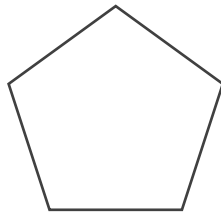


INNER DEVELOPMENT FOR WORLD DEVELOPMENT

An EduCareDo Course by Lisa Romero

To enroll in the full 12 lesson course, please visit:

<https://www.educaredo.org/subject-courses/inner-development>



LESSON 1

Introduction to Inner Development



EduCareDo

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

Introduction



A warm hello and welcome to this year long course on inner development in the light of anthroposophy. Many years ago I asked Erwin Berney (the founder and primary writer of the first EduCareDo course outlining the foundations of anthroposophy) if we could begin developing a course on inner development. He replied yes, but that this was a future project for EduCareDo. I began working with Erwin on the foundation course offering integrative workshops, and at the same time I began working towards the inner development course.

Over the last 25 years, this has been my primary area of research and teaching. Although I have written six books on meditation, inner development, and how our inner life affects our outer life, I wanted to make this new contribution in the form of an EduCareDo speciality course and I wanted to use this form so that there is an opportunity for ongoing dialogue throughout the process of working with the course content. Unlike the book format, EduCareDo distance-learning courses allow for a different type of engagement. In this course I want to walk with the participants through their journey with inner development, and through this new modality, keep growing and developing the different ways to express and cultivate the path towards the growth and freedom of the individual and of humanity as a whole.

This is an experiential course, outlining the various ways of working with inner development, along with various indications towards engaging with certain exercises and meditations over the 12 months of the course. Every month you will receive a new lesson including content towards understanding the inner development path and how to utilise the various methods of self-assessment to gauge for yourself where you are in this work and what you may need. There will be practical exercises suggested each month, so you can have direct experience as well as the opportunity to reflect on how the content resonates for you. This will help to deepen your individual insight into the inner schooling with which it would be most useful for you to engage. It will help you to orientate towards putting the time, energy, and attention you have in the best direction. I suggest you read each lesson through and then work through it. After working through it, and engaging with the exercises and contemplations that you choose to give your time, energy and attention to, the content can then be furthered individually through your questions and experiences via your diary sheets.

The diary sheets will be the main mode of communication between us, should you like to share them and engage with me in this way. They can be sent in as you see best, but for those wanting a monthly dialogue I suggest you try to complete the diary sheets on week three or four of working with each lesson and send them to me so that you receive a response towards the beginning of your next month's lesson. Of course this is in your hands

and you may wish to wait until there are certain thoughts, experiences, or questions arising, before you send in your diary sheets. You may also rather not send in any at all. The options are open to meet your own preferred way of learning and I will work to respond accordingly. I will be aiming to reply within 7 days of receiving your diary sheets.

Holding quiet consideration for your growing inner life, and not chatting about what happens, is a necessary part of building and strengthening our work on the inner path. To do otherwise weakens the potency of the 'seed stage' of the step you are on. It is like digging into or pulling back the soil from a planted seed to see what it's doing. This hinders its growth. And if this is done too often it will block the conditions required for right seasonal growth. Likewise, being overzealous, or sensationalising your inner world, changes or weakens the potency of the path and leads to more hindrances along the way. Instead of being the quiet observer of what is coming into being, we add to it fantasies of our own making, thereby shrouding the reality of what is taking place. Therefore, learning not to speak about what is taking place in the 'seed stage' beginnings of our inner development is a part of the inner development path itself.

However, once the growth is in plain sight above the quiet soil, above ground and in the light of consciousness, we can look on and begin to describe what we see. We do this knowing all the while that it is the beginning of the shooting process and the plant that is growing may not become namable to us for some time. So we try to stay with what is revealing itself, instead of jumping ahead or judging what we think is there. Try to avoid analysing or judging what is emerging, as these forces are too harsh for new shoots. Witness, observe, and give them room to grow, yet know that your reverent attention is essential, as it is a light that will help them grow. Asking the right questions of your inner experience can be supportive, but it is essential that you let the shoots unfurl their fuller nature to you over time.

It is with this in mind that I suggest you write for yourself your own insights and observations and only bring to the diary sheets that which you would like to clarify or question, so that you may be able to experience and form your own path with greater certainty. My intention is to support the process of your inner growth and development and to respond to your inner enquiry and questions out of my years of experience working with others, and through the clarity that I have gained in dedication and commitment to this task. I will therefore hold all the diary sheet communications in the greatest privacy and consideration of the task at hand.

I would like to begin the inner cultivating exercises by suggesting a simple practice that I have worked with for over 35 years. Rudolf Steiner engaged with this practice and it is a well-known practice in esoteric schooling. The practice is to keep a personal, separate diary/log where you can write your thoughts, experiences and questions, as you will possibly choose not to place many of them in your submitted diary sheets.

Writing your thoughts and insights can help to deepen the inner work through intensifying the right attention. You may never read them again but by scribing them in your own

handwriting, they are more present in your internal world. What we carry inwardly works onwards. While you may not even feel the meaningful thought of today is relevant when you read it at a later date, or it may seem dull or even unintelligible, the work of formulating the question, or scribing the experience, strengthens the potency. Many of these thoughts will not be read again and yet the practice still has its effects.

