

"Rules for Decision" (T-30.I)

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Part IX Rule 2 (cont.)

(T-17.VI.4:1-2) The value of deciding in advance what you want to happen is simply that you will perceive the situation as a means to *make* it happen. [So now you will see the situation is the means that will bring you the end that you have already chosen.] **You will therefore make every effort to overlook what interferes with the accomplishment of your objective, and concentrate on everything that helps you meet it.**

When you set the goal of truth for yourself, you realize that you don't want an illusion. For example, let's say I'm in a relationship with you and I have set up in my mind, ahead of time, that forgiveness is what I want to come from this relationship. I want to understand that your interests and mine are not separate. I want to understand that I cannot find happiness at your expense, that you are not an object that I want to use to meet my own needs—physical or emotional—and that you and I are really part of a larger whole. I am not separate from you, and you are not separate from me. If that is my goal, what I want to learn, then I will overlook anything that occurs between you and me that smacks of specialness. When Jesus says "overlook," he does not mean that you don't look. In fact, he means just the opposite: you look at it, but you overlook the ego's interpretation of it. You don't give it any power.

I will then see things that you say or do that yesterday, with the goal of specialness in my mind, I would have seized on and made the focal point of my attention as a way of proving that you are a terrible person, and that all you want to do is hurt me, abandon me, and reject me. I will now see all that and say, "Isn't that silly?" Maybe that is what you are doing, but that is your call for help and your call for help is a mirror of *my* call for help." That is what Jesus means by "overlooking what interferes with the accomplishment of your objective." It doesn't mean that you don't see the ego in the other person, nor does it mean that you don't see the ego in yourself. In fact, if you are going to do this right, you *must* see the ego in yourself. But then the idea is not to make a big deal about it—don't judge it, don't condemn yourself or someone else for it.

To repeat, this doesn't mean that you don't look at what is going on between you and the other person. But now that guilt is not your goal, you will not make the ego in the other person or the ego in yourself into something prominent. You will not use this as a way of justifying your own belief in specialness. You will see that what the other person is doing is simply part of your classroom: ordinarily it would have tempted you to make your specialness real, but now you say: "This is something that I can choose to see differently." And so you "overlook what interferes with the accomplishment of your objective, and concentrate on everything that helps you meet it." If my objective is to see that you and I share a

common interest and that we share the same goal, and you do something that appears to make you different from me, I will now realize that you are *not* different from me. Maybe you are different from me in *form*, in your *behavior*, but you are not different from me in the sense that we both share the same split mind. We both have a part of us that is attracted to the ego, and we both have a part of us that wants to return home with the Holy Spirit. That makes us the same. So I don't deny what I am seeing or experiencing or hearing. But I do deny that what I am seeing makes a difference. This is not a course in denying. It is a course in really looking directly at all the negative thoughts and feelings in myself and in someone else, and then realizing they don't make any difference.

As we practice that, what we are really practicing, as I said before, is the return to that original ontological moment when we looked at the "tiny, mad idea" and said: "This is serious." We could just as easily have looked at the "tiny, mad idea" and said: "This is silly." There is a part of our minds in which we did that. And that is the part we want to access. The way to access it is to continually practice right where we believe we are—with all the relationships and circumstances in our lives right now. We are not to deny the obvious differences, but rather that they make a difference. No matter how hateful and vicious our thoughts or behavior might be, they are nothing more than a reflection of the original "tiny, mad idea." And we can either see them as something serious, whereby we call them sinful, which then means that they have to be punished in you or in me, or we see them simply as silly thoughts that have no effect at all, because the truth that underlies our seeming differences is the truth that we are all one in God's Love.

If that is my goal, what I want to learn, then I will see whatever happens between you and me as something which will bring me closer to that goal, and I will be grateful for it. It doesn't mean on the level of form that I am grateful for your hatred and your viciousness. What I am grateful for is the opportunity for this dream, this classroom I have chosen, in which Jesus now teaches me that regardless of what you do, I can still be at peace. When he says in the Course: "Take me as your model for learning," that is what he means. Take me as the model so that when you are tempted to feel unfairly treated, you will think of me and you will realize that there is another way of looking at what is going on.

Let's turn to the workbook for a moment, to Lesson 24: "I do not perceive my own best interests." I will read the first two paragraphs which basically echo what we have been talking about in the "Rules for Decision" and in "Setting the Goal."

(W-pl.24.1:1-2) In no situation that arises do you realize the outcome that would make you happy. Therefore, you have no guide to appropriate action, and no way of judging the result.

Because we get everything backwards, we think that "appropriate action" is what will satisfy our needs and make us happy. "Appropriate action" is whatever will teach us the Holy Spirit's lessons of forgiveness. In other words, the situation is the means that will help us serve the goal that we have set.

