

LESSON 2

First Steps in the Light on the Path



EduCareDo

International Research and Learning Centre
based on the work of Rudolf Steiner

First Steps in the Light on the Path

When we are born, we bring with us three gifts, which gradually unfold during our first three years on earth; the gift of upright standing and walking, the gift of speech and the gift of thinking. In the ancient Yoga initiation wisdom, they saw these gifts bestowed on the human being as gifts of spiritual powers, the gifts of the Gods. Through their yoga exercises, they aimed to re-establish their connection with the bestowing beings.

After a child has arrived from its divine shelter the surrounding sense world gradually opens up. From the lying position, through sitting and crawling, the child finally arrives at one of the most important and dramatic moments in life: standing upright and starting to walk with hands free. To be able to orientate, to look upward and forward, to go out into the world to do human deeds and to exercise the human will, places the child into the wider human community. The great question is, how can the parents support these manifestations of the emerging human will while maintaining their caring attitude?

Great wonder and joy accompany the first communications when the child, recognising the parents, first calls out mama or daddy with a big smile. The child has the inner capacity to learn to speak gradually through imitating the words heard. What responsibility, we as adults have, for the words we use and how we speak to the child. The ability to carry over the content of one's inner being in language and feeling to another human being, gradually develops and keeps developing right through our lives, mediating between our thinking and will.

Step by step the child's ability to reflect the surrounding world is unfolding in thinking, the perceived world is entering the soul of the child in the form of simple concepts and thoughts, like a beginning of the search for meaning in life. What a challenge for parents to decide how, in what stages and to what sort of surrounding world they first introduce their child.

The level of development of our thinking, feeling and willing as manifestation of our soul forces puts its stamp on all our activities and our whole life on earth. If we recognise the divine origin of these three gifts for our life on earth, then they can be continuously renewed in the light of spirit and can bring healing to us and to the earth. Through such acts of gradual ennobling and renewal we can offer our reverence filled gratitude to the divine bestowing powers by consciously acknowledging and developing the divine capacities received. This striving takes us on our path step by step in the light of our consciousness to find and to re-establish our connection with the divine Spirit in us and the divine Spirit in the cosmos.

During our lives, we develop our thinking capacity through schooling; particularly in the sciences of the outer world, and with the study of mathematics we can get some experience in exact thinking. To come to a clearer realisation of our inner experiences in regards to world phenomena and to create a bridge between the two we arrive at a new science: Goethean Science. Through his research Rudolf Steiner further developed this work, leading to Spiritual Science, whereby human beings have to evolve and exercise their inner capacities in order to become the instruments of the Science of the Spirit, which can lead toward exact perception of the spirit. Through these efforts we can approach in our thinking the content of the original divine gift, which is truth leading to the meaning of life. (During the year we will pursue the basis and some of the methods of Goethean Science and its relationship to Anthroposophy – Spiritual Science.)

The gift of upright walking with our hands free made us really human, giving us the possibility to act freely and work in the world. This gift can be continually renewed by our conscious recognition of its divinity and through acting out of its real content: the goodness of the divine within us. These free and divine connected thoughts can fire our will so that in our deeds we may bring goodness into the world to experience morality of life.

In our speech through mediating between our thought and our will we also reveal our feeling realm. With the gift of speech we communicate in our human social relationships and through conscious inner creative artistic development we can step by step find the way to the spiritual content of this divine gift: the beauty in our feeling realm. Out of this beauty, through artistic creativity flows the joy of life.

If we think, feel and will (act) not according to our lower nature, but according to the Divine in us, then we bring the transforming power of divine love into our lives, which can penetrate all our earthly deeds with its healing forces. Through the path of our lives, by gradually ennobling the three godly gifts, we can approach with gratitude the bestowing beings.

The following table gives an overview of how we can work with the divine gifts in our lives. With our WILLING, working through our limbs (metabolic-limb system) we can do deeds towards GOODNESS and experience the MORALITY of life. Our FEELING in communication through our heart (rhythmic system) can lead us to BEAUTY and the JOY of life. With our THINKING through deep reflections (nerve-sense system) we come closer to TRUTH and the MEANING of life.

PATH OF GROWTH FOR THE DIVINE GIFTS

<i>Three divine gifts</i>	<i>In Active Use</i>	<i>Soul Forces in Action</i>	<i>The Ennobled Gifts</i>	<i>Our Experience</i>
UPRIGHT WALKING	Hands are free for work	WILLING through our metabolic-limb system	GOODNESS	MORALITY of life
SPEECH	Mediates between thought and will	FEELING through our rhythmic system	BEAUTY	JOY of life
THINKING	To form concepts from the external world	THINKING through our nerve-sense system	TRUTH	MEANING of life

Where Does the Path Start and Where Does it Lead?

