

## True Empathy

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

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

**(Paragraph 3 - Sentences 1-2) Like you, your brother thinks he is a dream. Share not in his illusion of himself, for your Identity depends on his reality.**

My identity, the way that I identify myself, will depend on how I perceive you. If I see your ego and your limited, separated, sick body as real, that is how I will see myself. Likewise, if I see myself as a limited, separated, sick ego body, that is how I will see you. It is one and the same. What I see outside is what I see inside; what I see inside is what I see outside.

**(Paragraph 3 - Sentence 3) Think, rather, of him as a mind in which illusions still persist, but as a mind which brother is to you.**

This line is very helpful. We are told not to deny the illusions that appear to be real, but to think of our brother as a mind—a dreamer who makes a decision, but yet a dreamer—still believing that illusions are real. So I do not deny that you experience yourself as sick, deprived, and unhappy, or that I experience myself in the same way. But I begin to develop what can be thought of as double vision, where I both see the dream and recognize that I am not that dream. I do not deny what I am feeling. I do not deny that I am hungry, for example, and I do not stop myself from eating. But on some level I am aware that I am feeding a part of myself that is not my Self. If you are physically sick, you still see a doctor or take whatever form of magic will alleviate your pain or your symptoms. And I do not withhold that help from you. But at the same time that I relate to your sick body or my sick body, I am aware that the sickness reflects a decision I have made to keep the Love of God away.

What is really important in all this is to recognize that our limitations, physical or psychological, are decisions that we have made. They are not the reality. We are the dreamer of the dream, and we can make a choice to have another dream. But the worst thing we can do is deny the experience. This is not a course in denial. It is a course in looking at the ego and making another choice about it. I realize that what I thought was independent of me and beyond my control is, in fact, something that came directly from a choice or decision in my mind.

What is also of great importance in all this is to look without judgment at what we have done—without judgment either of ourselves or of another person. Again, I do not identify with your dream, I identify with your mind. And then our joining with each other as separated minds becomes the way we remember that we are all one mind in Heaven.

**(Paragraph 3 - Sentences 4-5) He is not brother made by what he dreams, nor is his body, "hero" of the dream, your brother. It is his reality that is your brother, as is yours to him.**

This is a reference to the end of the preceding chapter, the section called "The Hero of the Dream," the hero being the body. We are not united because of our bodies. We are united because we share the same mind, and we share the same love that is in that mind. And ultimately we share the same Creator Who created us as Christ. But instead of this level of sharing, we all want to unite on the basis of our bodies. Thus, we may feel joined because we have the same religion, or come from the same part of the country, or have the same color skin, or share the same spiritual path. We all are joining on the basis of our bodies. We say we are brothers and sisters because we share the same body. But we are really brothers and sisters because we share the same mind. Whenever we join based upon the body, we are inevitably going to exclude. The "reality that is your brother" is in the *mind*, not in the body, not in the dreams of fear. The reality is in the mind that *chooses* either the dreams of fear or the dreams of love. So we identify, not with the ego, but with the part of the mind that can choose either the ego or the Holy Spirit.

**(Paragraph 3 - Sentences 6-7) Your mind and his are joined in brotherhood. His body and his dreams but seem to make a little gap, where yours have joined with his.**

This expresses the same idea we have been stressing: It is not the body but the *mind* that is joined in brotherhood. And yet we tend to join on the level of the body, the level of the dream. Even those dreams that appear to be dreams of unity end up simply being ones of separation, where one finds the little gap. Typically, we join in dreams of fear or attack that always oppose some other form of dream. So our dreams still involve difference, judgment, and attack. The idea once again is to see in everyone's dream a call for the Love of God, and then to join in that call.

**(Paragraph 4 - Sentence 1) And yet, between your minds there is no gap.**

The gap is perceived when we identify with the ego, which automatically leads to a body. Since the ego is a thought of something separate, the body then mirrors and embodies that separation. The ego is literally a thought of separation, which begins with the thought that I am separate from God, which automatically means that I am separate from the Mind of Christ that I am. Therefore, my ego tells me, Christ has been fragmented, God has been fragmented, and I am now that fragmented self that is separate from the Mind of Christ. That thought just fragments over and over again, and each of us, appearing to be separate from each other, becomes an aspect of that fragmented self. We are all separate from each other. Bodies separate. Ego thoughts separate. But we are joined on the level of the mind. There is a part within each of us that appears to be fragmented but still can choose. That is what unites us all; and there is no gap there.

**(Paragraph 4 - Sentence 2) To join his dreams is thus to meet him not, because his dreams would separate from you.**

This is what we are calling false empathy: I feel sorry for you—something terrible has happened to you. As I mentioned at the beginning, what makes false empathy such a powerful ego tool is that we empathize with something terrible that has happened to somebody. You have gotten sick, or you lost all your money in the stock market, or somebody killed you or somebody in your family, or somebody cheated you, robbed you, stole from your business, etc. I feel sorry for you because things have

happened to you beyond your control. That is the false empathy which denies the power of the mind to choose.

