ascetic practices.

The Oriental sages make their disciples live for years a life of resignation and asceticism before they impart to them their own wisdom. The Western world no longer demands pious exercises and ascetic practices as a preparation for science, but it does require a sincere willingness to withdraw oneself awhile from the immediate impressions of life, and to betake oneself into the realm of pure thought.

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### 1.8 Holistic Science Leading To Fullness Of Life

[10] The spheres of life are many and for each there develop a special science. But life itself is one, and the more the sciences strive to penetrate deeply into their separate spheres, the more they withdraw themselves from the vision of the world as a living whole. There must be one supreme science which seeks in the separate sciences the elements for leading men back once more to the fullness of life. The scientific specialist seeks in his studies to gain a knowledge of the world and its workings. This book has a philosophical aim: science itself is to be infused with the life of an organic whole. The special sciences are stages on the way to this all-inclusive science. A similar relationship is found in the arts.

*science itself is to be infused with the life of an organic whole...*



All genuine philosophers have been artists in concepts.

The composer in his work employs the rules of the theory of composition. This latter is an accumulation of principles, knowledge of which is a necessary presupposition for composing. In the act of composing, the rules of theory become the servants of life, of reality. In exactly the same sense philosophy is an art. All genuine philosophers have been artists in concepts. Human ideas have been the medium of their art, and scientific method their artistic technique. Abstract thinking thus gains concrete individual life. Ideas turn into life forces. We have no longer merely a knowledge about things, but we have now made knowledge a real, self-determining organism. Our consciousness, alive and active, has risen beyond a mere passive reception of truths.

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### 1.9 The Principle Question Is Freedom

[11] How philosophy, as an art, is related to freedom; what freedom is; and whether we do, or can, participate in it —these are the principle problems of my book. All other scientific discussions are put in only because they ultimately throw light on these questions which are, in my opinion, the most intimate

that concern mankind. These pages offer a "Philosophy of Freedom".

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### **1.10 Value Of Science Is Human Development**

[12] All science would be nothing but the satisfaction of idle curiosity did it not strive to enhance the existential value of human personality. The true value of the sciences is seen only when we have shown the importance of their results for humanity.



The final aim of the individuality can never be the cultivation of any single faculty, but only the development of all capacities which slumber within us.

Knowledge has value only in so far as it contributes to the all-round unfolding of the whole nature of man.

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### **1.11 Ideas To Serve Human Goals**

[13] This book, therefore, does not conceive the relation between science and life in such a way that man must bow down before the world of ideas and devote his powers to its service. On the contrary, it shows that he takes possession of the world of ideas in order to use them for his human aims, which transcend those of mere science.

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### **1.12 Master Over Ideas**

[14] Man must confront ideas as master; lest he become their slave.