The little children come to this world, into the care of their parents, bringing the divine gifts with them and from the very beginning the child is influenced by human intervention, in the form of education, care and doing (EduCareDo). The moment the mother chooses demand feeding or time feeding marks the beginning of the education of the child. Whether the mother shelters or exposes the child to more or less light, is one of the beginnings of care. To take the child out of the cot for unhindered movement, or by firmly covering up for protection and thereby restricting movement is the first guidance of to do or not. So the child and parents continuously connect to the godly gifts of thinking, speech and upright walking. These are working through the thinking, feeling and willing soul forces of the child, which now shelter the essence of the gifts: truth, beauty and goodness, manifesting in the meaning, joy and morality of life.

Truth, Beauty and Goodness also have their polar opposites in the Spurious (False), the Ugly and the Bad (Evil) and they are also there in the surrounding world of the child. The small child is entirely and trustingly open to the world. Through imitation the child identifies with people and takes everything in from the surrounding world with complete openness and without real defenses (even the mother's milk goes through the child's intestinal wall without much change).

So what should or should not be in the immediate surroundings of the young child? What a difficult question... Let's say for example there are artificial flowers in the room, the child then absorbs the falsehood. As an illustration of this: many years ago, when we bought our first radiogram (in those times it was a big box, like the size of a piano) our three-year-old daughter, who had been to concerts with us before, listened very carefully to the first record we put on. After some contemplation she said 'where are the little people who made the music in the box?' She was bewildered. Ugly objects, pictures, toys, or an emotion filled shouting argument in front of the small child are taken in and are absorbed, even if the child has no clue about the meaning of the content. So what a responsibility for parents and later for teachers to help and guide the child on the path towards Truth, Beauty and Goodness – the divine treasures – and to minimize the exposure to Untruth, Ugliness and Evil.

Helping and guiding the child on the path needs to be carried out differently during the various stages of the child's development. During the first seven years, culminating with the second dentition, there is a great physical development with active use of the limbs and WILLING. The next period up to puberty brings a great development and sensitivity in the FEELING realm. The growing into adulthood after puberty brings the possibility for clear THINKING about the world.

In Steiner education during the first seven years of the child's life, the aim is to show the goodness in the world through examples, by activities and experience. From seven to fourteen (puberty) children experience the beauty of the world through artistic teaching from every point of view. Finally from puberty to adult age (21 years) truth in the world is presented to the thinking student. More will be included later about Rudolf Steiner education and schools.

Creating Exercises and Experiments

You can now try to develop your own exercises! Remember the process: What do I know? (Truth), How do I care? (Beauty), What can I do? (Goodness). The opposites, the polarities, are there as our teachers to help develop our consciousness so we move towards self-knowledge and freedom. The first rule (sometimes the most difficult one) is that we have to be objective and honest with ourselves.

Example: If you have children, take a look at what surrounds them. (What is Truth, Beauty, and Goodness?) Say one of the children watches lots of TV and plays computer games for hours. How much truth or untruth is there? (What about virtual reality?) That does not mean you ban the child from TV and computer games, but ask "where am I really between these polarities" and "where is the child". By educating myself I can find out and weigh up the real effects of the TV and computer on the small child. I can make a more conscious decision about how to care and what to do. I might decide to create truly imaginative games, toys, plays, work or occupation for the child to re-balance the scale if it is moving away from the godly gifts.

What a responsibility to be a parent! What IS this responsibility? To get closer to this question we can look at a new word: 'responsability' meaning to develop the ability to respond to a situation. (What do I know?) Developing this ability to respond takes us on the path towards freedom.

We can create similar exercises with Beauty and Goodness, by finding our own situation between the polarities giving us the possibility to create caring and right deeds. This process could equally apply to our partner, family members, and friends. This exercise could become the most creative and joyful experience and at the same time it can be a strictly carried out scientific experiment where we become the instruments of the science. This experiment can also be an example of how to work with Spiritual Science on the path of knowledge. In these exercises we endeavor to find ourselves between polarities, opposites, because in this way we become conscious of ourselves and of where we really are. As consciousness always happens between polarities our exercises can help us also to increase our levels of consciousness. There are many levels of consciousness and many levels of exercises to get closer to self-knowledge.