The point here is that when I join with your dreams, I am not joining with you on the level of the mind anymore. If I join with you on the level of the mind, I am saying that you have chosen this. That is the beginning of true empathy. When I empathize falsely, I am empathizing with your terrible dream: How unfair this is! I make the dream real. Something has happened to you beyond your control. When I join with the mind or with the dreamer, I am saying this is a dream that you chose, which becomes the reminder that my lot in life is a dream that I have chosen. So we now join on the level of choice, where the power of the mind is.

A crucial theme in all of this is undoing the belief in the reality of victimization. We are not victimized by anyone or anything outside our own power to choose. That is why we are depressed, upset, or sick; that is why we die. There is a line in both the text and the workbook that says: "No one dies without his own consent" (W-pl.152.1:4). Death is a choice. Sickness is a choice. Loss is a choice. Everything is a choice. The whole purpose of the dream is so that we would be able to say "this has happened to me."

Every single dream in the world of the ego is a dream of victimization—every single one. Something happens to me. The dream seems to begin with our birth. Our experience, and the world's experience, is that birth is not something we choose; birth is something that happens to us. It is not something that an entity chooses—birth is the result of something that two parents do; it has nothing to do with the infant. The birth of the body is the beginning of every dream. Since the birth of the body is seen as something that happens to me—I do not choose it—then everything that happens after that in the dream is an aspect of the same idea of victimization. Something happens to me, I do not choose it. Every single dream involving the body is one of victimization. When we join in with that, we are saying that things happen to you and me beyond our control; the mind is impotent—in fact, we do not even have a mind. So to join with the mind is to join with the power that chooses. That is, again, the beginning of true empathy.

**(Paragraph 4 - Sentence 3) Therefore release him, merely by your claim on brotherhood, and not on dreams of fear.**

"Merely by your claim on brotherhood" means that our brotherhood lies within the mind, as the previous paragraph said. What keeps us one within the dream is that we are all one in the mind that has chosen to be separate. Recognizing that becomes the way we eventually awaken from the dream and realize we are all one in Christ. That is our true Brotherhood, but within the dream, our brotherhood rests on the fact that we are all one in the dream. We have all made the same mistake. We have fragmented into different dreams, but we are all essentially the same dreamer.

And so I release you merely by remembering for myself—and therefore for you, because minds are joined—that this is all a dream that we have chosen, to defend ourselves against awakening to the reality of love.

**(Paragraph 4 - Sentence 4) Let him acknowledge who he is, by not supporting his illusions by your faith, for if you do, you will have faith in yours.**

This is one of the core themes of the Course—we help each other by not supporting each other's dreams of fear. As I was saying earlier, all minds are one, we are all joined, and, therefore, if my mind is

healed, your mind is healed, too. Within the level of time and space, you may not choose to accept this yet. Similarly, Jesus demonstrated to all of us the illusory nature of everything in this world, but within the world of time and space we still have to go through a process of choosing to accept it. So I help you acknowledge who you are by reminding you, simply by my presence, that you have a choice. And I remind you by showing you that your dream has no effect on me. I do not love you any more or any less because of what you do. I am not any more or less peaceful because of what you do, or what your body has become. The minute that I let your dream have an effect on me, I am saying your dream is real. That means I am saying the thought underlying your dream is real, which is a thought of being separate from God. If I reinforce that thought in you, I obviously reinforce it in myself. But by demonstrating that my peace and love are not affected at all by what happens to you, I am saying that I am independent of your dream. So I am helping you realize that you, likewise, are independent of your dream. That helps break the identification we made right at the beginning when we *became* the ego thought system and forgot that we had a choice.

Again, the over-riding message of the Course is that we have a choice. And it is not a choice between illusions here in the world. It is a choice between illusions, in general, and the truth. That is the whole idea. That is why, as Jesus explains at the beginning, he does not do anything in the world. If Jesus fixed things in the world—if he healed cancer or AIDS, if he beamed light into the Middle East and brought light into the darkness—he would be joining with the dream, and he would be as insane as we are. He does nothing with the dream. That is why, in terms of the lesson he taught us, he did nothing with the dream of his crucifixion. He did not stop it, because he knew he was outside the dream. He was the part of the mind that was totally identified with the Love of Christ. He was the manifestation of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, what happened to the dream was irrelevant.

Other people's dreams of fear manifested in attack, and turned into dreams of viciousness. As I mentioned another time, the Course says, "Frightened people can be vicious" (T-3.I.4:2). But Jesus did not let other people's dreams of viciousness, attack, and murder have any effect on him, because he knew who he was. He was not the dream of this body that appeared to be beaten up, abandoned, rejected, betrayed, and crucified. In demonstrating that he was not the dream, he gave the world the message: *You* are not the dream; you are the dreamer, which means you have a choice. So basically Jesus was telling us from the cross that we have a choice in how we experience and perceive him—either as someone who is being victimized, or someone who is teaching us that there is no victimization. That is how the world was healed. Within the world of dreams, we still have to make that choice. But the message is clearly there in the mind, and that is what we learn and teach over and over again. By not letting your dream have any effect on me, I am saying that I am separate from your dream and my dream, and that you are separate from your dream as well. That opens up the possibility of choice—we can now choose another dream.