(W-pl.24.1:3-4) What you do is determined by your perception of the situation, and that perception is wrong [because, again, the way we will perceive the situation is in terms of what will meet our specialness needs]. It is inevitable, then, that you will not serve your own best interests.

Our *real* own best interest is to undo our ego and to really find peace. That is the last thing in the world the ego wants.

(W-pl.24.1:5-6) Yet they are your only goal in any situation which is correctly perceived [namely, your own best interests]. Otherwise, you will not recognize what they are.

So we see everything in the world as what will meet our separate special interests, not the interest that will restore to us the awareness that we are all one and that what happens to one affects everyone.

(W-pl.24.2:1-2) If you realized that you do not perceive your own best interests, you could be taught what they are. But in the presence of your conviction that you do know what they are, you cannot learn.

So much of the Course is geared towards having us understand that we don't know anything. Near the end of the text there is a passage that summarizes this emphatically: "There is no statement that the world is more afraid to hear than this: *I do not know the thing I am, and therefore do not know what I am doing, where I am, or how to look upon the world or on myself*" (T-31.V.17:6-7). What this really says is that I have made everything up, and therefore I can understand nothing. That is a Course—classic statement of undoing the seeming certainty and arrogance of the ego. However, the ego will respond with: "Well, if you don't know who you are, that must mean you are nothing—because if you are not with me, you are nothing." The ego purpose in this then is to make you very confused and frightened. What the ego doesn't tell you is that if you are not with it (the ego), you will be with God. The ego tries to confuse you about not being confused. Confusion is a defense against knowing the truth. There is first a fear of knowing the truth, and then the confusion is a defense against that.

Let me just elaborate on this a little more. The ego would have us believe that we really *do* understand the difference between what is true and what is false, what is important for me, and what is not important. So that the most important thing, to repeat, is to understand that we *don't* understand. That is what Jesus means by the difference between humility and arrogance, which is an important theme in the Course. Arrogance says: "I *do* know, I *do* understand." Arrogance says: "I can read this course once or twice or five times and understand what it says." Humility says: "I don't have a clue as to what I am about, therefore how can I have a clue as to what this course is about?"

So much of this, as is so clearly stated in this passage, is helping us realize that we don't know. But if we think we know, we will not believe we have to be taught. Therefore, how can Jesus help us with this course? This is a *teaching* course. This is a spiritual path that aims directly at *teaching*, which means as a student of this path you have to be open to being taught. If you think you already know what the world is, if you think you already know what forgiveness is, there is no way this course will teach it to you. There is no way that anyone will teach it to you, because you are already so sure you understand. I said earlier that people think there are different valid interpretations of this course. If this is what you think, you will never learn what this course means, because you will think that your interpretation is valid because it is *your* interpretation and that is fine. It is *not* fine. You will not know what the Course is teaching you precisely because you are so damn sure that you understand it. Consequently, you will not be open to being taught.

This is a course in teaching with Jesus as the teacher, and his message comes through these books. If you think you already understand them, how are you going to learn from them? Then you will even think that you can teach it! What he is saying is that it is very important that you understand that you don't understand. You don't understand your best interests, so how could you understand a course whose purpose is to teach you how much you don't know, and how insane you are. And simply being in

this world is proof that you are insane! Thinking that you have a brain that *thinks* is insane, because the brain doesn't think: the brain is the reflection, or the shadow of a thought system in your mind. But if you are mindless, how can you know that there is a problem?

This is not a course that you can master on an intellectual level. There is no question it is written on a high intellectual level, and it is meant to be studied and thought about. But if you think that the understanding comes from your thinking about it, you are going to miss the whole point. Your understanding will come *in spite of* your thinking about it. What makes this such a powerful spiritual tool is that it seems to be doing *one* thing, when it really does the exact opposite. It is written, again, on an intellectual level, and is meant to be studied over and over again. Jesus told Helen and Bill: "Study these notes. You are not studying these notes and that is why what happened to you yesterday happened—because you didn't study what I dictated to you." So he wanted these "notes" to be studied just as a text in college is studied. But as you study, you will begin to realize over a period of time that you are learning the exact opposite of what you think you are doing. This is a course that will lead you beyond your intellect and your brain to an experience of love. And so as you go through the process of studying and practicing it, and doing exactly what it says, you will be led on a journey that is the exact opposite of what you think you are doing. This is a journey that will lead you, by its very nature, to the heart of the problem, which is your mind.

