

Workshop Principles

§1. The workshops aim at personalization of the state of “idealized and active curiosity,” possessed in a private as opposed to a public way — that is to say, concerned for but not dependent on the assent (or approval) of others. “Active curiosity” is a curiosity that takes action, even if this action is largely conceptual. It regards the state of partial knowledge as ideal and avoids the sentiments and trappings of mastery. “Idealized curiosity, the companion idea, balances one’s available knowledge and experience with a productive experimental attitude that is willing to risk conceptual security on behalf of testing the resilience of ideas and personal positions.

§2. The workshops in studio and theory internalization do not take a relativist position, but they recognize that there are many approaches to the state of “idealized and active curiosity.” Similarly, there are many stages of study and development and many levels (from trivial to sublime, so to speak) that are not steps of a hierarchy but, rather, a scale that must be traversed, low to high and high to low, in any lifetime enterprise.

§3. The general attitude the workshops wish to cultivate is the willingness to start over; an avoidance of the desire to “cash in” by converting insights into dogma, prematurely and dogmatically distinguishing between rules of form and contents. In the start-over mentality, the ideal content is the open work, which sees and corrects itself best in some form of the negative.

§4. Much learning is training that aims at mastery, which in turn reinforces an ego model of the self. This model in turn identifies with mastery and defends itself against failure and criticism, but also invests personally in forced successes and external approval. Disavowing externalized satisfactions of this kind replaces the authoritarian other with self-criticism coupled with self-detachment, which is itself a kind of disavowal of the possibility of perfect self-knowledge. Knowing ourselves is ultimately the project of knowing the world and its nature.

§5. The workshops build on systems put in place by serious critical thinkers, not accepted in their original states but re-constructed in terms of consistencies that link them as systems. The goal is to find overlaps and near-matches of key ideas that allow “registration marks” to be defined independently and placed within each work — marks that are tailored to the workshop participant’s particular nature and developmental stage. Some marks will be shared by all, others will be shared by those with similar outlooks, still others will be unique to the user.

§6. The method of both workshops will follow the same template.

1. Introduction of the main principles and procedures
 - a. Questions
 - b. Notes/self-evaluation
2. Defining the system
 - a. Lecture with dialog
 - b. Discussion
3. Translation exercise 1 (selection, read in terms of the template)
 - a. Lecture with dialog
 - b. Discussion/debate
 - c. Fix/adjust
4. Translation exercise 2 ... (more samples may be involved)
 - a. Member presentations / selection
 - b. Discussion/debate
 - c. Fix/adjust
5. Translation exercise (personal project)

§7. At the beginning of each workshop, a questionnaire is distributed asking for a list of expectations. These are revisited at the end of the workshop, either by declaring the original expectation unproductive or unrealistic, predictive, or converted. Participants may share their comparisons. Discussion focuses on what constitutes the optimum relationship of starts to finishes. Self-directed workshops begin with the same statement of anticipated benefits and difficulties, to be compared with the same last upon completion.