

## Duality as Metaphor in *A Course in Miracles*

Excerpts from the Workshop held at the  
*Foundation for A Course in Miracles*  
Roscoe NY

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### Part II

#### Heaven: The State of Oneness

We will begin talking about what Heaven is, what the state of Oneness is, what early in the text is called One-mindedness. Then we will talk about what the Course refers to as wrong-mindedness, the thought system of the ego, which is the beginning of the thought system of duality, just as Oneness is the thought system of non-duality. Finally, we will talk about the correction or the undoing of the wrong-minded thought system of the ego, which is through the right-minded thought system of the Holy Spirit that centers around the teaching of forgiveness. These teachings of forgiveness all have to do with the *reflection* of truth. They are not true. They all belong to the world of duality, which means they should not be taken literally. When Jesus speaks about God and about the state of Heaven, he should be taken very literally. When he speaks about the ego, forgiveness, and the Holy Spirit's role, he is talking metaphorically or symbolically.

Let me go back to another musical example as a way of summarizing these three different types of mind: One-mindedness, wrong-mindedness and right-mindedness. About 30 years ago, I read a wonderful book on Beethoven by the British writer Marion Scott. She talked about Beethoven's three stages, which most music scholars talk about, the early, middle, and the late stage. The early stage is the period of the first 30 years of Beethoven's life, wherein the music he composed was very much based upon the formal technique that he learned from Mozart and Haydn. These are not his greatest works by any means. They are very much involved with form, and you can watch Beethoven learning how to master his craft. Then he entered into the second phase with the *Eroica* Symphony. His Symphonies Three to Eight, his last three piano concertos, some of his greatest piano sonatas, the middle quartets, and his opera *Fidelio* all belong to that period. Usually, this is the music that is the most accessible to music lovers and that really gave him his great reputation. His final stage, which begins with the Ninth Symphony and then goes into his late sonatas and the last quartets, is clearly his greatest music and probably the greatest music ever written. He transcended all the form, all the conventions, and basically gave a wonderful expression to the end of the spiritual journey.

Marion Scott spoke about Beethoven's first stage as where he looked at the material world through material eyes, where he basically was mastering the world of form, the world of materiality. In the second stage, he looked at the spiritual world through material eyes. Here he was really beginning to express the development and the deepening of his spiritual journey, which could be traced very clearly in his music, but he was still doing it within the framework of the world's forms. It was at the end of his life that he broke with all of these forms. Scott talked about this as when he looked at the spiritual world through spiritual eyes. That is why when you listen to this later music, especially the late sonatas and quartets, you realize that he was inhabiting a totally different realm from anything else he or anyone else had composed. That is what makes his music so other-worldly.

One could make the same kinds of statements about these three levels in *A Course in Miracles*. Wrong-mindedness is looking at the material world through material eyes. That is what the ego is all about. So those are all the passages in the Course that detail the dynamics of the ego and what specialness is all about, which was all predicated on the seeming reality of our guilt, our sinfulness, our need to project onto other people, cannibalize other people, and kill in order to get what we want.

The correction for this, right-mindedness, is Jesus looking at the material world, the ego thought system, but from the perspective of the spiritual. That is where he speaks very often using the term *reflection*. That is where he says that love is impossible in this world, but forgiveness, which is love's reflection, *is* possible here. He talks about the reflection of holiness here, which is what the holy relationship is. He talks about the holy instant. He uses the word *holy* even though holiness is not possible in this world, but the holy instant and the holy relationship are the *reflections* of what is true. Again, he is looking at the ego's thought system, a dualistic thought system, from the perspective of the spiritual, but the way that he writes about it, the way that it is presented, and the way that we are asked to practice it is as if we were here. It is looking at the material world, but through the eyes of vision. It is still within the world of duality, which means it is still illusory.