The practice has many effects. One of them is that it will, in time, prove to you that which is often spoken of about the nature of thoughts that come through spiritual insight. These are different from the common, daily, externally-stimulated thoughts. To re-experience your written, spiritually-imbued thought you have to engage again with the living thought activity; you will need to enter into a similar inner state as that through which the thought first came into living being within you. And meeting the thought again means that you meet it anew, in a living way, in order that it inspires us and reveals more to us. This is very different with thoughts that arise from our common thinking, which are understandable to the everyday mind, but do not grow beyond it. As deeper thoughts awaken, these living thoughts take on a new nature from that of everyday mind activity. This will become clear through the process of working with this simple practice.

Taking on this simple practice for a year, if you choose to, will help to develop a capacity to discern not only the nature of different thoughts, but also from where the thoughts are arising. It is worth discerning the fact that there are different qualities of thought and that there is inspiration that comes with certain thoughts. This capacity will grow and become an invaluable guide in determining what thoughts are right and true and may need to be acted on in some way, and what thoughts are just chatter, or fleeting thoughts, to which you do not need to give your valuable time and attention. This simple practice develops and grows our capacity to discern and distinguish in the world of thought. Or at the very least it will help you to recognise which kind of thinking has taken hold and to develop a sense for which thoughts are productive and which are just chatter. There are those thoughts that arise within you and there are those that seem to “land” or arrive inwardly.

You may wish to set aside a time each day to do this, by giving a few moments, perhaps before or after your daily inner practice, to take notes and reflect on your inner life and how things are unfolding in you. If it is done in a daily rhythm and at a reasonably consistent time, it will help you to enter the internal space more readily, as otherwise it can take time to turn from the inner life stimulated by outer impressions to the inner life that is cultivated from within. It is the inner life that is cultivated within, which forges the path of inner development. Many people overlook this simple truth and keep attaching their inner work to the outer world, or only look within in relationship to externally-stimulated experiences. The inner work that really changes us is cultivated separately from outer issues or dilemmas; it must be worked upon regardless of the outer changes and events of our lives. In this way, in order to quicken one's growth, a certain steadfastness to an inner practice of your own choosing that is not stimulated by outer events, is essential.

To consciously work on ourselves is a gift that we can give to the world around us. It serves the world in many ways. At times of great turbulence and uncertainty in the world, those

that have developed inwardly are stronger in their capacity to manage the challenges thrust upon themselves and upon others, and therefore can be of greater service to the surrounding community. Not being distracted or swept up by unuseful thoughts, and engaging with deeper, connected thoughts, steadies the internal world. This reality that our inner ways of being have an effect on the surrounding atmosphere in which we all share. This shows the interconnection between us, and how the separation that we perceive through our separated, bodily existence, does not continue when we consider the effects we have on each other through our inner life. Our internal world does indeed influence the atmosphere we share, and this can deeply affect others' inner experience. By developing ourselves we also support collective development and participate in the direction of the future progress of humankind.

We can do nothing more helpful for the world's further evolution than to evolve ourselves. This is something that, in fact, we must do. And we have no doubt whatsoever that we must, the moment we perceive the truth about our own nature, and its relationship with the wider world.

— Rudolf Steiner¹

By taking on the work of these lessons, you are choosing to engage in this work with greater commitment and that decision already has its effects, as all decisions of this nature do. Those of you that are already on this path of conscious inner development know that it is not always easy to stay committed or to step up, even when we know it is necessary. It takes continuous effort to make an ongoing commitment to your inner work. Being committed to meeting the ongoing inner work, while the importance of the outer world's demands are so convincing or distracting, takes great effort. This course allows each of us the opportunity to align and work with the clarity and certainty that the inner path that lies ahead of us is of immense value and meaning for the world; and it will also help us to stay connected to our intention to better ourselves and the world in which we live. I have seen time and time again the fruitfulness of working with an awareness of this connection. By taking others into consideration it helps to keep the commitment to the progression of our inner tasks and reveals that the true foundational purpose of inner development is essentially love.

This course is a contribution towards supporting that commitment in the face of the often distracting and anaesthetising material world. Each of the various contributions I have attempted to serve on this path of inner work has been inwardly directed. Every weekend event and each book, and the order in which they have been brought, has always been decided upon through the clarity and discernment of vital inner life experience, and so it is with this course. It is now the right time to work with this new approach to facilitation and to utilise the ways in which the outer world now operates in order to facilitate our work together on the path. We all participate in this work out of ourselves, individually and in our own way, yet through this course we will be connecting with a group of people all over the globe working together on the same journey.

Our connection through this course brings us together in the outer world and yet it will be up to us to take this further and deeper through the faculties we can awaken that belong to

humanity in this age. These are faculties that are already available to many individuals if we have the will to work towards awakening them. Even if we do not develop these faculties, our efforts will still bear positive results, as nothing is lost. However we are not the only ones that can access this pool of positivity that we add to by striving to progress on our own paths. This resource is available for all in humanity that seek it.

It does not matter where you are on the path or to what stage or degree you have journeyed. What matters is the willingness to see your next step, understand the necessity of your next step, and then to take your next step. All stages are supported through a conscious practice of inner development. All efforts in this direction have their effect not only on ourselves but on the wider world.

