

## Healing the Dream of Sickness

Excerpts from the Workshop held at the  
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### Part I

I thought I would begin by talking about the dream, since in a sense that goes to the heart not only of what we will be discussing in this workshop, but of the entire Course. When one speaks about dreams it is always appropriate to invoke Sigmund Freud, without whom, as I have said many times, we would not have *A Course in Miracles*. His work on dreams stands not only as the centerpiece of the entire body of his work, but actually of all psychology in the 20th century, and now into the 21st century. His first major book, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, published in 1900, was devoted to dreams, obviously; but he used that study as a springboard for understanding how the whole psyche works. He wrote that at a time when most dream researchers or people who wrote about dreams tended to denigrate them, viewing dreams as basically silly and having no meaning. One of the most important points to come from this initial work of Freud's was to show us that dreams indeed were quite meaningful and purposive. Purpose, as you know, is a significant term in the Course. Jesus speaks about it over and over again, and if we are to understand anything in this world, we must understand the purpose it serves, both in terms of the ego's thought system and then the correction of that through the Holy Spirit's thought system.

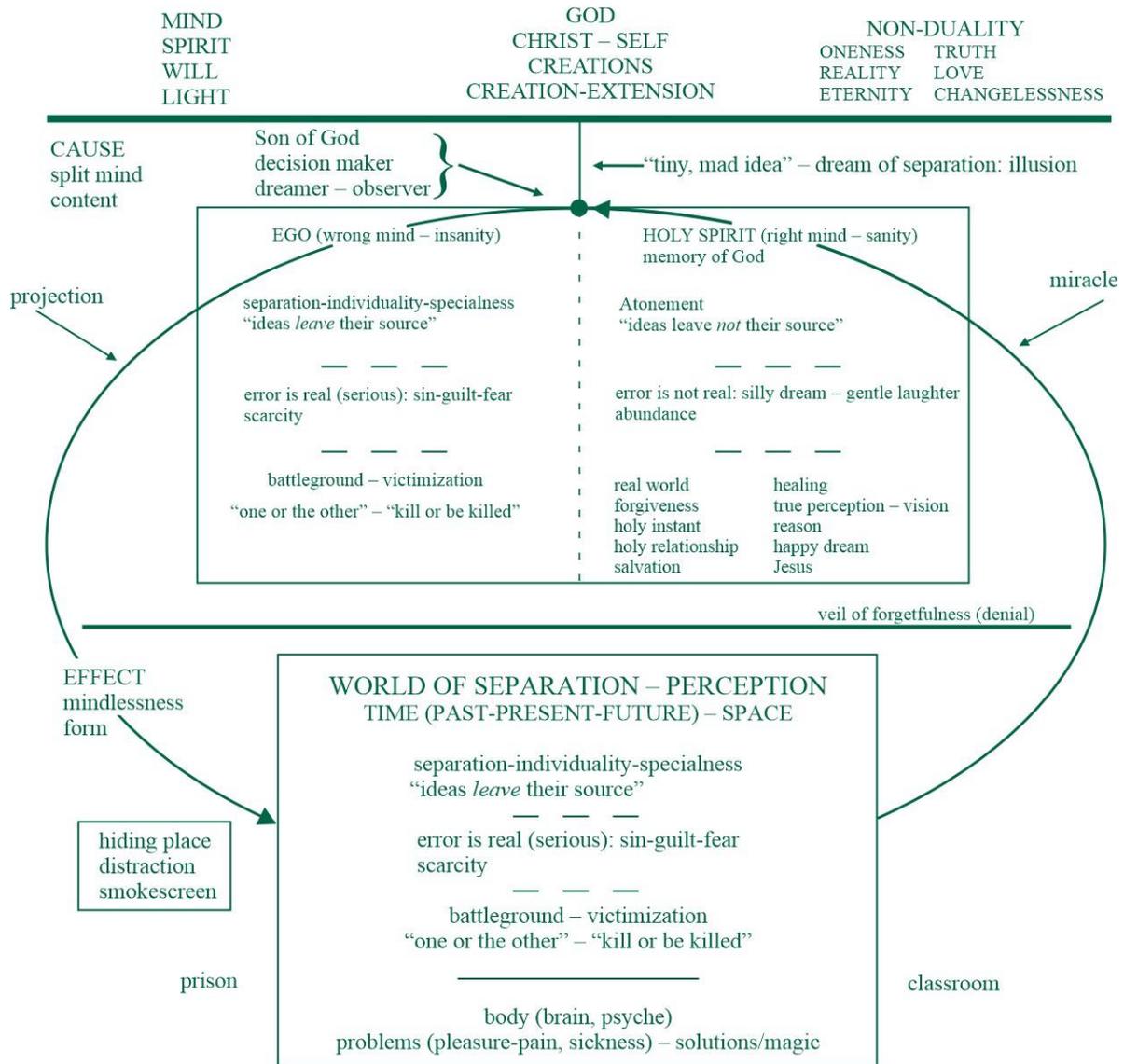
When Freud spoke about the purposive nature of dreams, he spoke specifically about their capacity to fulfill a wish, usually known as "the wish-fulfillment theory." Generally speaking, dreams keep us asleep. Thus, at night when we are asleep our defenses tend to relax somewhat and all of the fiendish unconscious material threatens to surface and consequently wake us up. The purpose of the dream is to tame these wild forces (as Freud thought of them) in our unconscious and make a compromise with them—in effect, to allow them to exist and to help them reach some kind of resolution or fulfillment. This is the more specific idea of *wish*: to fulfill all these instinctual drives, but primarily so that we would remain asleep. Overall we thus would say that dreams exist to fulfill the wish of remaining asleep, and secondarily to fulfill the wishes generated by these instinctual forces that always have to do, ultimately in Freud's theory, with infantile sexuality. It was in helping us understand that dreams serve a purpose that he made one of his most lasting contributions.