One-mindedness is looking at the spiritual world through spiritual sight. This is recognized in the passages that deal directly with what the state of Heaven is like. There are not many of them, because there is no way we could understand them. These are the passages in *A Course in Miracles* that tell us what truth is, what reality is, what non-duality is. When you understand that, at least intellectually, you have a perspective by which you can understand what illusion is, and what duality is. That is what would help you not fall into the mistake of taking passages out of context, twisting them around so they will mean what you want them to mean, which will always be to affirm the reality of your specialness at the expense of truth. When you truly understand what oneness, reality, and non-duality mean, you will not make that mistake. You will then have a perspective, a context, a framework in which to understand all of the statements of right-mindedness in the Course, all of the statements in the Course

that deal with the role of the Holy Spirit, and that deal with the role of the miracle and the role of forgiveness. If you do not have that perspective, you will think that what Jesus is talking about should be taken as literally true. It should not be taken as literally true, but he must speak to us on this level because that is where we believe we are.

Later we will look at passages that basically show us how Jesus was aware of this problem, and how he is aware of what he was doing in his course. The problem is that his students are not aware of what he is doing in the Course, and so in some way they skip over these passages because they do not seem that important, and therefore they miss the whole point. This will help you not miss the point, so that your lifetime's work with the Course will become a truly productive one and will be one that will truly lead you on the journey, which in the end will help you transcend your ego. If you are a student of the Course, you would not want to settle for anything less. That would always be the fundamental question you should ask yourself. Why would I settle for less when I could have everything? Why would I settle for a little glimpse of love when I could have that total experience of love? Why would I want Jesus' pinky when I could have his whole being? Why would I settle for less than everything? Yet that is what people do when they work with the Course, because they are not aware of what it is saying.

The state of Oneness or the state of Heaven is the perfect Unity and Oneness of God and Christ. The Course talks about the Mind of God, which is the Creator, and the Mind of Christ, which is what God created. This is always spelled with a capital *M*. The Mind of God and the Mind of Christ are totally unified. When we speak of something being non-dualistic, it means it is non-dual. There are not two; there is only one. This is the most important point to always keep in mind. This is the *only* level of reality. This is the *only* level of truth. Anything else that smacks of duality is only a reflection of reality or a reflection of truth, but not truth. Truth is only God and Christ and there is absolutely nothing else.

There is no way that this can be understood here, as we will see. The words *God* and *Christ* have no meaning in Heaven. The words *Creator* and *Created* have no meaning in Heaven. They do have meaning for us here, but these are dualistic terms. Obviously, we talk about God and we talk about Christ. We talk about the Father and we talk about the Son. We talk about God as the First Cause; we talk about Christ as the Effect. These are important words to us here because they are meaningful to us. In Heaven, there is no state of duality. There is no God as a separated consciousness that perceives Himself in relationship to His Son, Christ. There is no Christ as a separated consciousness that perceives Himself in relationship to His Creator. Again, these are dualistic terms; these are words. Later on, we will read an important passage where Jesus says that "words are but symbols of symbols. They are thus twice removed from reality" (M-21.1:9-10).

So the words *God* and *Christ* symbolize something, but we, who are creatures of duality and specialness, have no way of understanding what the concept of *oneness* means, what the concept of *non-duality* means. The idea that "nowhere does the Father end, the Son begin as something separate from Him" (W-pl.132.12:4) makes no sense to us. There are many passages in the Course that reflect this. There is not much we can say about it, but it is, once again, extremely important that you understand this is the bottom line. This is the only truth there is, the only reality. Everything else is a dream, everything else is totally made up.

This is one of the few places in the Course where you can actually see not only a description of Heaven, but almost a definition of it.

**(T-18.VI.1:1) There is nothing outside you.**

This is a perfectly clear non-dualistic statement.

