

## True Empathy

Excerpts from the Workshop held at the  
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### Part XIV

#### Commentary on the Section "The Greater Joining" (T-28.IV) (cont.)

**(Paragraph 2 - Sentence 1) There is a way of finding certainty right here and now.**

Despite all the uncertainty of this world, despite what appears to be the fact that our happiness depends on other people and circumstances beyond our control, it is yet possible to have certainty right here. But the certainty means that we must dislodge our attention from the world and realize that we could be certain and at peace all the time if we chose to be. That is our choice and our responsibility. Nobody can ever take that from us.

**(Paragraph 2 - Sentences 1-2) There is a way of finding certainty right here and now.** [And this is the way:] **Refuse to be a part of fearful dreams whatever form they take, for you will lose identity in them.**

What is important here is not that we do this perfectly, because clearly this is not something we are going to do perfectly right away. But we want to be aware at least, that if we find ourselves upset when a loved one is upset or sick or hurt, that our upset is not coming from what is happening to that person. Even if we cannot help feeling what we are feeling, we can at least recognize that we are not upset for the reason we think. We are upset because we became afraid of the fact that our reality is really spirit, that our reality is something that we both share, and nothing that happens on the level of the body can affect that. We are not asked to do this perfectly, but we are asked to recognize at least where the distress is coming from.

**(Paragraph 2 - Sentence 3) You find yourself by not accepting them as causing you, and giving you effects.**

"Them" refers to the fearful dreams in the previous sentence. This is the way that we find who we are and remember our Identity as Christ. In other words, our well-being, our self-identity, our self-worth are not dependent on other people's dreams. What other people do or say about us has no effect on who we are.

What is important about how this is stated is that we find our self by not accepting that other people can affect us. We do not necessarily accept right away who we are, but we at least recognize that we are not the effect of someone else's dream: I am not the effect of what *you* have chosen or decided. I am the effect of what I have chosen and decided. But because I am afraid of accepting responsibility for my fearful dream—that is the reminder of the origin of the dream when I attacked God, and I do not want to look at that at all—I say it is not *my* fearful dream that has made me unhappy, anxious, depressed, or sick; it is *your* fearful dream, and I have simply caught it.

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We remember Who we are as Christ by not giving other people power over us, and by accepting responsibility for ourselves. I am sick, I am unhappy, I fainted in the hospital room, I faint at the sight of blood, not because of the blood, not because of whatever is going on outside me, but because I have chosen to see myself as a body by separating from the one who reminds me that I am spirit.

**(Paragraph 2 - Sentences 4-5) You stand apart from them [the fearful dreams], but not apart from him who dreams them. Thus you separate the dreamer from the dream, and join in one, but let the other go.**

This is extremely important. The idea is that we can separate ourselves from the ego thought system. Remember, the problem right at the beginning was that, when we listened to the voice of the ego and the Voice of the Holy Spirit, we not only chose to hear the ego's voice, we *became* the ego's voice. We not only chose to believe in the ego's story of sin, guilt, and fear and a separated self, we *became* that separated self and forgot that there was any other choice. At that point, the dream and the dreamer became the same. The dream of the separation became the self who I am. So not only am I having a dream of separation, but I *am* the dream. I have become the dream of separation—a limited, separated, fragmented, sinful, guilty, fearful, dying self. The dream and the dreamer have become one and the same.

The Course is trying to help us—as this passage is now going to explain—to begin to separate the mind from the dream, so the dream and the dreamer are no longer seen as one and the same. I can now choose to step back with the Holy Spirit, look at the dream, and say this is not who I am.

When you are having an evil dream—let us say, for example, that your dream has taken the form of your being really angry and raping and killing people—my ego would have me say that your dream is very real; the dream is who you are. By my making it real, I am expressing that I believe I am that dream too. I cannot get angry at Hitler, to use another example, unless I first believe that *I* am the Hitler. I may not agree with what Hitler is doing. I may realize that he is not coming from a place of love. But I would not hate him or attack him or try to hurt him in any way, in my thoughts or in my actions, unless I saw in myself what I am seeing in him. I do not want to see it in myself, so I deny it and project it out. By attacking him, I am saying to God that the Hitler is not *me*—he is right here, he is the one you want. It is not me. In other words, at that point I am identifying with Hitler's dream. I am seeing Hitler as his dream, and I am seeing myself as that dream.

The Course is teaching us to step back and look at the dream with the Love of God next to us. Thus I step back, drop the ego's hand, take the hand of Jesus, and then say to Jesus, "Look at what this dream is. What a silly dream this person believes—that by murdering thirteen million people he will be happy and safe."

We are now talking about the beginning of the process of withdrawing our identification from the ego and going back to the mind. The mind is the dreamer, and I realize the dreamer is not the dream. The dreamer can now make another choice—what the Course elsewhere calls "choosing the happy dreams." I am no longer totally identified with the evil, wicked dreams—either yours or mine. I can step back and see that there is a mind that is not the dream. And you, who are having the evil dream—whether it is a dream on the level of a Hitler, or the evil dream of being sick, does not make any difference—I can see that there is a mind in you that chose that dream but can just as easily make another choice and choose

with the Holy Spirit instead of with the ego. And if I am seeing that in you, I am obviously seeing it in myself. That is what these passages are talking about.