When we look at the Course's view of dreams, seeing through the Freudian lens in terms of this more general purpose of fulfilling a wish, then we can suddenly understand why the dream has occurred, and specifically why the dream that we call the physical universe and the individual dreams we think of as our lives have occurred the way they have occurred. There is a method in the ego's madness and this method is the *fulfillment of a wish*. We learn from our study of *A Course in Miracles* that the wish that the world fulfills for us, and specifically the wish that our individual lives in this world fulfill, is the wish to keep ourselves asleep, just as Freud taught. However, seen in the metaphysical context, this means keeping the wish to be separate from God alive. That is the sleep of separation. The Course tells us that we are at home in God yet dreaming of exile (T-10.I.2:1). The exile of course is generated by the idea

that we have indeed pulled off the impossible and have separated ourselves from the Love of God. That is the origin of the dream, and that is what Jesus means when he says, as he does in several places, that the content of every dream is fear (T-18.II.4; "The Gifts of God," pp. 115-117). It is the fear that somehow God will retaliate and punish us for our sin of separating from Him. Thus, the overriding purpose that the ego's dream serves is that it keeps us asleep. It keeps the sleep of separation real so that we do not awaken from the dream and recognize that the entire thought system of the ego is the dream.

Near the end of Chapter 27 Jesus makes the distinction between two levels of dreams: the secret dream and the world's dream (T-27.VII.11-12). On the chart (see Below), the first level is represented in the wrong-minded box. This is the dream that hides the wish and the thought to be separate. It is the birthplace of the unholy trinity of sin, guilt, and fear. The ego tells us that our separation from God was a sin, that we killed God so that we would live—it is one or the other. We are then taught that we should feel guilty for this egregious sin of destroying the love of Heaven; and since in the ego's system guilt always demands punishment, we then become afraid of the punishment that we believe is inevitable and deserved—we deserve to be punished by the object of our sin, namely God. That is the secret dream, the original battleground where the ego sees us at war with God.

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Since this constellation of thoughts is so horrific and so fraught with pain and terror, the ego counsels us that we can be free of the pain of our guilt and escape the terror of our annihilation at the hands of this vengeful, maniacal God by leaving the mind, making up a world and hiding in that world. Specifically, we will hide our thought system, our image of ourselves, in a body. This is the beginning of what Jesus refers to as the "world's dream," represented on the chart as the box at the bottom: the world and the body. This is the second part of the ego's wish-fulfillment: the making of the world and all the fragmented thoughts, each of which seems to be encased in a body. In the ego's plan, the world enables us to keep this individual existence, this special self as our identity—unique, autonomous, independent, and free; but we can give away all responsibility for it.