Understanding the Way



There are three 'ways' of inner development that are helpful, if inwardly clarified, for understanding the evolution of the human being. To know what in us is in need of strengthening, we must make an inquiry towards understanding ourselves and where we are on each of these three ways. Then we can begin the task of developing further. Sometimes these three ways can appear as different paths. They are sometimes presented as individual pathways because of the necessity of expressing the complexity of the way, and because some individuals find their way to their inner work through one particular avenue. That said, the three paths do not exist in isolation from each other, and in order to take our growth in hand we must see how they work separately as well as how they are intertwined. Throughout the year the meeting of these paths will be clarified and illuminated so that each of the various ways may become clear. The exercises, meditations, and contemplations will be described, so that you can tread the way for yourself, but also so that you can understand it. The diary sheet dialogue is offered so that the reflection and feedback can support individual awareness and progress.

In the inner development of the human being the three paths could be recognised as:

- 1) Conscious self development
- 2) An active spiritual life
- 3) A meditative practice

Although they may be very intertwined in your own interior world, it is useful to bring clarity to them, for your own inner life and for the inner life of others. This will assist you to

not only understand how the different exercises and meditations work, but to understand what they are leading you and others to develop.

Although these three ways have always been given to support inner growth and development, there is also a need to be cautious. On the path of initiation, of going ahead on the archetypal path of human development, we are taught to be cautious. At the same time we are taught the necessity and even urgency of stepping towards the initiation path at this time. We need to know the intended outcomes of the path in order to help move our progression forward as well as to understand those pitfalls that hinder progression, remembering that as we delay ourselves we delay the whole in this united life.

The path of inner development through anthroposophy takes into consideration all three ways, and even though each individual may walk more actively on one path, the other ways are made comprehensible and accounted for should you feel ready to fully open the way.

Utilising the basic description below, take time to contemplate these three ways and where you are in relationship to each of them. Try to evaluate where your strengths are and where you have made progress. Also try to evaluate where you have yet to develop and where you struggle to develop.

CONSCIOUS SELF DEVELOPMENT

Conscious self development allows us to take hold of our interior world through adjustments created by achieving a certain level of inner awareness, and/or through inner exercises. By participating in self development we can further strengthen and develop our interior world. We can also overcome our shortcomings and even biographical patterns that disturb ourselves and sometimes others. We can learn to transform our one-sided tendencies and make changes to our actions and reactions towards the world. Many people participate on the path of self development in order to make changes to the pain and difficulties of life or to enhance their joy and happiness in life. They may also do so to become stronger and more confident, or more positive.

On its own, self development may lead to a greater sense of self and greater inner harmony. It often promotes seeking a way towards actualising this new sense of self in the outer world and within relationships with others in our lives. The caution is that it can also lead to a greater egotism and selfish selfness. It can lead to a selfness that is a preferred persona that interacts with the world to get what it wants, but not a genuine sense of 'I' consciousness that unites harmoniously with life.

CONTEMPLATION

There are so many examples of self development because life itself can provide the momentum to take up developing yourself. Think of something in yourself that has been developed, changed, or transformed, whether you decided to change certain behaviour patterns or to grow certain abilities, such as being more forthright, etc. You may have become conscious of the need for development through certain life experiences, problems, or challenges, and then worked upon a particular attribute.

It can also take the form of learning something that expanded your interior world, which required discipline or inner effort.

AN ACTIVE SPIRITUAL LIFE

An active spiritual life builds a relationship with our divine ideal and the spiritual world. It recognises our deep and ongoing connection to the spiritual world and the being/beings or consciousness/consciousnesses that emanate from that world. We may begin to find deep peace and grace in an inner life that learns to resonate with the benevolent spiritual consciousness that we recognise as our divine ideal. It brings a certain meaningfulness to life that in turn creates greater resilience in the face of adversity. It allows our life decisions to be based on spiritual principles rather than on materialism.

The caution is the potential to become dependent on someone or another's consciousness and capacities doing it for us, even if that other consciousness is of the spiritual world. We could more readily become dependent on something outside of ourselves doing our life for us. A deeper sense of personal responsibility may be lost for a blind "faith in spirit/god" working out our lives, our advancements, and shortcomings, without our own efforts engaging in freedom with the steps we need to take.

CONTEMPLATION

What is your divine ideal or spiritual path? It may take the form of a formal religiosity or it may not. It may be that which your family is connected to, and again, it may not. What is clear is that if it is an active spiritual life it adjusts your inner experience when you engage in connecting with it. It uplifts you and helps to disentangle you from the material view of life.

A MEDITATIVE PRACTICE

A meditative practice allows us to be conscious in other realms of consciousness. Meditation brings about new experiences in the realm of consciousness. Through meditation, we can achieve awareness beyond the everyday mind and enter into states of wellbeing and contentment that are unattainable in the common realms of consciousness. We can learn to surrender and experience the ability to "die before we die" and through this experience come to know that the true consciousness of our eternal being never dies. Meditation builds our capacity to remain conscious in realms of consciousness in which we would commonly lose ourselves. Other states of consciousness such as dreaming, deep sleep, and death, become accessible realms in full wakefulness.

