

Healing the Dream of Sickness

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Part VIII

Often in a discussion of sickness and healing questions come up regarding the use of medicine and other forms of healing available in the world. I would like to address this by referring to "The Shift in Perception," the second subsection under "How Is Healing Accomplished?" in the teachers' manual, beginning with paragraph 2.

(M-5.II.2:1-2) The acceptance of sickness as a decision of the mind, for a purpose for which it would use the body, is the basis of healing. And this is so for healing in all forms.

As we have said repeatedly, sickness has nothing to do with the body; it has to do with a decision in the mind for guilt instead of the Atonement. Once that decision is made, sickness is inevitable, regardless of the form it takes. Healing then brings the symptom back from the body—whether the emotional or physical level—to the mind, which is where the guilt is and where the healing or the remedy is. You bring the problem back to the answer, which is always in the mind.

(2:2-6) And this is so for healing in all forms. A patient decides that this is so, and he recovers. If he decides against recovery, he will not be healed. Who is the physician? Only the mind of the patient himself.

The physician is not the external person, and the so-called healing agent is not what heals. The physician is the mind, as Jesus says in this passage. It was the mind that made itself sick when it turned away from the Holy Spirit and toward the ego; therefore, it is only the mind that can correct itself. That is what asking Jesus for help is all about—it means going back into our mind and choosing a different teacher, which means choosing against the ego. Basically, we are the ones who make ourselves sick by choosing against the Holy Spirit and we are the only ones who can bring healing about by now choosing against the ego and for the Holy Spirit. That is the healing; that is the healer.

(2:7-13) The outcome is what he decides that it is. Special agents seem to be ministering to him, yet they but give form to his own choice. He chooses them in order to bring tangible form to his desires. And it is this they do, and nothing else. They are not actually needed at all. The patient could merely rise up without their aid and say, "I have no use for this." There is no form of sickness that would not be cured at once.

The "special agents" would be anything you take or do to alleviate a problem, anything external: an aspirin, or some other kind of drug, alternative medicine, homeopathic medicine, Chinese medicine, a special diet, special exercise, a special pillow for your back or your neck at night. It does not matter what it is; they all come under the category of "special agents." Jesus is saying that when we feel ill and take a

pill or have a procedure done, or do anything else that alleviates the emotional or physical pain, we feel better only because our mind made a decision to let go of the symptom.

We elect a compromise approach because the fear of the power of our mind is still too great, based on the ego's voice that tells us that if we go back into our mind and get in touch with its power, we will once again choose sin, and God will once again choose to destroy us. We choose to let go of the pain, but rather than seeing the power of our mind as the agent that lets go of the pain, we say it was the pill, the doctor, the procedure, the diet, etc. We all have our long list of things that help us. Not one of them is better or worse than any other. The unfortunate thing about people who use alternative approaches is they think they are better than people who practice traditional medicine. One will work for some people, one will work for other people. That does not mean you should not use an alternative method if that is what works for you, nor does it mean you should not follow traditional medicine if that works for you. But to think that your choice is better than anything else and that *you* are better because in your eyes you are doing something that is holy, pure, and natural rather than the awful stuff other people do is the arrogance of the ego. Why? Because you are excluding and separating; and above all you are falling into the first law of chaos: you are saying there is a hierarchy of illusions, that some magic is better than other magic. If Jesus believed in sin that would be the sin. That is why he stresses so much that we not make the error real.

You should pursue whatever works for you; just do not think it is any better than anyone else's magic or that one form of magic is any better than another form of magic. If it works for you it would be silly not to use it. Remember, though, that you could be healed simply by changing your mind, by having a kind thought about someone. That could heal you. But the ultimate implication of such a healing is that it would bring you out of your world and your body, back into your mind. We all harbor tremendous fear about that, because, as we discussed earlier, the greatest threat to the ego is that we would exercise the power of our mind and choose against *it*. That is the fear. What drove us insane was believing the ego's tale of sin, guilt, and fear; and then we became even more insane when we made up a world, and then defended against all that by forgetting what we did. There is a reason we made the world and continue to live here.