**(T-18.VI.1:2) That is what you must ultimately learn, for it is the realization that the Kingdom of Heaven is restored to you.**

There are many places in the Course where Jesus says things like this. When he says this is something you must ultimately learn, he is telling you this is very important. If you read this course with colored markers ready, this is one of the statements you should underline. He is telling you this is what it is all about, that you learn "there is nothing outside you." That means there is no God outside you, there is no Holy Spirit outside you, there is no Jesus outside you, there is no world outside you. If you keep statements like this in mind, you will not fall into the trap of making the error real, of believing there is a world out there that you must do something about, that you must heal, save, run away from, want to join with, or to forgive.

**(T-18.VI.1:3) For God created only this [namely the Kingdom of Heaven], and He did not depart from it nor leave it separate from Himself.**

This is a classic non-dualistic statement. This is a reflection of the other important principle in the Course, ideas leave not their source. We are an idea in the Mind of God and we have never left our Source. That means the separation never happened. Early in the text, Jesus says the Kingdom of Heaven is not within you. "The Kingdom of Heaven is you" (T-4.III.1:4). You are the Kingdom of Heaven because you are one with God and God is the Kingdom.

**(T-18.VI.1:4-6) The Kingdom of Heaven is the dwelling place of the Son of God, who left not his Father and dwells not apart from Him. [Once again, these are expressions of that perfect Oneness of God and Christ.] Heaven is not a place nor a condition. [And here is the definition:] It is merely an awareness of perfect Oneness, and the knowledge that there is nothing else; nothing outside this Oneness, and nothing else within.**

If we truly could understand this, we would not need anything else in the Course. Later on I will read a passage where Jesus says, "We say 'God is,' and then we cease to speak . . ." (W-pl.169.5:4). There is nothing else to say. God is. If God is, then His Son is also and there is nothing else. That is probably the closest we will get in the Course to a definition of Heaven. It is the "awareness of perfect Oneness and the knowledge that there is nothing else . . ." When Jesus uses *knowledge*, he is not talking about knowledge in the conventional sense where you know something, you are aware of something. That is because these all occur within a dualistic framework. *Knowledge* in the Course is just a synonym for that state of perfect Oneness. It is the state of the Kingdom, of pure Being. It is the "knowledge that there is nothing else; nothing outside this Oneness, and nothing else within."

Some of you are familiar with the book Gloria and I wrote many years ago called *Awaken from the Dream*, where there is a lovely (if I might say so, speaking for both of us) description of this unity of Heaven:

... in the Beginning, before there was even a concept of beginning, there is God, our Source and the Source of all creation: a perfection and resplendence whose magnificence is beyond comprehension; love and gentleness of such an infinite nature that consciousness could not even begin its apprehension; a pristine stillness of uninterrupted joy; a motionless flow without friction to impede it; a vast, limitless, and all-encompassing Totality, beyond space, beyond time, in which there is no beginning, no ending, for there was never a time or place when God was not. ...

Creation, like spirit, is abstract, formless, and unchanging. Its nature is unity, knowledge of which is that there is nowhere the Creator ends and the created begins. There is no boundary, no differentiation, no separation. Yet, included in this knowledge is the fact that we are not the Source of creation, though we remain One within It.

Can the Mind of God begin? Can the Mind of God end? Can a Thought that is part of that Mind be something other than that Mind? Surely not, since there is no subject or object in the state of Heaven; no observer or observed. There is no perception, simply the total knowledge of who we are: a glory of such unified resplendence that concepts of within-without have no meaning (*Awaken from the Dream*, pp. 3-4).

There is no way of understanding what that is, but you could at least begin to understand that nothing in this world has anything whatsoever, to do with that, in any way, shape, or form. We are talking about a concept of oneness and unity that totally transcends anything in this world. It transcends the role of the Holy Spirit. It transcends forgiveness. It transcends the miracle. It transcends *A Course in Miracles*. Those of you who are familiar with my book on Helen, *Absence from Felicity*, may remember that I discussed that Helen, who obviously had a very close relationship with Jesus and certainly experienced him as very real, occasionally would tell me of an experience she would have of a voice that was basically soundless and that transcended the voice of Jesus. That is what we are talking about. That experience

transcended the dualistic experience of having a relationship with Jesus. It was something beyond even what the Course is about, because the Course says it is not about Heaven and it is not about truth. It is about removing the interferences that we place between ourselves and truth.