The caution of the meditative path is that we lose connection with earthly life and see those that are content with physical reality as "less than" or "asleep". We could end up seeking to escape life and wish to live outside of the human experience, detaching ourselves from humanity's path, with its ups and downs, to find our way, removed from human tendencies. An aloofness may be experienced by those around us or we may feel less engaged or interested in the world.

CONTEMPLATION

Can you recall any experiences where your consciousness was very different from your everyday consciousness? You may have had an expansion of awareness or looked from outside your body towards yourself; you may have become “awake” to your sleeping state. How did this new state come about and what effects did it have on your daily life?



Painting by Laura Summer, #10 from the series Philosophy of Freedom

Our Individual Inner Ground

When we consider various inner exercises regardless of whether they are named self development exercises, or meditation practices, contemplation, or prayer, etc. we can begin to see where they are working on in us. Depending on how they are utilised by us and what ground already exists in us into which the inner practice can take root, each exercise will be worked according to our present inner condition. This is the same with all life experiences, depending on what ground is present, the events of life have differing effects. Various individuals standing under the same star-filled night sky can have greatly differing experiences. For some they are filled with awe and wonder at the majesty that is above us, yet another may experience very little, or nothing perceptible, and may be bored by the night sky. And for another their inner life may awaken with imaginations of our cosmic connection. Whatever is happening in our lives, our inner world is playing a major part in

our experience. It is through this “conversation” between what we perceive or take in, and who we are inwardly at that present time, that we are unfolding our ongoing education. We are participating in what will become the outer event we meet, as it lives on in us.

Each inner exercise works within these laws even if the ground seems “naturally prepared”. Some inner conditions must already be present for results to occur. In addition to our individual inner ground, the way in which we approach an exercise can affect what it can grow in us. For many people mindfulness meditation is not about developing a meditative state at all, but is instead being utilised as a self development practice. For others the same exercise leads to new states of wakefulness or an experience of the vastness of interior spaces. For some, prayer or contemplation leads to a state of meditation, and for others, prayer leads to a connection with the divine ideal outside of themselves. Self development can for some awaken the individual to the spiritual world and for others, it disconnects them from the spiritual teachings to be replaced by an interior self reliant guidance. It is because of these variants that as a student of the inner work you will need not only to assess where you are but to see how an exercise affects you.

The six subsidiary exercises found in much of Steiner's work and in the first year EduCareDo course give these basic “gardening” tools that will be needed in the beginning preparation of inner work. Productive inner work requires some inner work. They will also be needed throughout all phases of inner growth, as the seasons do tend to keep on coming and each year we are called to meet the ground again. It is for this reason they are a prerequisite of this course. They can be started together with this first months lesson from the beginning. Whichever way you see best that they are known and worked with, and if you need to review them in order to engage with them, then please take this up as they are an essential attribute for healthy progress. They are attached to the end of this lesson.

Starting with the six subsidiary exercises will give you the tools to work onwards and are especially important for those who are yet to engage in any self development work. You will recognise that to do clarified inner work, you require some inner work in order to do the inner work healthily.

All exercises have a definite intention to support certain stages of inner growth but they land differently in each of us because of the individual ground in which they may have to germinate. All steps are dependent on those previously taken. Therefore, there are not really beginner or advanced exercises, but rather if they are followed correctly, the exercise which is given archetypically will work to support the next step for us individually. The six subsidiary exercises provide the basic tools that every soul gardener will need even though we transform very individual lands.

You will in time see for yourself that the inner ground you have is the land on which the exercises are able to work. In time this inner soul-scape will become a rich world. And so, each exercise adds something that was not there before, or not ripened before, and at some point all the conditions that you require are together. From that point forward the growth can begin in a way that is perceptible to you.

Anthroposophical development is an interweaving of all these ways, but we may need to apply more attention in one direction than another. It is up to you to observe this, and again, your observations will be as true and clear as the sight you have. Therefore even when we have already given much effort to the path, it is always useful to retread your steps. In doing so, the path itself is clarified.

Gaining Inner Clarity: Honest Enquiry



Before any new step it is good to contemplate where we are now and where we recognise that it would be helpful for us to be developing, as well as why we want to engage in inner development. To begin with, it is useful to assess for ourselves where we are in ourselves on the inner journey. Although we may not be able to gain a full overview of our inner world, we can begin by looking at where we are now in our interior lives, just as we would assess our exterior lives. We want to gain insight into our internal world so that we may know the part we play, and the part we want to play, in the collective progress of humanity.

Honest self-appraisal is not easy because in life we are taught both to overestimate ourselves and to diminish ourselves. Whichever of these two tendencies we usually express most readily, the other is lurking in the background waiting to flip us to the other polarity. In their extremes, they say “I am everything” or “I am nothing”. Honesty is not easy because we must see things as they are, without shame or fear beating us up, just for enquiring within. We could try to look towards our inner selves as we would look towards a friend’s life that we truly seek to help through our onlooking, loving attention. With this friendly attention we can begin to contemplate our inner landscape. This will help in truly establishing a foothold on the next step we are going to take.

WHERE ARE YOU IN YOUR OWN GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT?

This enquiry will be supported by looking back on what occupied your inner life and how you responded inwardly to the world at different biographical stages. Taking time to reflect will help you to see where you are now. It could help to do this in 7 year cycles, reflecting back on your inner life in stages of years starting with 14-21, then 21-28, 28-35, etc. until you reach your present age. At each stage you can reflect on questions that may help with your self-assessment.