Never forget that everything occurs in our mind, and it occurs by our own choice. We all bought the ego's song and dance right at the beginning. We never questioned it because the ego never gave us a chance to—no sooner did we choose the ego than it obliterated all memory of our mind; the mind, then, was just gone. In that same instant, the world was made and the body was born, governed by a brain with no awareness of the mind at all. We have an elaborate set of sensory apparatuses for a reason: our sensory organs were specifically made to look without, to taste, smell, and feel what is outside. And our own body is also outside. The brain then interprets all the sensory data and adds up two and two and gets four and three-quarters. It interprets what it sees as reality and tells us it is reality. And since there is no one else we can ask except other insane people, we believe in the lie. And we believe in it because we are terrified that if we go back into our minds we would lose this self, which we would. As Jesus says in Chapter 13, our fear is that we would leap into our Father's arms and this world would disappear:

"You realize that, by removing the dark cloud that obscures it [separation], your love for your Father would impel you to answer His Call and leap into Heaven....You think you have made a world God would destroy; and by loving Him, which you do, you would throw this world away, which you would" (T-13.III.2:6; 4:3).

And so to preserve this identity, this separated individualized self, we continually have to choose to stay out of our minds.

This fear is why we elect a compromise approach—the use of "special agents." We do not really need anything to undo pain in our body, because there is no pain in the body. How can something that does not exist have pain? The pain is the guilt in our minds that we project or displace onto the body. Then we feel the pain in our body and try to do something with the body. It does not matter what you do. If something alleviates the pain and helps you feel better, by all means do it. Just do not think that is what healing is. You are simply choosing these agents or this form of magic in order to bring tangible form to your desires, your choice for healing. By no means does this mean you should not choose magic. A big mistake that students of *A Course in Miracles* make is thinking, "I am in pain, but it is all in my mind and I am not going to take anything." That implies that taking magic is evil. Jesus addresses this idea in Chapter 2:

"All material means that you accept as remedies for bodily ills are restatements of magic principles. This is the first step in believing that the body makes its own illness. It is a second misstep to attempt to heal it through non-creative agents. It does not follow, however, that the use of such agents for corrective purposes is evil" (T-2.IV.4:1-4).

This is a very important passage. Jesus is not saying that we should not take an aspirin, go to a doctor, have surgery, or do whatever makes us feel better. He explains:

"Sometimes the illness has a sufficiently strong hold over the mind to render a person temporarily inaccessible to the Atonement. In this case it may be wise to utilize a compromise approach to mind and body, in which something from the outside is temporarily given healing belief. This is because the last thing that can help the non-right-minded, or the sick, is an increase in fear. They are already in a fear-weakened state. If they are prematurely exposed to a miracle, they may be precipitated into panic. This is likely to occur when upside-down perception has induced the belief that miracles are frightening" (T-2.IV.4:5-10).

This is the same idea we have been discussing: the ego's strategy is to convince us that if we remain in our minds we will be struck dead. Therefore we can be safe only by fleeing the wrath of God through making up a world and choosing to be born into a body. Since we all obviously believe we are a body and take care of our bodies and care what other bodies think of our bodies, Jesus is saying not to pretend that we believe otherwise.

In saying "sometimes the illness has a sufficiently strong hold," Jesus is being a little kind because almost *always* the illness has a sufficiently strong hold, otherwise we would not have chosen it. We are terrified of the power of our mind—that is literally what made this world and sustains it. There is that little nagging voice that is always saying, "Don't get back into your mind because if you do you will sin again." And so we all make ourselves totally inept, helpless, powerless, and mindless in the magical hope that will protect us from ever sinning again. Of course the *coup de grâce* of the ego's system is that it takes that sin that we are so terrified of, projects it out, and then we see it in everyone else. So now we have a double protection: I am totally helpless and mindless so there is no way I can sin. How could God accuse me of that when I am so helpless? Not only that, the other person—the "sinner"—is the one with the power, not me. That person is the one who has hurt me.

