

True Empathy

Excerpts from the Workshop held at the
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Part XI

Commentary on the Section "The Agreement to Join" (T-28.III) (cont.)

(Paragraph 4 - Sentences 1-2) The end of dreaming is the end of fear, and love was never in the world of dreams. The gap is little.

This is another clear statement that love is not present in this world of dreams. The *reflection* of love is present in the world of dreams, but not love itself, because the dream was made to exclude love. The world was made to keep God out; the body was made as a limitation on love. Once you limit love, it stops being what it is.

If "the end of dreaming" is the end of fear, we could say the beginning of dreaming is the beginning of fear. Basically fear comes from the ego's dream, which is that we have separated from God. In reality, however, "the gap is little." In fact, at another level we can say that the gap is nonexistent, that this little gap is absolutely nothing. That is what the Course calls "the tiny tick of time." That is all it is—a tiny dip from eternity that had no effect at all.

(Paragraph 4 - Sentences 2-3) The gap is little. Yet it holds the seeds of pestilence and every form of ill, because it is a wish to keep apart and not to join.

Even though "the gap is little"—it has been compared to an infinitesimal ripple in the ocean, or a tiny sunbeam in relation to the sun (T-18.VIII.3:3-4)—yet within this little gap is contained the entire world of pain that we experience. This seems impossible to us who believe that we are here. But we believe we are here so that we won't look at what this little gap really is—a tiny insignificant piece of nothing. And yet we have given it the power to destroy Heaven.

That is another example of the arrogance of the ego. We believe this little, it'sy bitsy nothing had the power to destroy God, shatter Heaven, and, even more, literally drive God insane so He becomes the image of ourselves. Instead of our being the image of God, He becomes the image of us—a raging maniac who makes sin real and only wants vengeance. So He makes separation, difference, judgment, and attack real. All this is coming from the "tiny, mad idea," the little gap. If we could ever look at it, we would realize that there is nothing there.

When we choose not to look at the gap, we are listening to the ego. The ego counsels us: "Don't look at this little gap, because it is filled with your sin and guilt. It contains within it the raging vengeance of God, before which you should stand in terror." We say to the ego, "Yes, I understand what you are saying. You are right, I will never look at it again. I will get away from it as quickly as I can. I will make up a world, and I will hide there." And we never look. If we did, we would realize that there is nothing there.

So we can also say that our problems consist of not looking at their cause, at their source. If the problem is defined as not looking, then the solution is clear—we look. Not looking at the ego means we have listened to the ego and have turned away from the Holy Spirit. Therefore, looking at the ego means that we are dropping the hand of the ego and are looking with the Holy Spirit, Who tells us, "Look at all this—it is nothing more than a silly dream in which absolutely nothing has happened. And the gap is very, very little. Nothing is there." When we do not look at the gap, we make sin and guilt real. That is the cause of all of our problems and all our pain. The entire world is contained in this little gap.

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The "wish" referred to in the passage is the wish to keep ourselves apart from God, apart from the memory of God's Love, the Holy Spirit. Because that is the wish that made the world, we then wish to keep ourselves apart from everyone here. We have the illusion of joining with each other, but that is specialness—the joining to have our needs filled. That kind of joining reinforces the ego thought system, and so it is not a real joining at all.

(Paragraph 4 - Sentence 4) And thus it [the little gap] seems to give a cause to sickness which is not its cause.

Because we make the gap and the ego thought system real and project them out into the world, the cause of sickness is seen to be in the body, external to the mind. The truth, however, is that the cause is retained within this little gap. If we could ever look at the gap with open eyes, we would realize what it is and let it go.

(Paragraph 4 - Sentences 5-6) The purpose of the gap is all the cause that sickness has. For it [the gap] was made to keep you separated, in a body which you see as if it were the cause of pain.

The purpose of the gap is the wish to keep separate and apart. That is what sickness is—the choice to keep ourselves separate and apart from each other and from God. With this definition of sickness and the body, the definition of healing then is made clear. Within the little gap is the entire ego thought system. The purpose of this thought system is to keep the little gap real—we are separate from God, but we will never look at the gap. That is the key idea—we will never look at it. Instead we look at its seeming effect, forgetting that the world is an effect of the cause. By splitting off the effect from the cause, by allowing this veil of denial to fall across the mind, we forget where everything—the world, the separation, and sickness—came from. Not knowing about the mind, which means we do not know about the gap, all we see is the body.

As this is the only world that we know, we seek for the causes of our problems here. We seek for the cause of sickness here. We seek for the cause of pain here. We do not know anything else, and so there is no place else for us to look. Therefore we continue to look here in the world. That is the purpose of the little gap and of the ego thought system—to protect itself and keep us separate. The ego protects the separation by keeping us separate from the separation. The separation is in the mind—the ego separates us from that. Just as God's Love cannot but extend itself—it is love extending to love extending to love, an ongoing expression and extension of love—so, too, the ego's thought system, based upon separation and fragmentation, can only reproduce itself. So it separates and fragments, and separates and fragments. The ego separates us from God, then separates us from the separation in the mind, by making up a body which is separate. Then we keep looking for separate things outside us to

explain why we are feeling as terrible as we are feeling. And it just is endless—it goes on and on and on. The only way out is to realize that the problem is not in the world at all, it is back in the mind. That is what the miracle does. But it seems to us as if the body is the cause of everything rather than the mind.