Briefly summarized, the ego's purpose for the dream of the world and the body is to keep the separation that we believe we stole from God, but to give away the sin associated with it. When we talk about giving sin away we are talking about *projection*, another term for which we owe a deep debt of gratitude to Freud, because it was Freud who first described this incredibly important dynamic. Something I do not like in myself I reject, deny, and repress. Whatever I repress and becomes unconscious, I automatically project. That is the law of the split mind: what I repress I inevitably will project. I first push it down so that I am not aware of it, and then I push it out. I need bodies or objects onto which I can push this guilt. That is why the world was made. It was made to house all these billions and billions of fragments that we call bodies or forms, because they come in all varieties of shapes and sizes, both animate and inanimate. However, we learn in the text that nothing is really inanimate or animate, everything is the same (T-23.II.19). Everything is literally nothing, that we believe is something. We take the guilt over our responsibility for the separation that is in our minds and we say it is no longer in me; I am not responsible for the separation, someone or something else is, and the world arises to meet that need or to fulfill that wish.

That is the purpose of all dreams. They begin with the secret dream, as stated for example at the beginning of Lesson 93—"You think you are the home of evil, darkness and sin" (W-pl.93.1:1). The world arises to protect us from the awfulness of that thought; and then everyone *else* becomes "the home of evil, darkness and sin." If I happen to have a particularly negative image of myself, I will still believe it is not my fault. I am this awful, inadequate, inferior person because I was made this way: my genes, my upbringing, all the forces in the world that impinge on me and have formed me and made me what I am. No matter what we think of ourselves in this world, it ends up not being our fault. Again, the ego gets to have its cake and eat it too. We keep the separation that we believe we successfully stole from God, but we give the sin away—sin being the belief that we have done this. Now I have my separated self with no knowledge, awareness, or memory of where it came from; namely, I and the I's of all of us, because we begin as one Son and we separated as one Son. The secret dream is shared by all of us equally, because it is all one. The fragmentation into billions of seemingly separated selves does not occur until the second dream begins to emerge with what the beginning of Chapter 18 talks about: the first projection of error (T-18.I.4-6). The original error is what we all share as one—the secret dream. The world's dream arises as a defense against that. Its purpose is to keep the separated self intact, but to make someone, or everyone and everything, including the God we made up—to make all of these figures responsible. That is the dream.

What we find discussed throughout the Course, as well as the two companion pamphlets, is the idea of splitting off effect from cause, so that effect now appears to be a cause. In the upper left-hand part of the chart is the word *cause*, meaning the split mind is the cause of the world, the world therefore being nothing more or less than the effect. Once we project out the belief in separation—the thought of sin, guilt, and fear—from our minds and see it elsewhere, then what we have projected onto becomes the effect. That effect is caused by the thought in the mind that is animated and energized by the dynamic of projection. The world is the effect and the mind is the cause. When we split off effect from cause, we forget the cause. Notice also on the chart the solid line, which we refer to as the "veil of denial" or the "veil of forgetfulness" separating the mind from the world. That veil falls across our minds so that we forget where the world came from, and with no awareness of the cause, we just see the effect. Then we have to make up some cause: Where did the world come from? How did we get here? What is the purpose of the world? Then we believe that *the world causes us*. This self I believe I am I believe is

caused by the world of forces beyond my control, beginning with the union of a sperm and an egg. Whether it is done in the bedroom or in a test tube makes no difference; my physical life and my psychological life I believe begins when the sperm and the egg join. Or in the context of past lives I could say that who I am today is the effect of many sperms and many eggs joining over a period of centuries or millennia. Any way that you seek to understand it, it boils down to the same content: I am here not by my own decision, but because of something outside myself that caused me.

When we split effect from cause and repress the cause, we no longer have any knowledge of it. In other words, we become mindless, because the cause is the mind. Then we are left with the effect that we now believe is a cause. As we will see later, sickness is understood in this framework. When we think of sickness, whether mental or physical symptoms, what we label as *sick* or as *ill* is nothing more or less than the effect of the cause. A very important principle in the Course, which we come back to over and over again because it is so central, is the principle that *ideas leave not their source*. The idea of a physical universe—literally a physical universe, not just the world we perceive—is the idea that has never left its source in the mind. This means there is literally no world outside our minds because *ideas leave not their source*.

On the microcosmic level, for example, when I seek to get rid of my guilt, project it onto you, make you guilty, find fault, judge, blame, criticize you, etc., I have the magical hope that I have gotten rid of my guilt, my self-hatred, this awful judgment on myself by now placing it onto you and making you the home of evil, darkness, and sin. The guilt and the sin rest on you; they no longer rest within me. That is the magical hope. That does not mean I feel any less guilty. In fact what such attack does is *reinforce* my guilt, because there is some part of me that knows that I have attacked you falsely. No matter what you have done, no matter how reprehensible or vicious your actions may be in my eyes or the eyes of the entire world, that still does not make you responsible for how terrible I feel, or the distress, the disquiet, or the dis-ease that I feel within me. No matter how I try to project my guilt and make someone else responsible for how terrible I feel, it does not change the fact that the guilt still stays within me, because *ideas leave not their source*. The source of guilt in my mind has never left me simply because I indulged in the magical idea of thinking I could throw it away by placing it in you and then finding fault with you.