That is why when people try to change this course around (e.g., come up with a different way of doing the workbook or a different way of studying the text), they are not aware that they are tampering with the very heart and soul of this book, because the curriculum is to do exactly what Jesus says here: study the text as he gives it, do the workbook as he says you should do it. The very fact that you do it that way would automatically lead you on the journey with him as your guide. When you change it around, when you write abridged versions and shorten it, what you really are doing is attacking this course and its author by saying: "I can do this better than he did. You don't need 365 lessons; you need x amount of lessons. There are shortcuts to studying this text. You don't have to wade through all this—after all it is only the same stuff over and over again." What you are really doing is subverting the pedagogical process which again is the meat of the Course. The shortcut to this course is that there is no shortcut! You should do it exactly the way it is given. Why would you want to do it differently, unless you thought you could do a better job than he could? It is not sinful if you do it differently. It is not sinful if you do the workbook lessons backwards; it is just another reflection of your authority problem. You won't be punished for it, but you won't find peace or truth either. One of the best ways of learning this course is to observe how subtle your ego will be in trying to subvert it, change it, distort it, and make it into your own image, rather than growing into the image that he gives you.

Doing the Course the way he gave it is the way that you will "unlearn" your ego. And you don't have to understand how that happens—it will happen in spite of your seeming understanding. There is that wonderful line in the text: "You are still convinced that your understanding is a powerful contribution to the truth, and makes it what it is" (T-18.IV.7:5). That is another line the ego hates, because we are always trying to understand. The way to understand this course is to do what it says, which is to look at your specialness and your guilt with the love of Jesus beside you. *That* is how you will understand this course. Understanding is not achieved through intellectual mastery of its principles. You can spout back the Course perfectly and not have a clue as to what it says. You don't have to distort the Course by changing what it says intellectually: you can give back exactly what it says intellectually, but you won't understand what it is saying, because you have not become part of the process. The intellectual mastery

of the Course is the stepping stone towards the experience the Course will give you. This is a very carefully conceived and well-thought-out curriculum: don't try to change it. Simply do what it says as best you can. The learning and the understanding will come from another part of your mind—it certainly won't come from your brain.

(W-pl.24.2:3) The idea for today [I do not perceive my own best interests] is a step toward opening your mind so that learning can begin.

To say that the purpose of the Course is to open your mind is to say that it is a course in undoing. In the teacher's manual Jesus states that "true learning" in this world is "unlearning" (M-4.X.3:7). You don't have to be taught anything, because truth is already present in your mind via the Holy Spirit. You have to be taught to "unlearn" what the ego made in the place of truth. This is about opening our minds, because our minds are closed shut. That is another way of saying what it means to be "mindless." Our minds close shut on guilt, then put it outside, and now we are so positive that we understand what goes on in this world. We understand how to survive in this world, because we live in a world that seems to be outside us—that seems to be hostile and threatening to us. It is a world in which we experience ourselves as extremely vulnerable. We are so sure we understand how things work in this world. We are so sure we understand how the body works. We have all these brilliant scientists that are so clear about how the body works. They are all dead-wrong! The body doesn't work within itself, the body works because the mind tells it that it should work that way.

The reason that this coin falls when I drop it is not the law of gravity. Practically everybody in this world will tell you that this coin falls because of the law of gravity. That's not true. The coin falls because we made up a world with a law of gravity which results in objects falling, because that is another way of proving that this is a lawful world that obeys principles that always hold. The whole thing is made up! The reason the coin falls is that we chose to listen to the ego. And then step by step from that belief, from that choice, we made up a world that mirrors the ego's thought system. The law of gravity is not a law. It is a distortion of a law. The body doesn't work for all the reasons people say it works: The body works because we chose the ego instead of the Holy Spirit.

If you really want to make a meaningful change in the world, change your mind. To quote the famous line: "...seek not to change the world, choose to change your mind about the world" (T-21.in.1:7). If you are serious about wanting to change the world, change yourself—because you are the world. There is no world outside, remember. There is no world outside you, so why do you want to change a world that doesn't exist? You want to change your mind, or a thought that *tells* you there is a world out there. Change your mind, then your mind will be totally identified with love. And then that presence of love will be reflected in the dream, and will work through you, so that you will act lovingly in the world. But your only focus will be on the Love of God in your mind. That is very simple—you don't have to worry about the world. Love will work through you and will guide you in the world with no effort on your part at all. Because of the widespread misunderstanding of these principles it is worth noting again that the Course's concentration on my reaction to what you do in no way supports an attitude of indifference toward what is going on in the world. On the contrary, once my ego thoughts are out of the way, love will be expressed through me, and therefore I will automatically do what is in everyone's best interests, instead of being motivated solely by the urgency to have my specialness needs fulfilled. But for this to happen you first must have the attitude of humility that says: "I do not understand anything." That way you are opening your mind so you can be taught. If you have the attitude of being a little child, as Jesus

continually tells his students in the Course, then as a little child you will learn. That is the attitude you should have: I am a little baby and don't understand anything, but thank God, there is this loving brother within me who will teach me. And that teaching comes from within me; it doesn't come from outside me.