Over and over again Jesus says, in one form or another, that knowledge is not the goal of this course, oneness is not the goal of this course. Peace is the goal of this course. And peace in *A Course in Miracles* is accomplished through the undoing of the ego's specialness. One does not have to understand or know what that oneness is. But, again, if you are going to really understand this course, then you must understand there is something beyond what you think these words are telling you. These words are telling you one thing on the level of form, but on the level of content, if you follow them along without pre-judging them, you will be led by them beyond everything in this world, as the Course says, right up to the gate of Heaven, and then the Course stops. It has carried out its purpose. Then, as Jesus says, God will reach down and lift you back unto Himself (C-4.8:3). That is not the Course goal. That happens afterward.

**(W-pII.11.2:4) What God has willed to be forever One will still be One when time is over; and will not be changed throughout the course of time, remaining as it was before the thought of time began.**

**(W-pII.11.4:1-5) We are creation; we the Sons of God. We seem to be discrete, and unaware of our eternal unity with Him. Yet back of all our doubts, past all our fears, there still is certainty. For love remains with all its Thoughts, its sureness being theirs. God's memory is in our holy minds, which know their oneness and their unity with their Creator.**

Here we see another very clear statement that the world of separation, of separate personalities, of individualities, the world of discreteness has nothing to do with Heaven. It is all part of the illusion. It is all part of the dream, and we remain, as the Course says, at home in God yet dreaming of exile (T-10.I.2:1). We remain at home with God in that state of perfect Oneness with Him.

**(T-2.VII.6:1-3) It should especially be noted that God has only *one* Son. If all His creations are His Sons, every one must be an integral part of the whole Sonship. The Sonship in its Oneness transcends the sum of its parts.**

That last line is an extremely important one. It is repeated several times in the Course in different ways. What Jesus is saying is that what constitutes Christ, what constitutes the one Son of God, is not adding up all of the seemingly separate fragments. What constitutes Christ is its perfect unity and wholeness. The Oneness transcends the sum of its parts. What defines Christ is this perfect Oneness, not the conglomerate or the sum total of all the seeming fragments. That is how we think of it here. That is why the whole thought of the hundredth-monkey idea, which many Course students adopt and think that is what the Course is talking

about, misses the point entirely. That is a wonderful example of the kind of thing I was discussing earlier, where people will take things from the Course out of context and basically understand them within the context of their particular thought system, or their form of spirituality. If you understand that what defines Christ is His perfect wholeness and oneness, then you cannot add up a certain number of members of the Sonship, get a magic number that tilts the rest of the Sonship and everybody falls into God's lap. If you understand and you accept no compromise in which duality plays a part, you will not fall into that trap.

People take the section called "The Circle of Atonement," which talks about how teachers of innocence are gathered together and the implication of that section is that you get more and more people within the Sonship—people interpret that as saying that they have got to get more and more people studying the Course; governments, national and world leaders must study the Course. So we get more and more people into this circle and when we get enough people, everybody will be pulled into it and, again, we fall into Heaven. That is a very nice spirituality. It could work for people. It is not *A Course in Miracles*. Please, do not fall into that trap. If you accept no compromise in which duality plays a part, you could never fall into that trap because that is a dualistic statement, that you get people who are seemingly separate, and you just get enough of them in one place and something magical will happen. That is not what this Course is about.