Thus, making up a world, experiencing ourselves with a body, and experiencing pain, discomfort, and suffering in the body are all part of the ego's strategy to keep us out of our minds—literally and figuratively—because we are all insane. It would be terrifying for us to know—not just intellectually—but to truly *know* that we made this up. Yet knowing this would heal us, because we would understand *why* we made it up; we would realize how stupid it was, and then we would make the other choice.

There is nothing wrong in the compromise approach. As a serious student of *A Course in Miracles*, if you become ill or something is wrong, use whatever form of magic helps you, but just be aware that it is magic. Do not try to force spirituality or metaphysical truth on yourself when you are still anchored in the world and the body. That is just silly. It is not spiritual and ends up making you an absolutely dreadful person to yourself and everyone around you. That is why I often make fun of *Course in Miracles* students—they can be awful in this regard. They have such a difficult time with this because while they may intellectually understand a metaphysical truth, they certainly do not live as if they believe it. That is why the image of a ladder that Jesus gives us in *The Song of Prayer* is so helpful (see S-1.11). The idea of prayer or forgiveness as a ladder means that it is a process, and only right at the top of the ladder do you understand that this whole thing is made up. You know, not just intellectually but experientially, that your self is outside the dream. This is what allows you to go through your days and months and years here without being affected by the world.

That is how Jesus was here. No one *really* knows how he was here, but whatever he looked like, and whatever his experiences were, we can be sure that he knew he was *not* here. That is what being in the real world means, but that does not happen until you reach the top of the ladder. Until you reach that point you are still bound here, and you still stagger into the bathroom every morning and see something in the mirror that you mistakenly think is your self. Some days you may like what you see, but most of the time—especially as you get older—you do not. Either way, you think that what you see is you. But do not pretend that you are not a body; and if you are ill, do whatever helps you get through the day and the rest of your life. As a good Course student, you could at least practice being aware that this is only a compromise approach, until you really know that it is all made up.

It is also true, as I have said in other classes, that when you are near the top of the ladder you do not need the book. The purpose of the book is just to get you up the ladder. When you are close to the top, you no longer need to hear about how ugly and awful the body is and how vicious and murderous special relationships are because you will know at that point that all of this is a dream. You do not have to be motivated to leave the world and the dream because you will already have left it. That is the purpose of this course—to instill in us the motivation to awaken from the dream.

The Course is a form of magic, just as pills are. People form the same special relationship with *A Course in Miracles* as they do with alcohol, food, people, or anything else. They feel they cannot get through the day without their daily workbook lesson, so they have to do a lesson every day for the rest of their lives—or something like that. The Course is meant obviously to be very helpful, but it is not meant to be a crutch. It is meant to be a mind-training device. There is nothing in this book that is any holier than anything else, but people form very special relationships not only with *A Course in Miracles* as a thought system, but with their *book*.

When you are aware of that in yourself, do not make a big deal about it; just say, "What else is new! Of course I am going to form a special relationship with it." Do not be fooled by your ego and do not think it

is going to be any different. I like to remind people that the ego is a 100 percent thought system that does not diminish, just as the Holy Spirit represents a 100 percent thought system that does not diminish. The ego is what it is; it does not shrink. It is hate, murder, suffering, guilt, and pain, just as the Holy Spirit's thought system represents forgiveness, love, and peace. What changes is the amount of time you spend there and the amount of faith that you place in the ego or the Holy Spirit. The ego itself does not change. Thus making progress in this course does not preclude your having massive ego attacks every once in a while. The difference would be that when you have them, you would recognize them for what they are; you would not be devastated by them and you would try not to devastate other people by them. Again, the ego does not shrink. What shrinks or changes is the amount of time, energy, and thought you invest in the ego's thought system.