CONTEMPLATION

What were the main discords arising inwardly at this time?

Try not to put the focus on outer events but rather on the inner life in response to the events.

What are the ongoing themes and patterns that seem to challenge you?

Look to the themes and challenges that your inner life keeps meeting.

How would you rate your inner wellbeing at the stage of development in question?

This is helpful because we may not find that the inner turbulence of challenging themes and patterns is creating an imbalance, and on the other hand, even small events can have great impact.

Before going on to the next contemplations you may want to make notes on what has arisen through this exercise. There is no benefit to rushing through this step, as the clearer you are about what needs to be worked through, the more readily you can find the best practice to support your next step.

HOW ARE YOU PARTICIPATING IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF OTHERS IN YOUR LIFE?

This enquiry can be seen in the relationships we have with others as well as the inner experience we have in relationship. Your own inner response is often the best indicator of where you are truly working well, or not, in this regard. Some people do not want to look within, and then the responses from the relationships around them become the reflection of how things are working, instead of finding this within. It is of no real benefit to ask someone else to tell you what you need to change. It is only useful if you can also see these needs for yourself. If you are unable to see the needed change for yourself, you will be unable to take the necessary steps towards the change.

CONTEMPLATION

What are you already doing to develop inwardly that is changing how you respond to others and the world around you?

What do you contribute to the positive inner experience of others?

Where do you feel most able to help in others' advancement?

WHERE ARE YOU IN YOUR RELATIONSHIP TO THE WORLD'S DEVELOPMENT?

In this enquiry we see ourselves as a coordinated link in the world around us. Our individual action in the world around us is an outer manifestation of our inner life.

CONTEMPLATION

What are you contributing inwardly to humanity's collective thoughts, feelings, and actions? You can again reflect on the past to build towards understanding the present, but you can also just observe this in your inner life at present, as well as in the environment around you.

How do you live outwardly in ways that express your inner intentions towards growth and development?

What choices do you need to make to outwardly reflect your inner intention to live in a way that supports the collective path of development?

Asking questions of your life is a way to get clarity on how you are tracking your inner life. It also provokes the sides of our personality that react to such enquiry. However, if we can allow ourselves to live with the questions, we begin to gain insight into what steps we are ready to take. The inner development path begins with our recognition of the need for inner development.

By beginning to focus inwardly without the outer sense impressions being our primary stimuli and the outer world our primary input, we start to grow the necessary faculty of imaginative consciousness. This faculty will be deeply engaged with through the various inner practices in upcoming lessons. The current trend to cultivate an internal world built solely on external stimuli and input is wearing down the ground upon which this faculty is developed.

Whether we have consciously walked a path of inner development or not, life is always offering opportunities and circumstances through which we can grow. In fact, our lives can be seen as the greatest schooling there is for us. Each aspect of our outer life allows us to see what has once lived in us. Because that which once lived in our internal life has contributed towards forming our outer life. How we meet daily challenges shows us what lives in us now, and shows us what will be made manifest in the outer world in the future.

Times often arise where we get to a certain point of inner experience and recognise the need for conscious inner development. By seeing the possible ways in which we can grow, and by evaluating ourselves, we can gain clarity regarding the best next step for us, and in the diagnosis, the remedy also becomes clearer. We can begin to know which exercises will help support the growth that we see is needed.

No one is untouched by the need for inner development. Even when we ourselves feel well, inner development could be seen as akin to preventative healthcare. In times of inner harmony, instead of waiting for discomfort to arise from what is calling for change, we could utilise this harmonious inner space to extend ourselves, out of our own inner freedom, to consciously grow further that which we know we will need in the future: the capacities to meet the future needs of our evolving life, individually, and as a humanity. (These capacities will be explored directly in upcoming lessons.)

We could begin to cultivate a new way of being by recognising that our inner life is a place where the expressions of spiritual forces awaken and grow. Slowly we learn to develop reverence, love, and hope, towards the interior world, the place in which the realities of the spiritual world grow in us.

Rudolf Steiner expressed that the greatest catastrophe facing humanity is our disconnectedness from the spiritual world. We can see the momentum of this disconnection growing with unprecedented speed in our age, and yet we are also given opportunities to reset our trajectory as a collective humanity.

Crisis or illness in the individual life gives us an opportunity to take stock, to reevaluate where we are heading, and to see what we were doing that created the need for this event, this place of great difficulty. Going through crisis or illness will allow us to develop greater capacities and to build resilience. Today we are facing this challenge as the whole of humanity. We are being given an opportunity to adjust the collective future, and yet it is up to each individual to step up and recognise how our individual efforts affect the whole.

We are all facing a collective inner challenge right now yet it is manifesting differently for different individuals because of the situations of life which we are facing. Some are so disturbed outwardly through this crisis that they will find it even harder to look inwards, and yet others naturally look inwards regardless of the outward challenge.

