

Miracles versus Magic

Excerpts from the Workshop held at the
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Part X Concluding Discussion

Q: When you talk about the pain of recognizing that you are doing this unto yourself, it sometimes feels not so easy to laugh and step outside of that.

A: That's true. I think what the ego then would have you do is exactly what you are describing, and then that becomes serious, because pain is very serious. Physical and/or emotional pain is very serious. That is something you want to look at also, as it happens, and just see it as something you want to watch. Then, in the end, the most happy fact of all is that we are doing this to ourselves. That is what gives us the power. As long as we think that the world is doing it to us, or the body is doing it to us, or someone else is doing it to us, there is no hope, because there are very few things we can control in this world. However, realizing that we are doing this to ourselves, as the text says: "The secret of salvation is but this: that you are doing this unto yourself" (T-27.VIII.10:1), is the real end of pain, and that is the real hope. Feeling bad, stupid, or guilty about that is exactly what the ego wants. We are taking that seriously. Everything the ego does has as its purpose to take itself seriously.

Again, the reason the ego made the body and a psyche to feel pain, which is the reflection of guilt, which is painful, is that these become tremendous distractions. We all know that when we are in pain, the last thing in the world we want to think of is God. All we want is relief from the pain. That is the underlying and ultimate purpose, because pain is serious. We localize the seriousness of pain to the body, when the real pain is the guilt over the belief that we destroyed Heaven, and that is in our mind. Our physical or psychological pain is magic, and then we take magic to reduce the pain. Then, of course, whatever magic we take in itself becomes a problem, so afterward we have to take magic against the magic, against the magic. We have to take a pill to counteract the effects of the other pill we took.

The ego is clever, devious, and destructive. That is what it is, so do whatever you have to do to alleviate your pain, but also try at the same time to step back and just see where all this fits. It is a comfort to understand that everyone is in the same boat, because everyone is in pain in this world, but in different forms. *Everyone is in pain.* Being in this world is painful. We are all stuck. That is one very helpful way of understanding the shared interests that we all have. We all have the same need and the same goal to escape from the pain of being here. At some point we have to understand that the "here" that we are in is not the body. The "here" that is the real cause of the pain is in the ego thought system, what the early parts of the text call our wrong mind. That is where the pain is.

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Q: But the pain that we are talking about we *want* to have. We are in the exact place that we want to be. Where I am getting a bit confused is, since I want this pain, why do I take something to kill it off?

A: You see, but you are not. What you are doing is taking magic to alleviate the magical symptom without the magical cause, the decision to be an ego. You alleviate one symptom and the ego says, "Oh, isn't that great!" and, bingo, you have another symptom. Then you have to take magic for that, and the ego tells you that magic works, because you had this pain yesterday and you took this pill or did this, and it worked. Now you have a different pain today or perhaps the same pain, so magic again will help.

Q: And if I do not take it, I suffer and become a martyr.

A: Right. And that is magic, too. Everything we do here is magic. The ego is magic. The ego makes up its thought system of guilt and fear to get us to leave the mind voluntarily. It is all magical, its purpose being to solve the problem of the decision maker, which to the ego is a serious problem, because the decision maker has the power to undo the ego, simply by changing its mind. The ego makes up this magical story filled with all kinds of magical figures—a ghost story. It is the mother of ghost stories, because God ends up as the real villain. Then we flee from that into a world, which is a magical way of avoiding the magic of guilt, which is a magical way of avoiding the power of our minds to change. Then we are in this world and we have one problem after another, with one form of magic after another, whether it is the magic of medicine, money, relationships, food, or whatever. It is always something. It works temporarily, which to the ego is great, because that reinforces the idea that magic helps. This means we have a real problem here in the body, and magic will come to the rescue. If magic never worked, then we might be very tempted to go back to the miracle. However, since magic works—at least we think it works—then we keep doing it.

Q: But the magic of the pill and the alleviation of the pain, which is the other layer, can at least get me back to looking.

A: Yes. Obviously, once you are in pain you want to undo the distraction; but it is helpful to see the greater context in which all this happens, and realize, as I was saying earlier, that the real lesson is: I can be at peace; my mind can be peaceful even if I am in pain. That is the lesson we want to learn. Part of that is that we can take a pill to alleviate the pain and still be peaceful. We always want to move as quickly as we can back to the mind, because that is where the issue is.

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Q: What is the process when there is psychological pain?

A: It is the same thing. Do whatever you need to do to alleviate your psychological and/or physical pain, because it is cruel not to. But do not be taken in. Remember, what you believe is the pain is not the pain, and what you believe alleviates the pain does not really alleviate the pain. Try to see it within a larger context. You really have to be kind to yourself, though, because bodies were made to feel pain. We have a very sophisticated sensory apparatus. Our psyches were made to feel pain. Obviously, we all believe that we are bodies, so of course we are going to feel pain. We have an investment in seeing the world as real. Pain is one of the things that make the world very real, and so is pleasure. That makes the world real, which makes the underlying thought real, which is made real because we take it seriously,

and therefore we take the world seriously. It is a trap and there is no way out of it unless we recognize that this is not happening "out here." It is a projection of a decision we make in our mind.

There is no way we can awaken from the dream from within the dream. We cannot awaken from the dream by fighting it or defeating the bad guys, whoever the bad guys or bad things are. We cannot awaken from the dream by making it a better dream—by bringing *A Course in Miracles* to the world, as an example. We can awaken from the dream only by opening our eyes, and we learn how to open our eyes by continually asking Jesus to help us look with him at the world we made. He will teach us that the world is a projection of the inner world we made. Only then can we change our minds about it.

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Q: Could you say, then, that everything we do here is a defense? Even getting dressed in the morning?

A: Yes. Everything we do here is a defense—unless we do it in our right minds; but otherwise, everything here is a defense. You would also have to say that breathing is a defense, and eating and drinking, grooming one's self, etc., are defenses. However, if you see your body as a classroom in which you are going to learn ultimately that you are not a body, then taking care of your body is really allowing yourself to learn the lessons in the classroom you think you are in. Now, the real classroom is in the mind, but we do not know about our minds; we just know about our bodies. Thus, the right-minded correction for the ego's interpretation of the body as a prison is to see it as a classroom. Part of the classroom is—just as when you are a student in a college and attend a class—you get dressed every morning, groom yourself, and do what normal bodies do. It is the same thing here. You have to keep this body alive. As long as we think we are in a body and want to use it for a right-minded purpose, we must take care of the body. As we make our way up the ladder, which means as we learn our lessons more and more, which in turn means undoing our guilt more and more, and smiling more at our ego, we are beginning to understand that the classroom is not in the body at all, because the body does not learn. The classroom is in our mind.

We begin to understand that what we are studying—*A Course in Miracles*—has nothing to do with this book, and that the real learning is occurring in the mind. That is what will help to wean us from our dependence on the book as the book, and the Course as the spiritual path. We will begin to understand that what we are studying, practicing, and applying is really a projection of what is going on in our mind. It is that relationship with the symbol we call Jesus, who represents the purity of our right mind and the Love of God in our right mind that is our teacher. That is where the learning is going on. That is what will help us become less and less dependent on the book. We will be very grateful for this course, and for this book, because it will have gotten us to the point where we will not need it anymore—at least not the way we used to, because we are now internalizing what we are learning. At the very end, we realize that we *are* the book, because *we are the love that is the source of the book*. That happens at the very top of the ladder. That is the real world.