

True Empathy

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Part VII

Commentary on the Section "True Empathy" (T-16.I)

(Paragraph 4 - Sentences 1-2) True empathy is of Him Who knows what it is. You will learn His interpretation of it if you let Him use your capacity for strength, and not for weakness.

True empathy is always a lack of differences; it's always true joining. The onus is always placed upon us. It is not the Holy Spirit's responsibility; it is *my* responsibility. I must let Him teach me the proper way of looking at this situation. I have used the power of my mind for weakness, and have reinforced it through seeing weakness in everyone else. The Holy Spirit will use that power to join with Him, so my perceptions are based upon strength instead of weakness.

Let's look in the teacher's manual at a particularly difficult passage that is an answer to the question: "**Should healing be repeated?**" (M-7) The question is based on the idea that someone is sick, and I have had a healing thought, that is, I don't buy into the sickness. But the symptom stays, and then I say, "Oh, this didn't work. I should do it again." I'm obviously still seeing the sickness as resting in the physical symptom.

(M-7 - Paragraph 4 - Sentences 1-5) One of the most difficult temptations to recognize is that to doubt a healing because of the appearance of continuing symptoms is a mistake in the form of lack of trust. As such it is an attack. Usually it seems to be just the opposite. It does appear unreasonable at first to be told that continued concern is attack. It has all the appearances of love.

This is exactly what we've been talking about. When I believe there is a problem in you that has to be solved or you won't be peaceful—which is another way of saying that if your problem is not resolved I won't be peaceful—I'm once again seeing the problem as external. I'm seeing the thought of separation as real, I'm seeing you as different and separate from me, and I'm judging that. There is no love in that. By empathizing with your pain and suffering, I'm identifying with weakness, and reinforcing a belief in differences. That's what this means; it doesn't seem to be that "continued concern" is really an attack, because it looks like love.

(M-7 - Paragraph 4 - Sentence 6) Yet love without trust is impossible, and doubt and trust cannot coexist.

One way of understanding what the Course means by "trust"—a word which is used often—is that no matter what my ego has done and no matter what your ego has done, the Love of Christ has not been changed at all. That's what trust is. To have listened to the Holy Spirit right at the beginning would have been to say: I trust what You are saying. Despite all these thoughts that I'm having, I realize they have had no effect upon the reality of God; they have had no effect on the reality of myself as God's child.

Despite all the cacophony and the dissonance that I believe is so real, "not one note in Heaven's song has been missed." Nothing has happened.

"Trust" in this world, in our experience here, would be knowing that no matter what is going on within you, no matter what is going on within me, the light of Christ that joins us both as one has not been changed; it has not been severed. Nothing has altered the fact that you and I are both children of the same Father. That is what trust is.

When the Course says "I trust my brothers who are one with me" (W-pl.181.Heading,6:5; W-pl.rIV.201.1:1), it does not mean that we trust their egos. Don't ever take anything in the Course to mean that you should trust people's egos. Jesus says, "Frightened people can be vicious" (T-3.1.4:2). What he's saying is: Trust that, regardless of what another ego is doing to you, or what *your* ego is doing, it has no effect upon our shared reality as love. Another way to say it is: I trust that no matter what you are doing to me or to my loved ones, the peace of God within me is not being affected. If I choose to identify with the love of Jesus, no matter what you do, it will have no effect on me. That's what trust is.

In the specific context of this passage it means that I trust that regardless of the fact that your body may have AIDS and may be dying, despite all the pain that I perceive you in, it is having no effect on the fact that your mind is still totally joined with me, that your mind is still at one with God, and that all of this is nothing more than a dream. It doesn't mean that I don't pay attention to you, or do things behaviorally, but I don't let what is happening to you have any effect on the love and the peace of God inside me. If it does have an effect, then I'm giving you a power over me that you don't have.

If I let your problem have an effect on me, one of the forms of which would be that I am concerned and upset and I can't sleep at night because I'm worrying about you, then I am saying: "You, not I, have the power to take the peace of God away from me. My mind is not powerful enough to take away the peace of God; *your* mind is." In other words, I am impotent, I am weak. The very thing that can save me I have now said has no power.

By saying I am concerned about you and upset by what you're going through, I'm giving you the power to take God's peace away from me, which means I am not able to accept responsibility for my own choice to separate myself from the Love of God; I'm dumping that responsibility onto you. That is not loving. I want the blame to rest on you so I can go before God and say, "The reason I'm so unhappy and miserable and separate from You is not a decision I have made for which I am responsible. It's something somebody else did to me, and that's why I'm upset and why I don't feel Your Love."