The principle that *ideas leave not their source* also operates in Heaven. We are an idea in the Mind of God and that is what Jesus means in the Course when he speaks about our being *thought*. We are *thought*; we are not flesh. We are a *thought* in the Mind of God. Putting that together with the principle that *ideas leave not their source* is a restatement of the Atonement principle that says the separation from God never happened. We are free within our insane dreaming to believe that we have pulled off the impossible, but that does not mean that we have, because *ideas leave not their source*. The *idea* of God's Son has never left its source in God. The idea of guilt has never left its source in my mind when I seek to project it out onto you. The sickness of believing I could destroy God, get away with it and then be happy has never left its source, even though I have made up a body and made it to be sick. Sickness has never left its source; guilt has never left its source; love has never left its Source.

The ego of course teaches exactly the opposite. The entire thought system of the ego begins with the proposition that *ideas do leave their source*. Again, once the idea leaves its source, we believe the source has been rendered nonexistent. And then once I begin the ego's secret dream, which is the home of guilt, the ego tells me ideas *do* leave their source: I can get rid of my guilt by making up a world

housed with separate bodies, onto each of which I am now free to project my guilt. Therefore I am done with it and someone else will pay the price of my sin, not me. In fact, one of the causes and purposes of sickness is that it enables me to say you did this to me. You have made me sick. And it does not matter whether I define the pathogen as you (my mother, my father, my siblings, my lovers, my spouse, my children, etc.), or I define the pathogen as a bacteria or virus. In any occurrence, I am still saying the reason I am feeling so miserable, so dis-eased, so uncomfortable is that I have been invaded by a power or force outside my control. That is the purpose sickness serves, and we will come back to this over and over again.

But what is critically important, which in a sense forms the metaphysical backdrop for everything we will be discussing, is to really understand that there is no body, there is no sickness, there is no world—*ideas leave not their source*. There are only sick thoughts within our minds. That is the sickness. A sick body can be defined any number of ways: by a physical symptom, what we usually think of as mental illness, or just being upset about something, a transient emotional state. All of these are nothing more or less than the ego's attempt to fulfill the wish of its dream to keep us separated and believing that we have an identity separated from God. That thought then gets housed in a body, which then defines itself in terms of the differentiation between itself and other bodies. That is the sickness—the belief that that is who I am.

Again, the ego's secret wish is to keep the separated self intact but to blame someone or something else for it. Interestingly, the word *pathogen* comes from the Greek *pathos*, meaning disease or illness, and *gen*, meaning cause or what produces something. In our world, we tend to think of pathogens—as do most biologists and medical people—as being organisms such as bacteria or viruses that cause disease. When we study *A Course in Miracles*, we understand that the true pathogen is *guilt*. That is the cause of disease; and even more specifically, it is our *decision for guilt*, because guilt does not exist outside of our belief in it and our wish for it. We wish for guilt because guilt says I have sinned. Sin says I have separated from God, which means that this separated self that I am now indulging myself with is real, but I do not want to get punished for it. That is why we have the second dream, the world's dream, which seeks to complete the ego's wish by fulfilling it—by finding fault with everyone and everything else, and labeling everything in the world as a potential or an actual pathogen. I am filled with disease not because of *me*, but because of someone or something else. That is why there is a world. Remember, again, you must understand *purpose*. If you are to understand anything about this world, and above all understand anything about this course, you must recognize the only purpose the body and the world serve, which is to have this capacity to fulfill the wish to keep my sin and my separated self intact, both of which are in my mind, but then to magically believe I can get rid of all responsibility for my sinfulness and for my self by blaming other people. That is why there is a world of bodies. As the workbook says, “Thus were specifics made” (W-pl.161.3:1). There must be something that I hate. I need something out there as a means of getting rid of my hate, the hatred of myself.

As we will see later, the Holy Spirit has a different use for the body: to correct our confusion of cause and effect. We see bodies as being both effects and cause: your body has caused the effect, which is my body in pain. The Holy Spirit helps us recognize through our misperceptions of the body that the only purpose the body serves is to bring our attention back to the real cause, which is the choice for guilt in the mind. *That is the sickness*.