So I join with you now, but not on the level of the dream—"Oh, you poor dear, look at the terrible things that have happened to you"—or, on the level of hate—"Oh, you awful person, look what you are doing." I step back and realize that you have a mind that made the wrong choice, just as I have a mind that made the wrong choice. And we can now join on that level—that is the real joining. So I separate out the mind from the dream. I join with you as the dreamer, not as the dream. I do not join with you in your sickness by feeling sorry for you, or feeling guilty about it, or being angry about it. Rather, I join with you on the level of the decision maker who chose the dream of fear and sickness, because you are afraid of love. And I realize I did the same thing, which means we are one on the level of the mind, not on the level of the dream. I get past the form to the underlying content. The content is not evil or wicked. The content is not sin. The content is fear, a fear that we both share. And underneath the fear is the call for the Love of God that we both yearn for.

**(Paragraph 2 - Sentences 6-7) The dream is but illusion in the mind.** [Remember, it is not the mind, it is an illusion in the mind.] **And with the mind you would unite, but never with the dream.**

I do not want to unite with your sickness or your pain. I want to unite with the decision you made to turn away from love towards fear, because that is what I did. By joining with you there—and that is the true joining—I am undoing the fear of being separate. If I can join with you and say we are both in the same miserable ego boat along with everyone else, that joining within the dream becomes the reflection of the joining within Christ. I no longer see you as separate from me. I do not join with you in an alliance of special love or an alliance of hate. Special love seems to be joining, special hate seems not to be, but they are both different forms of the same illusion. Instead, I get beyond that and identify with the choice that you made, which helps me recognize I made the same choice. Then I can look at a Hitler, or any other person whom we put in that category, and say this person has acted out of fear—not out of evil, maliciousness, or sin. So I am no longer making the judgment of attack. I am making a judgment that says this is fear, which comes from a fear of love, which is the same fear that I have.

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Thus I no longer identify with your dream, with your pain as you are experiencing it. I identify with your decision to be in pain, to dream a dream of pain, fear, or sickness. This then becomes the reflection of true empathy. I am identifying with the strength of your mind that has chosen to be weak, which means the memory is restored to you of a mind that can choose to be strong.

**(Paragraph 2 - Sentences 7-8) And with the mind you would unite, but never with the dream. It is the dream you fear, and not the mind.**

To repeat the central teaching: I want to unite with the decision-making part of your mind, which helps me to identify with the decision-making part of my mind.

I believe I am afraid of what the ego has told me is real: sin, guilt, fear, punishment, sacrifice, suffering, and death. As other sections in the text teach (e.g., T-19.IV), I am really not afraid of pain, guilt, or death; I am attracted to them. By identifying with pain, suffering, and death, I identify with my body, which

means that I identify with the thought of separation. So I fear the dream. But the dream is made up, so it ends up that there is nothing to be afraid of.

**(Paragraph 2 - Sentence 9) You see them as the same, because you think that you are but a dream.**

We equate the dream and the mind, the dream and the dreamer, which means we no longer believe that we have a choice. Remember, when we chose the ego, we *became* the ego, and that is the end of the story as far as our egos are concerned. The only choice open to us at that point is to kill or be killed. Do I kill you first, or do I allow you to kill me? That is the only choice I see. But the real choice is between the ego and the Holy Spirit. And it is my mind that makes that choice. When I remember where the real choice lies, my mind—the dreamer—is no longer identified with the dream.

But when I think that you *are* your evil dreams, I think that because you are someone who is sick, and who is dying. And the reason I identify you with your dream of a sick body, or a suffering body, or an oppressed or victimized body, is that I think that *I* am my sick body too. I think *I* am the sick dream of sin, guilt, and fear, and punishment. And because that is how I see myself, that is how I must see you.

The important statement in the Course that "projection makes perception" (T-21.in.1:1) is illustrative of that. We first look within, and what we make real in ourselves is what we will make real outside ourselves. If I look within and say I am that limited, separated dream, and the dream and the dreamer are one—there is no other choice—then when I look out in the world, I will perceive that in everyone around me.

**(Paragraph 2 - Sentence 10) And what is real, and what is but illusion in yourself you do not know and cannot tell apart.**

What is but illusion is my ego. What is *real* in myself is the Holy Spirit. He is the reflection of the reality of my Identity as Christ. But I do not know the difference between reality and illusion, because I have screened off what is real, and have instead made illusion the reality. So the reality now is that you are a separated, sick Son of God, just as I am. And then we have to make the best of what is already a terrible situation. I do not look at what is true in you and what is true in me—namely that we are both minds that have decided that we are separate. But once we can identify with the mind or the dreamer instead of the dream, then we are able to change the dream—that is, before we awaken to the reality that we are all part of the one Mind of Christ, we first have to exchange the nightmare dreams for the happy dreams of the Holy Spirit.