The same dynamic is in force when there's an apparent healing. Someone gave a personal example of working with people who are going into surgery for a transplant and then getting very excited when the operation has been successful.

It's the exact same thing. What I'm saying in this example is that something outside me has the power to make me happy. If the operation doesn't work, I will feel bad. I'll feel guilty, responsible, sorry, etc. If the operation succeeds, then I'll feel happy. I'm letting my peace of mind and the Love of God within me rest upon a whim, whether it's the doctor, God, or the patient doesn't matter. I have now seen myself as a victim who simply has to stand by waiting to see if this person will be healed physically or not. There's no love in that, because I am allowing myself to be dependent on somebody else. I will love the person if he gets well, I will hate him if he doesn't. That's the way we function most of the time, but there's no

love in that. I am denigrating and depreciating the power of my mind, and I'm giving that power to somebody else. If that person has the power I don't have, then by the laws of specialness, which are the laws that govern everything in this world, I must hate him for it. Then I say, "Why does he have that power and I don't? Not because I gave it to him, but because he took it from me. Therefore, he deserves my attack so I can get it back from him."

That's what, on a totally different level, is meant by the axiom "dependency breeds contempt." We hate the people we are dependent on, because we feel our salvation rests on them. They have the power to make me happy or sad. That they have the power and I don't is a reliving of the original moment when I looked at God and said, "He has the power I don't have. And why does He have it and I don't? Because He took it from me. Therefore I'm justified in hating Him and stealing it back from Him." That's what we relive over and over again. So I pray for you, I minister to you, I take care of you, and if you feel good and you get better, then I feel fine. If you don't, I feel terrible. Thus I place myself at your mercy, which is not a very nice place to be. Again, to have concern is not love; it is really an attack.

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Let's go back to "**True Empathy**" in the text now.

(Paragraph 4 - Sentence 5) You are not sure that He will do His part, because you have never yet done yours completely.

This is why we do not trust Jesus, why we don't trust the Holy Spirit, or the Course, and why we complain that all we get are a lot of empty promises—this Course doesn't do what it claims it will do, I'm not feeling any better, etc. All this, of course, is a projection of the fact that we believe we have failed God. We accuse ourselves of having turned our backs on Him. And because of that we project the blame onto Him and say, "He has turned His back on me."

Whenever you begin to doubt what the Course is teaching you, or what your experiences of Jesus or the Holy Spirit are, and you feel somehow that you'll do better on your own, you are reflecting the original ego thought: I will do better on my own; I don't need God. Our doubts about the Holy Spirit's efficacy in helping us have nothing to do with Him; they have to do with our own fear, coming from our belief that we have failed Him.

Once again, this is what we always do. We turn our backs on the Holy Spirit or Jesus, and then we believe other people are doing it to us. Since we believe we stole the Kingdom from God, we must therefore believe God is going to try to steal it back from us, a thought so horrible that there's no way we can look at it, so we blot it all out. But we project it out into the world, so it appears as if the world is out to steal the Kingdom from us. People are out to take things from me. The government will steal from me; the I.R.S. will steal from me; my bosses will steal from me; my friends will steal from me. If I'm not careful, people are going to steal the love and the peace that is inside me. These thoughts are all coming from the underlying belief that I don't want to look at, that I am the one who stole first.

A line in the text that comes at the end of the section on the dynamics of the ego says "If he [your brother] speaks not of Christ to you, you spoke not of Christ to him" (T-11.V.18:6). This does not mean that I am responsible for your attack thoughts or un-Christlike thoughts against me. It means that if I perceive you as speaking in an un-Christlike, unloving way to me, it's because I accuse myself of first

having spoken in an un-Christlike way to you. It doesn't mean that I deny what your ego does. But when I make what your ego does real and accuse you of being un-Christlike to me, it is because I'm secretly accusing myself of doing the same thing.

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When we live in the real world, which is the end of all this, and everything in us is absolutely constant, and we walk always with the Love of the Holy Spirit within us—in fact, we have become that Love—then nothing that happens in the world will shake that Love from us. It doesn't mean that we can't walk along in the world and have the kind of superficial preferences and reactions everybody has, but all of it will remain just that—superficial. Nothing that we perceive or see in the world will take away that deep sense of certainty of God's Love and God's peace inside of us.