By now most individuals have been restricted from going about life in the “old way,” even if it is simply that our automatic thoughts and feelings are changed because of the outer changes. Many have been stopping and taking stock of their lives individually. By reorientating ourselves and our lives, we may use the present crisis for a positive reset, or to discern what is essential from where we have been engaging our time, energy, and attention, that is not essential. It is in our hands, and yet this event is being spiritually supported. It is given as an opportunity for a positive change, if we wish to take it.

This present event still leaves us with choices. Many of the environmental catastrophes that are potentially on the way would simply have to be endured, but here we have a possibility to make the inner adjustments necessary to support the outer world. If we take stock, and take up responsibility for our next steps, we can work for the future of the healthier whole.

We start by beginning to work towards a future in which there is space for our inner life. For it is the place where we gain the greatest strength, resilience, and freedom. We could create a world where the inner life is supported by our outer world and by the lives we choose to live. Instead of being inwardly more and more dominated by outer input that weakens, burdens, and shackles us inwardly (even if it pretends otherwise), we could, right now, make a shift from this trajectory.

Every positive shift that humanity creates affects not only the human beings on the earth, but the other kingdoms of nature are also affected, as is their capacity to grow and support our health-sustaining world. We can already see the natural world beginning to slowly benefit, as it is relieved from the onslaught of the way in which our common way of being consistently affects its course.

We are being faced with a quickening that could help humanity’s future in extraordinary ways. People may be striving to get “back to normal” and that is understandable and we must have the deepest compassion for our humanity, but can we go forward to a new,

healthier life? Sometimes people on the self development path are looking to others to make changes, seeing that those bound to materialism have the greatest shift to make. However, this is not the case. Each person has their own individual responsibility, and all, no matter who we are, or where we are on the way, are being given the opportunity to quicken towards wholeness, or towards greater inner health at this time. Collectively, our inner lives will participate in the outer events of the world. Many are concerned primarily with the origin of this crisis, and who is to blame. Instead, we could ask, Where can it lead us? What can we learn? Can we grow well from this?

Humanity will be changed by this event, but how will we be different? Will we wake up to our collective journey and how interconnected we are? Will we learn to care for each other and the planet? Will we wake to the free spiritual life possible for all?

Let each of us play our part as consciously as possible, because when consciousness is applied, it increases the potency of our efforts and quickens our inner development, and therefore the world's. We are all, individually, right now, contributing to what is an extraordinary opportunity to turn the tides of our collective future.

The breeze at dawn has secrets to tell you.
Don't go back to sleep.
You must ask for what you really want.
Don't go back to sleep.
People are going back and forth across the doorsill
where the two worlds touch.
The door is round and open.
Don't go back to sleep.

— Rumi²

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*Addendum*³

The primary way to combat outer hindrances and restore or develop them into healthy capacities requires that we create renewed inner conditions for ourselves through exercises that bring about a harmonising and strengthening of the soul life. Such exercises are given in slightly different ways in various schools for inner development. They are presented in what follows according to what has been given by Rudolf Steiner in the form of the “six subsidiary exercises” described in his books *How to Know Higher Worlds* and *An Outline of Esoteric Science*, as well as in the compilation *Guidance in Esoteric Training*, which is quoted at length in the next several pages [in italics].⁴

The first condition is the cultivation of absolutely clear thinking.

The second condition is the control of will.

The third condition is the control of feeling.

The fourth condition is the cultivation of a “positive attitude.”

The fifth condition is to develop the feeling of confronting every new experience with complete open-mindedness.

The sixth condition is to gradually develop a beautiful equilibrium of soul.

We begin with the first condition—control of thinking— for one month, adding to this exercise the second condition in the second month, then the third condition in the third month, and so forth. It is useful to add the next exercise even if you have not succeeded in the month before, as the power gained from the new exercise may be the very thing you needed to manage the previous one more successfully.

THE FIRST CONDITION: CULTIVATION OF CLEAR THINKING

For this exercise, pupils must rid themselves of will-o'- the-wisp thought, even if only for a very short time during the day. About five minutes is enough, but the longer the better.

Pupils must become the ruler of their own world of thought. We are not the ruler if the way we think is determined by external circumstances, one's occupation, some tradition or other, social relationships, membership in a particular race, the daily round of life, certain activities, and so forth.

Therefore, during this brief time—acting entirely out of our own free will—we must empty the soul of the ordinary, everyday flow of thoughts, and by our own initiative place one single thought at the center of our soul.

The thought need not be a particularly striking or interesting one. Indeed, it will be even better for what has to be attained in an esoteric sense if a thoroughly uninteresting and insignificant thought is chosen. Our thinking capacity is then prompted to act out of its own energy, which is the essential thing here; in contrast, an interesting thought has the effect of carrying the thinking along with it.

It is better if this exercise in thought control is undertaken with a pin rather than with Napoleon. The pupil says to himself: I will start from this thought, and through my own inner initiative I will associate with it everything that is pertinent to it. At the end of the period of the exercise, the thought should be just as colorful and living as it was at the beginning. This exercise is repeated from one day to the next for at least a month; a new thought may be taken every day, or the same thought may be adhered to for several days.

At the end of the exercise, an endeavor is made to become fully conscious of the inner feeling of firmness and security that will soon be noticed by paying subtler attention to one's own soul. The exercise is then brought to a conclusion by focusing the thinking upon the head and the middle of the spine (brain and spinal cord), as if the feeling of security were being poured into this part of the body.