(Paragraph 5 - Sentence 1) The cause of pain is separation, not the body, which is only its effect.

The body is the effect of separation, of a thought in the mind, of a decision the mind made to be separate from God and the Holy Spirit.

What is really important in working with the Course is first to understand the principles being taught; then to be able to apply those principles each time we are tempted to make pain real and to make the cause of pain be something or someone external to the mind; and then just to be aware of how quickly we forget everything.

In effect, the purpose of the workbook is to get the process under way. It is a one-year training program, to train our minds to begin to see that the cause of everything is in the mind. The lessons right at the beginning of the workbook start out that way. These lessons help us realize that the mind makes up everything we see, that our thoughts are important, that the meaning that we have given to everything comes from our past, and that we have the power to change that. So we start to feel upset and our first reaction is to blame it on something we ate or drank last night that we shouldn't have, or on something that somebody said to us. But we can try to stop ourselves as quickly as we can after that happens and remind ourselves that that is not why we are upset. "I am never upset for the reason I think," as the workbook teaches. I am upset because I dropped the hand of Jesus. That is why I am upset. I was feeling alone, and my ego was just looking for something or someone else to blame. I wanted to blame it on the food, or the company I was with, or what this person did or did not do to me—something outside me. So I made the sickness real and then I searched for the cause outside. Then of course what I wanted to do was to get other people to agree with me.

Thus we begin to recognize that that is the false empathy that the ego fosters.

(Paragraph 5 - Sentences 2-4) Yet separation is but an empty space, enclosing nothing, doing nothing, and as unsubstantial as the empty place between the ripples that a ship has made in passing by. And covered just as fast, as water rushes in to close the gap, and as the waves in joining cover it. Where is the gap between the waves when they have joined, and covered up the space which seemed to keep them separate for a little while?

This image is of a boat moving through the water, making a gap as it passes by. Just as quickly as the gap is made, waves rush in and cover it over, so that within seconds there no longer is any gap. That basically is the Course's explanation for what happened at the separation. When we seemed to fall asleep and have the "tiny, mad idea" contained in this little gap—that we had separated ourselves from God—simultaneously, the memory of God's Love in our minds that we carried with us into the dream covered over the gap. If we identify with that memory of God's Love, then the gap is gone. The gap is telling me there is a separation between myself and God, but through that memory the gap is closed. The gap was closed in the instant that it seemed to occur. Remember, "not one note in Heaven's song was missed" (T-26.V.5:4). There seemed to be a gap, but as quickly as the gap seemed to be, just as quickly was it undone. As quickly as the tiny tick seemed to happen, just as quickly was it erased. The

problem is that we still believe we are here, and we live as if the gap were real and we were indeed separate.

The truth is that the error has already been undone by the presence of the Holy Spirit in the mind. The problem is that we have turned away from Him. Just as we believed we had turned away from God at the beginning, we now believe that we can turn away from the Holy Spirit. The purpose of the Course is to turn us back towards Him. When we turn towards the Holy Spirit and identify with Him, we accept the fact that the dream is already over. That is what the Course means when it says that the script is written and the journey is already over. We only think we are still on the journey. The whole mistake has already been undone. And so, just as the gap in the water when the boat passes by is an empty space that contains nothing, so, too, is this thought. The ego never happened.

(Paragraph 5 - Sentence 5) Where are the grounds for sickness when the minds have joined to close the little gap between them, where the seeds of sickness seem to grow?

The original joining is between ourselves and the Holy Spirit, which is reflected by our joining with each other. As we continue to decide not to blame others for our distress, we are beginning the process of accepting our oneness with each other, which is the reflection of our accepting in our minds our oneness with the Holy Spirit.

In principle this happens in one instant. In our experience within the dream, it takes a long time and a lot of hard work and practice. We can see how strong our resistance is simply by recognizing how quickly we attribute our dis-ease, our discomfort, our pain and our annoyance to something other than our own choice. I am upset "because of . . ." But it is never that I am upset because I became afraid of God's Love and separated from it. I became afraid that the Holy Spirit or Jesus were coming too close and I separated from Them. I became afraid of how happy and free from the past I was feeling, and therefore I had to make up a problem.

One way to chart one's progress in the Course—and I mean this half-seriously, because there is always a danger when we try to measure our progress—is to see how quickly we can recall the real cause of our distress. Over a period of time, our reaction time—the time between when we get upset and the time when we remember why we got upset—will grow shorter and shorter. And so we stop blaming someone or something else and say, "I became upset because I became afraid of love."

The danger in this is that, if I judge myself for becoming afraid of love, then once again I will have separated myself from love. If the love of Jesus looks with me on my fear of him, it will be without judgment. And I will simply say, "I became afraid of your love, so I dropped your hand and blamed this person and got angry or sick." If I can do it this way, then I am looking with Jesus. But if I get down on myself because I am so stupid, I forgot, and I am doing it again, etc., then I am right back in the same ego trap.