

## LESSON 25 • JANUARY 25

**“I do not know what anything is for.”**

### Practice instructions

**Purpose:** To begin to learn that the purposes you assign things are totally meaningless. This will help you give up those purposes.

**Exercise:** Six times, for two minutes.

- Repeat the idea slowly.
- Then look about you and let your glance rest on each thing that catches your eye. Keep looking at it long enough to say quite slowly, “*I do not know what this \_\_\_\_\_ is for.*” Then move on to the next thing. Make no distinctions between things near or far, important or unimportant, human or nonhuman.

**Remarks:** As you look at an object and repeat the idea, you may become aware of just how much you see that object as existing to serve your personal interests. This includes inanimate objects as well as animate ones, such as human bodies. We see everything in our environment as having the purpose of serving this separate self. That simply *cannot* be what its true purpose is.

### Commentary

Have you noticed how the pace of recommended practice is accelerating? Yesterday we moved from five one-minute periods to five two-minute periods; today we increase to six two-minute periods. How many of us are making a serious effort to follow these instructions? Remember how the introduction said that we aren’t asked to believe the ideas, accept them, or welcome them; even active resistance is okay. All that is asked is that we “use them” (W-pI.In.9:4), to “apply the ideas as you are directed to do” (W-pI.In.8:3). Nothing but that is required to make them effective. But applying them as directed *is* required, if we want them to have effect in our lives.

We don’t know what anything is for. The obvious question is: “What is it for?” This lesson answers the question. “Everything is for your own best interests” (1:5). Obviously that relates to yesterday’s lesson, “I do not perceive my own best interests.” What is for my best interests? Everything.

We don’t know that and we certainly don’t believe it. We evaluate everything “in terms of ego goals” (2:1), and since “the ego is not you” (2:2), that cannot give us any idea of what our best interests are. We are picking and choosing the things that support our ego, which is not our Self, and therefore, clearly, we are actually undermining our true Self. (The statement that “the ego is not you” is particularly important; it isn’t something we would realize without being told.)

We look at the world from the ego perspective and we literally “assign” purposes to things, purposes that will support our ego. When things don’t live up to our expectations, we get upset. All our goals involve “personal” interests. Yet, “Since you have no personal interests, your goals are really concerned with nothing” (3:2). We don’t really have personal interests because the “person” we think of when we say those words isn’t real. We have no real goals that we do not share in common with all living things, because all living things are connected, and the sharing is what makes the goals real. Shared goals recognize the reality of who we are. Ego goals do not. This is why we are extremely confused about what things are for.

The lesson points out that, on a superficial level, we do know what things are for; we know a telephone is for talking to someone not physically present. “Yet purpose cannot be understood at these levels” (4:3). For instance, we don’t understand why we want to reach someone by phone.

We may think we understand. You might be calling the store to order a book. But why do you want the book? Why call now, at precisely this moment? There is a deeper purpose in everything that we do not understand, nor can we understand it as long as we think our conscious goals are the real ones. We have “to be willing to give up the goals [we] have established for everything” (5:1).

The entire foundation of our judgment is rotten because it rests on the idea that there are “things” outside of us that differ from us. There is nothing outside of us; everything is part of us. As long as we are coming from that false premise, our goals will be skewed and our judgments will be faulty.

I find it very helpful to remember that I don’t know what anything means and I don’t know what it is for. A phone call may bring “bad news,” but I can say, “I do not know what this phone call is for; I do not know what this situation is for, and therefore I cannot judge it.”

The Course insists on our total ignorance. “The confusion between your real creation and what you have made of yourself is so profound that it has become literally impossible for you to know anything” (T-3.V.3:2). That’s pretty definite, isn’t it? “Literally impossible.” This isn’t any figure of speech. Obviously, if you literally know nothing, judgment is impossible.

Because we’ve confused ourselves with our egos, we can’t know anything. Our belief in our identity as separate beings, located in bodies, has become an unquestioned core belief behind our every thought. We evaluate everything in terms of ego goals (W-pI.25.2:1). Before we even begin to evaluate what anything means we have presupposed that, whatever it is and whatever it means, it is not us; it is *other*. From that premise it is literally impossible to know or understand anything because it is not *other*. It is part of us.

A very young baby in its crib goes through a process of learning that its foot or hand is part of itself. To begin with, the baby does not know that. You can watch the baby, sometimes, treating the foot as if it were a foreign object.

We are all still infants in this sense because we don’t recognize parts of ourselves when we see them; we think they are something else. Because we think they are something else, we are unable to form judgments that make any sense. Our judgments are not simply exaggerated or inaccurate, they are so wide of the mark they’re ludicrous.

Let us remember not our own ideas of what the world is for. We do not know.  
(T-31.I.12:2-3)

If we don’t know what anything is for, we can’t judge it! We can’t evaluate whether or not it is fulfilling its purpose because we don’t know what its purpose is.

We aren’t being asked to acquire all this knowledge we lack; we are asked to become still and to remember how much we don’t know (see T-31.II.6:4). The Text tells us that there is no statement that the world is more afraid to hear than this:

*I do not know the thing I am, and therefore do not know what I am doing, where I am, or how to look upon the world or on myself.* (T-31.V.17:7)

It goes on to say that learning this is the birth of salvation. This is where learning starts: admitting how incapable of judging we are. All of these things we don’t know! Recognizing our ignorance is the birth of salvation because, until we admit we don’t know, we won’t ask for help. As long as we think we know, we block true knowing.

Little children recognize that they do not understand what they perceive, and so they ask what it means. Do not make the mistake of believing that you understand what you perceive, for its meaning is lost to you....Yet while you think you know its meaning, you will see no need to ask it of Him.

You do not know the meaning of anything you perceive. Not one thought you hold is wholly true. The recognition of this is your firm beginning. (T-11.VIII.2:2-3, 5; 3:1-3).