So if something happens in the world and I feel upset, it's not because of what happened in the world, whether it's the world at large or my personal world. It's because I let it have an effect on me. I gave away the power of my mind—I gave away the Love of God in my mind, and I'm responsible for that.

(Paragraph 4 - Sentences 6-7) You cannot know how to respond to what you do not understand. Be tempted not in this, and yield not to the ego's triumphant use of empathy for its glory.

These are very strong statements. A little later in this chapter there are two very powerful sections on special relationships (T-16.IV,V). One of them talks about how, whenever we are involved in specialness with another, we are using that as a way of triumphing once again over God (T-16.V.10:1). Every time we get what we want from somebody, and there's that sense of triumph, it's because secretly the ego has jumped up and down and said: "Ah, you see, I've done it again. I've gotten what I wanted from Heaven. I don't care about God. I don't care about the Christ that has been shattered, because I got what I wanted." Joy comes when we get what we want from another.

So, in our earlier example, if I feel really glad when a patient has been healed, and an operation has worked, it's because once again, my ego is saying: "I have triumphed over God; I have gotten what I've wanted; it's outside me." That's what this is about.

When I feel good and miserable because you are good and miserable, my ego is triumphing in glory, because I'm making the body real; I'm making the ego thought system real. And once again I'm pushing God to the background. That's where the good feeling comes from. The good feeling comes from the fact that I have once again stolen from the outside and brought it inside. It can be a good feeling because of something that I'm eating, or a good feeling that comes because I've gotten something in the world that I've wanted—the promotion, the raise, the car, or the house, the patient healed, etc. We feel good where, beforehand, we did not feel good.

Happiness and peace and the Love and joy of God are a constant state. Happiness and peace and love and joy of the ego are not constant. They rise and fall based upon circumstances. If the stock market goes up I feel good; if it goes down I feel terrible. My happiness and peace depend on something external to me. The good feeling comes because I once again have succeeded in stealing from outside to get what I want to make me happy. That's where the triumph and the glory come from.

Someone, referring to herself as a "professional do-gooder," was speaking about her experience as a social worker, working with drug-addicted, homeless people with AIDS. She was wondering if she chose to work with this group to reinforce her guilt. Well, of course the ego would do that. But the Holy Spirit

joins us in the classroom. The Course talks about how what we made to harm, the Holy Spirit uses to heal. Jesus explains how the Holy Spirit never takes the special relationship away from us. He transforms it. So, yes, the ego would use that work as a way of making me feel guilty, choosing up sides, having good guys and bad guys, and feeling as if I'm better than God; I love all these people much more than Jesus does. He doesn't give a damn about them; he doesn't even know about them. But I do, and I'm going to go on my shining white horse and save them, etc. That's what the ego would do.

Jesus can use the same situation to teach me that there are no differences. Whether a person is homeless or has a home, whether a person has AIDS or doesn't have AIDS, is addicted to drugs or not, makes no difference in the eyes of the Kingdom. What I will learn over a period of time, then, is that I can be as loving to the homeless, drug-addicted people with AIDS as I can be to all the normal people. I can be as loving to my students, my family members, and my friends as I can be to these poor victims; there is no difference. As I learn that lesson, the Holy Spirit turns the tables on the ego. What the ego used for separation, I now will use as a classroom in which I learn what joining is.

To question my motivation for choosing this work situation after I'm in it is irrelevant. Yes, this is my classroom, just as being born into the body of one sex instead of the other is my classroom. Big deal. That's what it is. Once I'm here in the classroom, it is neutral. We can understand the body on two levels. On the metaphysical level, the body is the symbol of sin, guilt, and attack. On level two, which is the experience we have within the dream, the body is neutral. So on the one hand, the Course says the world was made as an attack on God; it says the body was made as a limitation on love. That's what I call a "Level One" statement. Then the workbook says, "My body is a wholly neutral thing" (W-p11.294). Once I'm here in this classroom, my body is neutral. It can serve either the purpose of the ego or the purpose of the Holy Spirit. I have the choice of which teacher I want to instruct me in this classroom.

So the *fact* of the matter is that I am a social worker who is dealing with these particular groups. The question now is: Do I let the ego guide me from day to day, or do I let the Holy Spirit guide me? What the ego made to kill and attack and separate, the Holy Spirit uses as an instrument for teaching us what forgiveness and joining are.