In our fast moving world it is sometimes difficult to keep up with new developments and their effects on us and on the world. Many questions on world affairs cause us concern; what are the effects of genetically modified food plants? Where can the possibility of cloning take us? Vaccination or no vaccination? Hyperactivity of children? Food additives and their effects? Pollution of air, water, soil and what could be done? Hunger, disease and poverty in many parts of the world? Drugs, their effects and what can be done? Social problems all over the world and which way to go? Etc.etc.etc. We provide you with a list of references in connection with the course material and a wider list of books about themes mentioned during the course. You can order any of the books on the lists at any of the bookshops nominated by us and as a student of EduCareDo you will receive a 10%-20% discount.

Finding Meaning

We have taken the First steps in the Light on the Path to know and understand the world and ourselves, but where do we find the meaning of our life in this world? How can we

know the meaning? Do we know the world through our sense experiences only? We certainly could not experience the world without our senses, but there is also a non-sensory factor in knowingly experiencing the world and that is CONSCIOUSNESS.

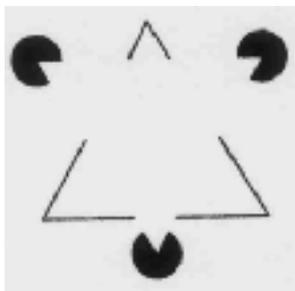
EXPERIMENTS

1. There is more to seeing than meets the eye'. Look at this black and white patchwork. Suddenly from the chaos a figure appears. It is as though a light has been switched on. What happened? The pattern registered on the retina is the same as before, there is no sensory change. So the difference is not sensory. The retinal stimulation is the same, but through our effort the organisation, the appreciation of the elements, has changed.

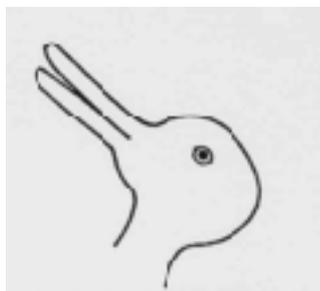


This non-sensory perception of organisation is the perception of meaning. A purely sensory experience is a state of awareness without meaning.

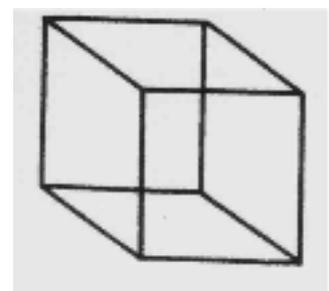
2. First, just try to look casually at these pictures, and quickly say what you see. Now try again with some intention and effort to find more, or to alter what you have first seen. All three pictures will present to your consciousness an alternative meaning too. (Write in your Diary what you have observed in this exercise with these four pictures).



Triangle
after Kanizsa



An Ambiguous Picture



The Cube,
after C.J.S. Clarke

When we come to a sudden recognition of some element of truth, we often exclaim: "Oh, I see!" We feel pleasure that we recognise something new. Consciousness has the structure of intentionality and is always directed towards an 'object'.

When we look at the patchwork pattern of the first picture with a passive onlooker consciousness, we find no meaning in it. However, if we look again with a more active participating consciousness, then our constructive mind is finding, organising the MEANING. Goethe developed, through experiments and exercises, the basis of the science of Phenomenology, applying this active 'participatory consciousness' in observing the living world of plants. Instead of observing the plants with passive 'onlooker

consciousness', he 'participated' in the life processes of the plant and followed these processes right through, without theorising or explaining anything into the 'experienceable' phenomena. He named this method of observation the 'perceptive power of thought' always looking for MEANING. After many diligent exercises, the book of nature started to open to his perceptive power of thought and started to reveal to him many 'manifest secrets of nature'. Cognition is concerned with condensation of meaning, not with sensory data. This condensation of meaning led Goethe in many areas to search for the origins of the phenomena, THE ARCHETYPE. He surmised that there must be an original plant out of which all other plants have derived, how otherwise could we recognise that a plant in front of us is really a plant. Goethe also applied this method to his extensive studies of colour phenomena. We will be working during the year with further aspects of Goethe's phenomenological science.

Rudolf Steiner further developed Goethe's perceptive power of thinking by transforming it to conscious 'seeing' in thinking, where an increased level of cognition is possible through the condensation of meaning, and through a diminished concern of sensory data during this process. This 'sense free' thinking in meditation can lead to higher levels of consciousness and meaning. We will try to develop our capacities in this area through many different consciousness-widening experiments and exercises.

Drawings: The patchwork is a Giraffe, Triangular line overlapped by a white triangle, Rabbit or duck, Cube seen from above or from below.

EduCareDo Diary Page

Name:

Student Number:

Date:

What was really new to me in this lesson?

What was most inspiring to me in this lesson?

What can I do, what will I do with this finding? (Even if it is only a small deed.)

What have I done and what is in process of being done:

After three months?

After six months?

Other remarks: