

The Meaning of Judgment

Excerpts from the Workshop held at the
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Part I

This workshop is basically a companion to the other workshop I have given on judgment called "To Judge or Not to Judge." We will end up in the same place, but we will approach it a little differently. I would like to structure this around four different kinds of judgment, three of which are directly articulated in *A Course in Miracles*, and the fourth, which is actually the second type of judgment in the sequence we will be discussing, is implied all the way through.

The first is the ego's dream of judgment, based on the idea that we could be separate from God. It is a way of judging God as inadequate, if not puny. The ego in all its great might has brought God to His knees, usurped His authority, and made up its own world. This judgment is based on differences, which are all different forms of attack.

I am going to skip the second type of judgment here and come back to it shortly. The Course refers to the third type as the judgment of the Holy Spirit, discussed most clearly in "The Judgment of the Holy Spirit" (T-12.I) and "The Equality of Miracles" (T-14.X), sections we will not be reviewing in this workshop. We are all asked to share this judgment, which sees everyone and everything in this world as either expressing the Love of God or calling for It. There is no attack in this kind of perception.

The fourth judgment the Course speaks about is called the Last Judgment, the Final Judgment, or God's Judgment (e.g., T-2.VIII; W-pII.10). This judgment occurs at the very end of the process of the Atonement. It states that "what is false is false, and what is true has never changed" (W-pII.10.1:1). This judgment ends the dream entirely. It is the pure expression of the Atonement principle: the separation never happened. Once we have accepted and identified with the judgment of the Holy Spirit, God's Final Judgment is just a wisp away. In the Course's metaphorical description, God reaches down and lifts us back unto Himself—God's last step.

The crucial issue, however, is how to get from the first judgment—the ego's dream of judgment—to the third judgment, the Holy Spirit's perception of everything as either an expression of love or a call for love. We will spend a great deal of time talking about this second kind of judgment. It does not have a name in the Course, but it is reflected

throughout. This is the judgment we make when we look at the ego's judgment and recognize that all of our thoughts and judgments have had no effect. I will elaborate on this later. Without this intermediate step it is impossible ever to know truly what the Holy Spirit's judgment is about. One of the mistakes students make when they begin working with the Course is to think it is easy to go from the first to the third type of judgment—from the ego's judgment of differences, specialness and attack, to the Holy Spirit's judgment that recognizes everyone as the same, where the only seeming difference is that people either express love or call for it.

Anyone who has worked seriously with *A Course in Miracles* for a period of time recognizes that it is not easy to shift from our ego judgments to the Holy Spirit's judgment. An interim step is needed. Again, that is the judgment we will be addressing. This kind of judgment is expressed very clearly in one of the important definitions the Course gives for the process of forgiveness: "Forgiveness . . . is still and quietly does nothing. It merely looks, and waits, and judges not" (W-p11.1.4:1,3). Jesus' repeatedly urging us to take his hand and to look with him on the ego's darkness is this second form of judgment. It does not deny the ego thoughts that we express in the world—all the thoughts of violence, viciousness, and murder.

This step recognizes that all of our thoughts ultimately can have no effect on our inner peace. That allows us then to look out on the world and truly see that everyone here is either expressing love or calling for it. Without this second judgment, the third and fourth steps are absolutely impossible. When I say, as I have said many times, don't skip over steps, this is the step I am speaking of. It means that we really look at the fact that we judge all the time.

My earlier workshop poses the question whether "to judge or not to judge"; and the obvious answer seems to be that we should not judge. But that is the *wrong* answer. The right answer is not only should we judge, but there is no way we can avoid judging, because that is what this world is. This whole world rests on the premise that our judgment of God and of God's Son is valid. So first we really want to be able to judge and not feel guilty about it; that is inherent in this second step. We look at all the judgments we make against other people, ourselves, Jesus, and God, but without judging ourselves for making those judgments—in other words, without feeling guilty.

We will use as our basic text for this workshop the section called "The Forgiving Dream" (T-29.IX), which will enable us to review these four steps. But before turning to that, I would like to discuss the steps in a little more detail: first, the ego's dream of judgment; then looking with Jesus at these judgments without feeling guilty, which allows us then to look at everyone in the world as our brother or sister in Christ; and, finally, the end of the process, the Atonement, the recognition that everything in this world is an illusion.

The entire ego thought system began with the initial judgment that came when the "tiny, mad idea" seemed to arise within the mind of God's Son. Before that, God and His Son

dwelled in Heaven together in a unity so perfect that it would be impossible even to speak of God as a Creator or Source distinct from Christ, His Effect or His Son. In other words, no differentiation is possible in Heaven. Judgment, of course, is always based on differentiation. All of our judgments entail comparing one person to another, or one series of events to another, or one object to another, etc. Our entire world of perception rests upon this. That is why there is no perception and no judgment in Heaven.

When the Course speaks about God's Judgment, it is meant as the expression of this perfect Oneness. God's presence as perfect unity and perfect Love, and the presence of Christ as forever one with God's Oneness and God's Love is the judgment on everything that the ego thinks. And that judgment simply says "what is false [the thought of separation] is false and what is true [the reality of the oneness of Heaven] has never changed" (W-pII.10.1:1). But when the "tiny, mad idea" seemed to arise, all of a sudden duality appeared. And that was the birth of judgment.

The Son of God now began to experience himself in relation to—as separate from—his Creator and Source. And he did not experience that relationship in a very nice way. He saw himself as lacking, with God unfairly having what he did not have, but that he now had the power to steal from God what he believed was coming to him. And so the Son became the creator and source of life. He became the one who existed on his own. That was the birth of the ego. In that instant, God became the Son's effect, for the Son was now God's cause. The Course refers to this as usurping God's role. The Son sets himself up as his own creator, so that God, as He truly is, ceases to exist, at least within the Son's mind. God is no longer the Source of all Being. The Son now is.

The initial judgment is that there is an unfair or unjust difference between God and me, which leaves me in a state of scarcity or lack. My ego concludes that I am lacking the creatorship, of being on the throne, because God has deprived me of it. Therefore I am justified in taking back from God what is rightfully mine. That is the initial judgment. One of the most crucial things to understand about this initial judgment is that it is based upon differences. Before the "tiny, mad idea" seemed to arise there was no separated consciousness that could observe, perceive, or think about any differences.

Skipping ahead a few steps now: From this "tiny, mad idea" and its initial dream of judgment arose the whole physical universe. When Jesus says in *A Course in Miracles* that this world is an illusion, he means that the entire physical universe is an illusion. It is unreal. We know it is unreal because the world we see and experience is a place of differences. That is how we perceive. It is extremely important in working with *A Course in Miracles* that we recognize that everything in the world is completely unreal. As a result, any thought that God or the Holy Spirit does anything in this world must be false. If They did anything in this world for us, They

would be insane, because They would be making the world of duality real, which would compromise Their own integrity as pure spirit that is perfectly one.

The entire world of time and space—a world of differences—arises from the thought that the Son could be different from God. We *are* the world that we believe we come into when we are born. But we do not "come into" this world; the world comes from the projection of the thought of separation and differences within our minds. That is why the principle, "Ideas leave not their source" (T-26.VII.4:7), is so crucial for understanding the Course's teaching. The world is nothing more than the projection of this thought of separation and guilt. And it has not left its source within our minds, where we also remain—which means there is no world out there.

The judgment we all make is that there is a world into which we come, a world within which we experience ourselves, outside our minds, which will exist after we die. We will explore this in more detail later. But this entire world is a dream of judgment. It is a dream because it is outside the reality of God's Mind; and it is a judgment because anything outside God's Mind must be perceived as different from It—and that is a judgment.

It is impossible for us to exist in this world without these kinds of judgments. Our world is indeed a world of perception. We all perceive ourselves in relationship to others and to things that are outside us, and Jesus is not saying we should deny that this is our experience. Near the beginning of the text he says that it is practically impossible to deny our physical experience in this world (T-2.IV.3:10). But he is asking us to look at it differently, as we will see. The point is that we cannot exist in this world as separated individuals—believing we each have a real body and a personality distinct from other people's bodies and personalities—and not judge. And we are all very good at denying how much we judge. A clear example of how students of the Course fall into this trap occurred when the Gulf War broke out. Some students would say to other students who expressed concern about what was happening in the Persian Gulf, "What war? There's no war out there. By saying there's a war out there, watching a news program and talking about it, you're giving it a reality it doesn't have." They were not aware that they were making an even worse judgment, because they were saying, "There is something terrible out there that I do not wish to see. And therefore I will spiritualize it and say that *A Course in Miracles* says that everything is unreal here, that no one is different, that war is impossible; therefore there is no war out there." From a metaphysical level, that of course is true; but no one here in the world, with very, very few exceptions, is on that level.

And so we are not asked to deny the judgments we make, which is why it is so important to speak about this intervening step between the ego's dream of judgment and the Holy Spirit's judgment: being willing to learn to be comfortable with all the judgments we make. And initially that means understanding that simply being in this world, waking up in the morning

and believing that we have awakened here, is a judgment and an attack. We are saying, "I believe that I am at home here in my bed." The truth is that we are really at home in God, and we would not be dreaming that we are awakening at home in our bedroom if we did not want to leave God. If everything occurs within our minds and everything is a choice, as *A Course in Miracles* tells us over and over again, then simply believing that we are here in the world is an attack thought. It is an attack thought that says I prefer to be here rather than with God, my Creator and Source. And worse than that, I am saying I not only believe that I want to be here and that I can be here, but I believe that I actually *am* here, which means I am here at God's expense. I have usurped His place. I have killed Him off and placed myself on His throne.

Simply taking a breath conceals this vicious attack thought, this judgment that says I am separate from God; I am better than He is; and my individuality and my existence have been bought at His expense. Now this does not mean we should feel guilty because we take a breath every 15 or 20 seconds, or that we awaken in the morning and feel good. It does mean that we should not delude ourselves into thinking that all these experiences are holy or spiritual, that they are real and that, above all, they are free from judgment. We cannot do anything in this world without judgment, because that is what being in this world is about. So the answer is not that we should not judge. The answer is that we should learn how to be comfortable with all the judgments we do make, because only then can we move beyond them.

Let me add another ingredient, which has to do with the mechanism of denial. Once we believe we are really here, as I have been saying, we assume that we, and not God, are the creator and source of our own being. The guilt involved is enormous, because the ego tells us we cannot kill God and expect to get off scot-free. This is the birthplace of our guilt, followed by the terrifying fear that when God catches up with us, He will destroy us. So to protect ourselves from the horror of our guilt that comes from the awesomeness of the sin of seizing God's throne, we all make believe we have not done it. That is the mechanism of *denial or repression*. And an inexorable law of the ego mind is that once we deny something we must project it out.

So we first judge ourselves for attacking God, but then we say, "No, I am not the one who has done this terrible thing. Someone else has done it." We take our own guilt over believing that we have attacked God by separating ourselves from Him, and we project it out. We find someone else to blame for it; and then we are no longer aware of the origin of this dream of judgment in our own minds. We believe the dream is reality and that it exists on the outside, external to us. But the truth is that the dream of judgment has never left its source within our minds. We do not remember it, but we are still the ones who are dreaming this dream of judgment, sin, and attack—of murdering God. And on His slain corpse we erect our own self.

The basic problem is that we first judge ourselves as sinful, and then we say this is so terrible we will never look at it again. Then we protect the thought by hiding it from ourselves. The thought is so horrible and so anxiety-inducing that we make a vow never to look at it again: the first level of protecting it. Then we take the thought, project it out and put it on someone else: the second level of protecting it. And so we never accept responsibility for the thought, because we no longer know about it anymore. We have pushed it into our unconscious. We tell ourselves, "I am not the one who has done this; someone else has done it. I am not the one who is sinful; someone else has sinned against me. I am not the one who made the mistake; I am not the one who made the wrong turn, or did this, that, or the other thing. Someone else did it." In other words, we protect the judgment. And as long as we protect the judgment it will never be healed. That is why this second form of judgment is so important. We have to learn to be aware—not that we are in truth miserable sinners, wretched creatures of specialness who want to destroy everyone—but we *believe* we are. There is a big difference. This is not the way God sees us. In fact, God does not see us at all. This is the way we see ourselves. But once having seen ourselves this way, we then deny the thought and put it onto someone else, which means that we are protecting it. This is what we mean psychologically when we describe someone as being *defensive*. A defensive person puts up a wall when something said to him causes him to feel threatened. The person is really saying, "Don't come near me. This thought of sin and this judgment that I am making against myself is so raw that I cannot look at it, and I don't want you looking at it either." This is really what it means to be defensive. It is an attitude of protecting the thought that I am a terrible person. This is not how God or Jesus sees us; it is how we see ourselves. But if we refuse to recognize what we believe about ourselves, we can never change our minds about that belief.

That is why we cannot simply go from the ego's dream of judgment to the Holy Spirit's judgment that everyone is calling for love or expressing love. It is essential that we first train ourselves—and *A Course in Miracles* is that training program—to look at the thought system of the ego. This is not a course in denial or in making believe that terrible things do not happen in the world, which express the terrible thoughts that go on in the mind of the Son. Over and over again Jesus uses very strong words such as *murder* and *vicious* to describe the ego thought system. He is not saying this is a wonderful world. How can it be a wonderful world if it was made to escape from God? How can it be a wonderful world if it serves to protect us so that we never actually look at the underlying dream of judgment, which is unreal but which we *believe* is real? How can this be a wonderful world if it stands in the way of healing?

In working with the Course, we want to develop an attitude of being able to look with open eyes at what the world is—whether on an international level, an interpersonal level, or a personal level within our own minds. The goal of *A Course in Miracles* is to have us be able to look at these ego thoughts without judgment. When that judgment is gone, when we can

really look at all the hate and specialness in us—the need to be so important, all the demands we make to be treated as if we were important—without judging ourselves or feeling guilty about these thoughts, without being afraid of any kind of punishment, then they will disappear because the basic ego thought is unreal. The basic thought that underlies the entirety of the ego thought system—and that constitutes the basic premise underlying the entire physical universe—is an unreal thought. It is a thought that says that we can really push God around and bring Him to His knees, establishing ourselves as God. And if we can look at that for what it is, without judgment, we will realize, as the text says at one point, "It is a joke to think that time can come to circumvent eternity, which *means* there is no time" (T-27.VIII.6:5). In other words, the "tiny, mad idea" that gave rise to this world is just that: *tiny* because it is insignificant, with no power and no effect, and *mad* because it is insane. The ego cannot pull off the impossible. It can lead us to believe that the impossible has happened, but it cannot make it happen. But if we do not look at it, then we do not know what it really is.

So the purpose of *A Course in Miracles* is to have us reach the point where we can truly look at the ego. And when we do, it will disappear as the Course says, back "into the nothingness from which it came . . ." (M-13.1:2). At that point, the Holy Spirit's judgment becomes a reality for us. Since we then have only the Love of Christ within us and experience only Jesus' love for us within our minds, when we look out on the world we see the way he sees. And we understand, as the text explains, that every attack is really an expression of fear (T-2.VI.7:1). And underneath the fear is the call for love that has been denied, which means that we now look out on the world and see everyone as either asking for love or expressing love. And so our response is always the same.

Whether you are asking me for love or expressing love to me, as your brother in Christ, I will extend love to you. I will no longer see any differences. The superficial differences will not matter to me. All that will matter is that you are either calling for love or expressing love. Then the love in me greets you—my response is always the same. That is the judgment of the Holy Spirit. From there, the Course explains, God reaches down and lifts us back unto Himself as the whole dream disappears. Again, what allows these third and fourth steps—the Holy Spirit's judgment and God's Final Judgment—to occur is this second step of looking without judgment at our ego thought system, with all its ugliness, viciousness, and unkindness. But we look at it with a smile that says these thoughts have no effect on Who I am, no effect on my relationship with Jesus, and therefore no effect on my relationship with God.