

Study Guide and Commentary ACIM[®] Text, Chapter 3, Section IV

Error and the Ego

Overview of the Section

Perception is the primary subject of this chapter, “The Innocent Perception.” What we think is true produces our perception. If we believe in guilt we will see a guilty world; if we believe in innocence we will see an innocent world. True perception is seeing without judgment because it is seeing things as God created them, and not as we have made them.

Section IV continues the discussion about perception, although its title does not refer to it. It shows that perception itself comes from the ego’s error of trying to see ourselves as we wish to be, rather than as we are. It has been *heavily* edited, so we are including a great deal of material from the Urtext.

Paragraph 1

1. ¹[Ur: Most of] The abilities you now possess are only shadows of your real strength [Ur: strengths. The Soul knows, loves, and creates. These are its unequivocal functions.]. ²All of your present functions are divided [Ur: equivocal] and open to question and doubt. ³This is because you are not [Ur: no longer] certain how you will use them, and are therefore incapable of knowledge [Ur: He is therefore incapable of knowledge, because he is uncertain]. ⁴You are also incapable of knowledge because you can still perceive lovelessly. [Ur: He is also incapable of true loving, because he can perceive lovelessly. He cannot create surely, because perception deceives, and illusions are not pure.] ⁵Perception did not exist until the separation introduced degrees, aspects and intervals. ⁶Spirit [Ur: The Soul] has no levels, and all conflict arises from the concept of levels. [Ur: Wars arise when some regard others as if they were on a different level. All interpersonal conflicts arise from this fallacy.] ⁷Only the Levels of the Trinity are capable of Unity. ⁸The levels created by the separation [Ur: are disastrous. They] cannot but conflict. ⁹This is because they are [Ur: essentially] meaningless to each other. [Ur: Freud realized this perfectly, and that is why he conceived as forever irreconcilable the different levels of his psyche. They were conflict-prone by definition, because they wanted different things and obeyed different principles.]

• Study Question •

1. *1. What two reasons are given here for why we are “incapable of knowledge” (1:3–4)?*



Many mystics have taught that the world of duality came about as a deliberate choice of the One, for a good reason: in order for us to experience something other than aloneness. Yet, as the Course puts it here, “The levels created by the separation cannot but conflict” (1:8). The many, having forgotten they are the One, inevitably clash. The result of the choice to be many is always pain as well as pleasure. Is pain thus part of God’s Will?

The Course teaches that, although the separation was a choice, it was a mistake we made, not a choice made by God. It also says that, once we have explored our reason for manifesting the world, we will find it was without reason, and the world will simply disappear into nothingness (T-17.II.5:2–3).

Mystics and the Course agree we have chosen separation for some reason, but they disagree on the validity of the reason. In both systems of thought, the present is the result of our choice. In both, the technique for relieving our suffering is the same: remembering Who we are, and becoming aware of our choice.

Our choice for separation weakens our abilities in several ways, turning them into “shadows of your real strength” (1:1). We are uncertain of our abilities (1:2), and we are uncertain of how to use them (1:3). I think this refers to the purpose we give to our abilities, rather than to the mechanics of using them. We believe we have misused our abilities, and are afraid we will misuse them again. Our abilities are also weakened because we perceive lovelessly (1:4).

The general theme has been stated: Our present abilities are degraded forms of our true strengths. The remainder of the section presents a specific example of that theme, i.e. the interpretative function of perception, which is a degraded form of creation. Paragraphs 2 to 5 move on to what appear to be other topics—the separation, and levels, and perception—but these are simply fleshing out the example. Jesus returns to the specific example in 6:1–3.

It is extremely difficult for us to grasp that the entire realm of perception lies in the ego’s domain, and is an aspect of separation. Even right perception, the goal of the Course’s curriculum, does not transcend the ego, since all perception occurs within the domain of the ego (2:2).

This realm of perception is what we refer to as consciousness, which will be discussed in the next paragraph. To our usual way of thinking, perception is the only way of knowing. Yet Jesus is teaching us that perception does not know anything (3:1–2). We believe that the only way of gaining information is to perceive the world and to attempt to understand it; in fact, using perception we cannot know anything at all. Knowing is a function of spirit (6:4), not of what we think of as mind. Knowing is completely different from perception.

Perception derives from separateness; until the separation perception didn’t even exist (1:5). This thought is important enough to be restated in 5:2–3. Existence without any perception is hard to conceive. We may think it would be something like being deaf and blind, only without touch, taste or smell as well (all forms of perception)—entirely cut

off, alone, unable to communicate. It seems terrifying. We cannot comprehend being without “degrees, aspects and levels” (1:5) that distinguish, make differences, and separate one from another, providing fertile ground for attack (1:6). Yet the testimony of mystics down through the ages is that we can experience this kind of formless awareness and that, far from terrifying, it is total bliss. Ken Wilber, for example, says:

When bodymind drops, when I am nowhere to be found, there is such an infinite Emptiness, a radical Fullness, endlessly laced with luminosity. I-I [the true Self] open as the Kosmos, here where no object corrupts primordial Purity, here where concepts are too embarrassed to speak, here where duality hides its face in shame, and suffering cannot even remember its name. Nothing ever happens here, in the fullness of infinity, singing self-existing bliss, alive with self-liberating gestures, always happy to be home. (One Taste, p. 214)

When the Course speaks of its ultimate goal for us, knowledge, it is talking about this primordial unity. Nevertheless, to realize this goal we must focus on duality for a while. We must clear up our perception, even though perception did not exist before the separation, nor will it exist when we have arrived back at the home we never left. As we focus on perception, however, we must continually keep in mind that merely having right perception is not the final goal; it is only a means to that end.