We can see the purpose of the Course as being to help us to recognize how much better we will feel not spending time with the ego, and how much better we will feel spending time with the Holy Spirit. That is what will motivate us. But that also is what makes the process of this Course long and difficult, because we are not so convinced that we will be better off without our egos. Guilt, seduction, manipulation, special relationships are very old friends and trusted allies; they have gotten us through a lot of miserable periods in our lives, and they even seem to have made us happy from time to time. But they do not bring the peace of God, the happiness does not last, and the love is not really love. But learning and accepting that takes a lot of time. As adults, if we go through a very fearful period, we will exercise what is referred to as regression, when we go back to an earlier stage. In fact, sometimes you see adults sucking their thumb—they have become very frightened and anxious and so they go back to the security that sucking their thumb provided them when they were children. When we are extremely upset we will go back to whatever earlier pattern got us through difficult situations, even though intellectually we know it does not work anymore. That is just standard for the species.

Well, when we get frightened we will go back to what has helped us in the past: the ego. This is powerfully expressed at the end of Chapter 19 where Jesus describes how frightened we become as we stand before the fourth and final obstacle, when the veil is about to be lifted (T-19.IV-D.6). This is the end of the ego, which means the end of this self we think we are. And instead of looking through the veil, our eyes look down remembering our promises to our friends. And who are our friends? Guilt, sin, fear, and death. And then we yearn to jump right back into their arms, not because they are so attractive in themselves, but because of what they offer us: the certainty that this individual self will survive. Thus we think, I don't care how miserable I am as long as I am the one who is miserable. As painful as my sickness, my old age, my mental state, and all the pain that I am feeling may be, it is my pain; and I don't want anyone, including Jesus, to take it away from me. So he has to wait. And the way he waits is to continually present to us the two choices. He says, "Look at what the ego offers you and look at what I am offering you"; and then he waits patiently. Fortunately he does not wait in time, so there is no danger of his running out of patience.

It is important to understand how fearful this course really is and for the healer to understand "the fear of release," which Jesus talks about in the section called "The Function of the Miracle Worker":

"Before miracle workers are ready to undertake their function in this world, it is essential that they fully understand the fear of release. Otherwise they may unwittingly foster the belief that release is imprisonment, a belief that is already very prevalent" (T-2.V.1:1-2).

Our fear is of being released from our guilt, our fear, and the ego thought system. If we do not understand this, we will become impatient and condemnatory with ourselves and others. It is very important to understand our fear of release from the ego's prison because the ego teaches us that release is imprisonment and that imprisonment by the ego is really freedom. At the end of Chapter 7 (T-7.X) and the beginning of Chapter 8 (T-8.II), Jesus talks about the confusion of pain and joy and the difference between imprisonment and freedom. We do not know the differences, so we need a teacher who gently and patiently, with care and love, points them out to us so that we can make the choice ourselves. Jesus is asking us to be just as gentle, caring, and loving with each other as he is with us, and not to be impatient when people are frightened. When people do stupid or vicious things it is not because they are stupid or vicious, but because they are fearful. That is the Holy Spirit's judgment and vision. He does not see sin. He sees expressions of love or calls for love, and calls for love are born out of fear. You can tell how you are doing by seeing how you are with others. Are you impatient and judgmental? If so, that is showing you your own impatience and judgment towards yourself, since the world is "the outside picture of an inward condition" (T-21.in.1:5). How we are with others shows us how we are with ourselves.

We do not accept what this course says, we do not accept the real source of healing, and we do not forgive and let go of our grievances because we are so terrified. We are terrified of the consequence of letting go of the ego thought system, which means we would go back into our minds. That is why we made the world and other people. We need them so that we can project our hatred of ourselves and our guilt onto them, which is why we hate everyone. You must understand that this is the purpose the world and specifically our bodies were made to serve. It will give you a much better appreciation for your own fear. What if you got up in the morning and looked into the mirror and literally did not see anyone, not just visually, but if you *really* knew there was no one there? That is terrifying, and no one would like that. Jesus asks,

"What if you recognized this world is an hallucination? What if you really understood you made it up? What if you realized that those who seem to walk about in it, to sin and die, attack and murder and destroy themselves, are wholly unreal?" (T-20.VIII.7:3-5).

If you are not careful, and if you do not go very slowly and gently, you could become psychotic, because the terror would be too overwhelming. That is why you need a teacher who will go with you very slowly. Jesus is more gentle with us than we would be with ourselves. You must have a proper appreciation of your own fear of release from the ego's imprisonment.