These exercises are practiced with the aim of developing a mastery over our own inner life, freeing it, as it were, for a receptive attitude toward the influences of the outer world. Therefore, it is not a matter of striving to know everything about the object that we choose as our focus. It is not a matter of outwardly investigating it, but rather of concentrating our thinking on the chosen object. Again, it is more fruitful if one is not outwardly looking at the chosen object, but rather picturing it within your mind's eye. "Practice this exercise for approximately one month, and then add the second requirement."

THE SECOND CONDITION: CONTROL OF THE WILL

We try to think of some action that, in the ordinary course of life, we will certainly not have performed. Then, we make it a duty to perform this action every day. It will therefore be good to choose an action that can be performed every day, and that one can continue to perform for as long a period of time as possible.

Again, it is better to begin with some insignificant action that we will have to force ourselves to perform—for example, to water a flower we have bought at a fixed time every day. After a certain period of time, a second similar action should be added to the first—later a third, and so on . . . as many as are compatible with the carrying out of all our other duties.

This exercise should likewise last for one month. But as far as possible, the first exercise should also continue alongside the second during this second month, although it will become a less dominant duty than it was during the first month. Nevertheless, the first month's practice must not be left unheeded, for otherwise it will quickly be noticed that the fruits of the first month are lost and the slovenliness of uncontrolled thinking begins again. Care must be taken that once these fruits have been won, they are never again lost.

If, through the second exercise, this quality of "initiative of action" has been achieved, then, with subtle attentiveness, we become conscious of the feeling of an inner impulse of activity in the soul. We pour this feeling/experience into the body, letting it stream from the head down into and around the heart.

Although many people struggle with this exercise, it is important to realize that each exercise is in fact quite challenging: the great effort required of us is the very means whereby these exercises serve to develop inner strength, and even to provide inner control and self-reliance to those who are dedicated enough in their practice. The will exercise seems particularly difficult, and that is because only with the will exercise can we immediately see whether or not the goal has been achieved. It may be that we are just as poor in the attention needed for the thinking exercise as we are in that needed for the will exercise, but that we do not perceive our lack of thinking-attentiveness as clearly as we can perceive the task left undone.

THE THIRD CONDITION: CONTROL OF FEELING

In the third month, life should be centered on a new exercise: the development of a certain equanimity toward the fluctuations of joy and sorrow, pleasure and pain. The “heights of jubilation” and “depths of despair” should quite consciously be replaced by an equable mood. Care should be taken that no pleasure will carry us away, no sorrow plunge us into the depths, no experience lead to immoderate anger or irritation, no expectation give rise to anxiety or fear, no situation disconcert us, and so on.

There need be no fear that such an exercise will make life barren and unproductive; rather, it will quickly be noticed that the experiences to which this exercise is applied are replaced by purer qualities of soul. Above all, if subtle attentiveness is maintained, an inner tranquility in the body will one day become noticeable. As in the two cases above, we should now pour this feeling into the body, letting it stream from the heart toward the hands, the feet, and finally the head.

This naturally cannot be done after each period of practicing this exercise—for here it is not primarily a matter of one single exercise, but of sustained attentiveness to the inner life of the soul. However, at least once every day, this inner tranquility should be called up before the soul and should be followed by the practice of “pouring out” from the heart what has been inwardly cultivated through the exercise.

A connection with the exercise of the previous months should once again be maintained, as was done during the second month with regard to the exercise of the first month.

Inner objectivity is gained to a heightened degree through the “control of feeling” exercise. Even as feelings well up, we maintain an ability to witness them rather than identify ourselves with them. There may then grow within us a capacity to calm the waters of feeling turbulence at will. As one continues with this practice, one will not experience that the feelings have grown dull at all, but rather that one can master their expression if need be. At the very least, one will be able to witness the feelings and choose whether or not to act them out.

THE FOURTH CONDITION: CULTIVATION OF A POSITIVE ATTITUDE

In the fourth month, as a new exercise, what is sometimes called a “positive attitude to life” should be cultivated. It consists in seeking always for the good, the praiseworthy, the beautiful, and the like, in all beings, all experiences, and all things.

This quality of soul is best characterized by a Persian legend concerning Christ Jesus, which Rudolf Steiner recounted in this connection. One day, as Christ Jesus was walking with His disciples, they saw a dead dog lying by the roadside in a state of advanced decomposition. All the disciples turned away from the disgusting sight; Christ Jesus alone did not move, but looked thoughtfully at the corpse and said: “What beautiful teeth the animal has!” Where the others had seen only the repulsive, the unpleasant, He looked for the beautiful.

So must the esoteric pupil strive to seek for the positive in every phenomenon and in every being. The pupil will soon notice that under the veil of something repugnant, there is a hidden beauty—that even under the outer guise of a criminal, there is a hidden good—that under the mask of a lunatic, the divine soul is somehow concealed.

In a certain respect, this exercise is connected with what is called “abstention from criticism” (non-participation in criticism). This is not to be understood in the sense of calling black white and white black. There is, however, a difference between a judgment that, proceeding merely from one’s own personality, is colored with the element of personal sympathy or antipathy, and an attitude that enters lovingly into the alien phenomenon or being, always asking: How has it come to be like this or to act like this? Such an attitude will, by its very nature, be more set upon helping what is imperfect than upon simply finding fault and criticizing.