If Christ is totally one, if as Jesus says in the teachers' manual, it is true that only one teacher of God is needed to save the world (M-12.1:1), then you do not add up numbers. This is not about getting converts. It is about each individual student of *A Course in Miracles* learning this course, accepting the Atonement for oneself, and then realizing that they are that one. Later on I will explain to you how that works psychologically, how that really works, how everyone really is part of the one. When you start adding people up, you are making the error real, you are making separation real, and you are saying a certain number of people are needed to save the world. The manual makes it very clear that only one is needed, and Jesus is not talking about himself. He would be an example of the one, but we are all examples of the one. Jesus is an example of one who has accepted the Atonement for himself, whose mind is perfectly healed, but in that awareness, in that healing, in that acceptance of the Atonement, he knows there are no separated Sons. He becomes the Christ because he now realizes that he is the Christ. He, as a separate personality, disappears because we are all Christ, we are all part of that whole.

There is no way anyone in this world can understand how that works, and Jesus does not ask us to understand how it works, but what he does ask us to do is understand how nothing else works. If you understand how nothing else works, then you will leave the door open for what truly works and in fact is the only thing that does work. This is very, very important. If you try to superimpose on *A Course in Miracles* your own spiritual path, which may have thousands, hundreds of thousands, and even millions of devotees, you will never learn what this course is

saying. There is nothing else in this world like this course. It is not saying that you will not find God in other pathways, but you will not find God if you try to do that other pathway with the Course. And you certainly will not find it with the Course. You may construct your own spirituality based on little fragments from the Course and little fragments from this and little fragments from that, and that might work for you, but that has nothing to do with *A Course in Miracles*. If you change one teaching in this course, if you omit one teaching in this course, you have omitted the whole Course.

That is why Jesus says you either believe all of this course or none of it (T-22.II.7:4). This is not a course you can pick and choose from. It is not sinful, wicked, or bad, if you do, but then it is no longer *A Course in Miracles*. It is something else. It is eclectic spirituality. There is absolutely nothing wrong with anyone doing that, or promulgating it, or teaching it, but they should have the humility, the good sense, and the self-respect to be clear with the world that they are no longer teaching *A Course in Miracles*. Blend this with anything else and you will have lost what this is.

Just as Christ is defined by "the whole is greater than the sum of its parts" this course is the same way. This is greater than the sum of its individual teachings. Its individual teachings form a perfectly integrated whole that transcends any one statement or any one principle. That is what you must understand. That is what this hidden level of the Course is, that you realize the perfect totality that this thought system represents. Again, you do not have to be able to accept it totally. You do not have to live it totally. You do not have to understand it totally, but do understand that there is nothing else like it, and nothing else that you think it is saying is what it is saying. That will leave the door open.

This course, just like Christ, is greater than the sum of its parts, and if you want to know what it is teaching, you must give yourself to it totally. And the way you give yourself to it totally is to realize how much you do not want to give yourself to it totally, how much you want to withhold yourself from it. There is nothing wrong in doing that. In fact, there is something wrong in your *not* doing it, because if you think you are not doing it then you are a liar. You should assume you will do it. You will withhold from it; you will take out certain things that you are not comfortable with; you will blend it in with other things; and you will make the Course a statement of dualistic thinking instead of non-dualistic thinking. Don't be surprised when you do it, but don't be arrogant in thinking you don't do it. It is in realizing that you are trying to change the Course, just as you tried to change Heaven, that will help you get past all of your guilt over your seeming sin.

Everyone is going to "sin" with this course, because no one wants to hear what it says. If people wanted to hear what it said, then they would already know what it says and they would not need it. No one wanted to hear what Jesus said two thousand years ago either. That is not a sin. That is just a reflection of the original thought when you did not want to hear

what God said either, which is the word of perfect Oneness. Therefore, you want to be aware of your attempting to subvert, pervert, distort, and change this course, but forgive yourself for it. Just don't arrogantly think you are not doing that.

Remember, the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. How many people are really ready to totally give themselves to the whole of this course, to the whole of Jesus' love without any reservation? That is what you want to look at in yourself and be humble about. That is what will allow you to forgive yourself, not for what you think you have done to Jesus or *A Course in Miracles*, but what you think you did to God and to Christ.