The argument that the very circumstances of their lives oblige many people to find fault and condemn is not valid here. For in such cases, the circumstances are such that the person in question cannot go through a genuine esoteric training.

If it has once been noticed that the feeling described expresses itself in the soul as a kind of bliss, then endeavors should be made in thought to guide this feeling/experience into the heart, and from there to let it stream into the eyes, and onward out into the space in front of and around oneself. It will be noticed that an intimate relationship to this surrounding space is thereby acquired. Pupils grow out of and beyond themselves, as it were. Pupils learn to regard a part of their environment as something that belongs to them.

A great deal of concentration is necessary for this exercise, and above all, recognition of the fact that all unrestrained feelings, all passions, and all overly exuberant emotions have an absolutely destructive effect upon the mood indicated. The exercises of the earlier months are also to be repeated, as was done before.

As with the previous exercises, the positivity exercise has effects reaching much further than merely how we meet day-to-day circumstances. Positivity is a necessity in dealing with all aspects of the inner path of evolution. Without it, we would give up, turn back, or feel overwhelmed by the mountain of obstacles that face us in our task of genuine

transformation. Positivity is the sign that the student of the inner work is becoming stronger against outer hindrances.

THE FIFTH CONDITION: DEVELOP A FEELING OF CONFRONTING EVERY NEW EXPERIENCE WITH COMPLETE OPEN-MINDEDNESS

In the fifth month, efforts should be made to develop the feeling of confronting every new experience without any prejudgments. The esoteric student must break entirely with the attitude that, in the face of something just heard or seen, exclaims: "I've never heard or seen that before; I don't believe it—it's an illusion."

At every moment, the pupil must be ready to encounter and accept absolutely new experiences. What the pupil previously recognized as being in accordance with natural law, or what they regarded as possible, should present no obstacle to the acceptance of a new truth. Although radically expressed, it is absolutely correct that if anyone were to come to the esoteric pupil and say, "Since last night, the steeple of such and such a church has been tilted right over," the pupil should leave a loophole open for the possibility of becoming convinced that their previous knowledge of natural law could somehow be increased by such an apparently unprecedented fact.

Open-mindedness is not only necessary for inner strengthening—it is also the gesture that all students of inner schooling must cultivate in order to allow for other possibilities and realities to be perceived. In this way, we are guarded from the blunting effects of the material world and kept open to the enlivening effects of the Mysteries of life.

THE SIXTH CONDITION:

THE GRADUAL DEVELOPMENT OF A BEAUTIFUL EQUILIBRIUM OF SOUL

In the sixth month, endeavors should be made to repeat all five exercises again, systematically and in regular alternation. In this way, a beautiful equilibrium of soul will gradually develop. It will especially be noticed that previous dissatisfactions with certain phenomena and beings in the world completely disappear.

A mood of "reconciling all experiences" now gradually takes hold of the soul—a mood that is by no means one of indifference, but, on the contrary, a mood that enables one for the first time to work in the world for the sake of the world's genuine progress and improvement. One comes to a tranquil understanding of things that were formerly quite closed to the soul.

These exercises can be taken on by all individuals wanting to strengthen themselves against the outer hindrances of the world, as well as to come into stronger connection with the forms of outer support that the world provides. The many erroneous thoughts, feelings, and impulses of the collective consciousness will no longer have the same influence upon us, and the beneficial and progressive elements of the collective consciousness will emerge more clearly into the forefront. Through carrying out these exercises, we will not feel the great burden of the collective consciousness; but instead, greater hope in human progress

will awaken within us. Along with this hope will arise a greater will to participate in positive change for the world.

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¹ Rudolf Steiner, *Soul Exercises: Word and Symbol Meditations*. SteinerBooks, 2014. p. 32. Rudolf Steiner Collected Works Number: 267.

² Rumi. "Untitled." *The Essential Rumi*. Ed. Reynold Nicholson. New York: HarperCollins, 1995. p. 36.

³ Lisa Romero, *Sex Education and the Spirit*. Innerwork Books, 2017. Pp. 39-47.

⁴ See especially *Knowledge of the Higher Worlds*, "Some Effects of Initiation"; *An Outline of Esoteric Science*, "Knowledge of the Higher Worlds—Initiation"; and *Guidance in Esoteric Training*, part 1: "General Requirements" (pp. 13–19). Rudolf Steiner, *Knowledge of the Higher Worlds: How is It Achieved?* CW 10 (tr. rev. by D. Osmond and C. Davy, London: Rudolf Steiner Press, 1993); also translated as *Knowledge of the Higher Worlds and Its Attainment* (tr. revised by H. and L. Mon- ges, Anthroposophic Press, 1947), and *How to Know Higher Worlds* (tr. C. Bamford, Hudson, NY: Anthroposophic Press, 1994). Rudolf Steiner, *Occult Science: An Outline*, CW 13 (op. cit.); also translated as *An Outline of Occult Science* (op. cit.), and *An Outline of Esoteric Science* (op. cit.). Rudolf Steiner, CW 245, *Guidance in Esoteric Training: From the Esoteric School* (London: Rudolf Steiner Press, 1994).