Jesus introduces “the levels of the Trinity” (1:7) here. He says that only within the One can there be levels without the unity being disturbed. Levels in the Trinity work, and “the levels created by the separation” (1:8) don’t work, because the levels of the separation “are meaningless to each other.” We have to presume then, that the levels of the Trinity are meaningful to each other and that they are known to each other. This ties in with the theme of knowledge that is running through several sections. Only when we know one another can we come to know God, and thus join in that meaningful communion of the levels of the Trinity—of which we, as God’s Son, are a part (T-3.II. 5:4; see also T-8.IV.8:9–13). To know one another, we must first attain right, or true, perception of one another, and that means seeing one another as sinless. Forgiveness is thus what enables us to function as one, as do the parts of the Trinity, even though we may maintain our seeming “partness” in this world.

Note: The word “created” in 1:8 is loosely used. Strictly speaking, the separation does not “create” anything.

Paragraph 2

2. [Ur: In our picture of the psyche, there is an unconscious level, which properly consists *only* of the miracle ability and should be under *my* direction; and a conscious level, which perceives or is aware of impulses from both the unconscious and the superconscious. These are the sources of the impulses it receives. Consciousness is thus the level of perception, but *not* of knowledge. Again, to *perceive* is *not* to know. (In this connection, {Edgar} Cayce is more accurate than Freud.) Consciousness was the first split that man introduced into

himself.] ¹Consciousness, the level of perception, was the first split introduced into the mind after the separation, making the mind a perceiver rather than a creator [Ur: in the true sense]. ²Consciousness is correctly identified as the domain of the ego. [Ur: Jung was right indeed in insisting that the ego is *not* the self, and that the self should be regarded as an achievement. He did not recognize (a term we now understand) that the Achievement was God's.] ³The ego is a wrong-minded [Ur: man-made] attempt to perceive yourself as you wish to be, rather than as you are. [Ur: This is an example of the created/creator confusion we spoke of before.] ⁴Yet you can know yourself only as you are, because that is all you can be sure of. ⁵Everything else *is* open to question.

• Study Question •

2. *How does this paragraph define the ego? How does this relate to our desire to be our own creator?*

Robert Perry has pointed out that this is actually the first place that “ego” is mentioned in the Course. (An earlier use of the term, in 2.II.2:5, was not in the dictation but was inserted by the editors.) He also points out that, given all the psychological context referring to Freud and Jung, “it is really talking about *not* the eventual Course ego [the term as it is eventually used in most of the Course], but basically about the Freudian ego.” He points out that the way the Course uses the term, the ego is a mostly unconscious belief system that whispers in your ear, hoping you will choose it. Here, however, the ego is *conscious* and it is what is actually *doing the choosing*. As with some other terms in the Course, the eventual meaning of *ego* is not reflected in this very early use of the word.

The Course seldom uses the term “consciousness.” Here, the author depicts consciousness as the restricted form of awareness that we now experience through our physical senses: thinking as separated minds, understanding things through perception from the perspective of duality, with us as subject and other things as objects. The “Clarification of Terms” (the second part of the Manual) says that consciousness cannot transcend the perceptual realm (see C-1.7:3–6).

What we now know and think of as “consciousness” is not our natural state. Our natural state is One-mindedness. Consciousness involves perception and therefore separation (not-oneness). Our entire state of mind—our being and consciousness as we know it—is all part of the illusion of separation—as hard as that may be to accept. Therefore, we must give up consciousness (as we know it) if we want to attain knowledge. Dimly aware of this, the ego fears God, because knowing God means its annihilation. Knowledge does end consciousness as we know it, but the good news is that dualistic consciousness is not all there is.

When God takes that “last step,” we will leave perception and consciousness behind entirely, but we will not cease to exist. On the contrary, only then will we truly and fully

exist. Our minds will be in a state which is beyond our current ability to understand: a state of perfect knowledge without any translation or interpretation; knowledge which is an intrinsic part of us, rather than coming to us from outside ourselves.

Consciousness is the level of perception (2:1), and consciousness is the domain of the (Freudian) ego (2:2); therefore, perception is the domain of this ego. When the mind chooses to separate, it generates the ability of perception, and that brings about consciousness. Perception is the result of the separation error; it is not a part of our natural inheritance in spirit.

Perception came about in order to make the ego possible (2:3). The ego is a perception. Perception was necessary in order to make the ego seem real; we perceived what we wanted to perceive. "Perception is a choice and not a fact" (T-21.I.5:7). Knowledge is truth. Knowledge, therefore, knows our true Self, and can only know our true Self (2:4-5). The separated ego cannot be "known" because it is not real; therefore, the mind had to make perception to replace knowledge. Perception became a kind of pseudo-knowing, in order to make it possible for us to seem to fulfill our wish to be something other than our true Self.

Despite the fact that perception is so tied to separation, our healing begins by correcting perception; the Course does not just throw perception out in the trash. In fact, the entire focus of the Course is on correcting our perception, helping us to give up illusions. Our deepest illusion seems to be identification with our ego and our body. Yet, it is only an illusion, for how can we lose our true identity? Several times (W-pI.139.2:3, for example) the Course states that the only thing you can be sure of is who you are. We spend much of our lives trying to "find ourselves," yet, "that is all you can be sure of" (2:4). Many spiritual masters say the same thing. Ramana Maharshi, for instance, said:

We talk loosely of Self-realization, for lack of a better term. But how can one realize [sic] or make real that which alone is real? All we need to do is to give up our habit of regarding as real that which is unreal. All religious practices are meant solely to help us do this. When we stop regarding the unreal as real, then reality alone will remain, and we will be that (quoted in *The Enlightened Mind*, edited by Stephen Mitchell).

Paragraph 3

3. ¹The ego is the questioning aspect [Ur: compartment] of the post-separation self [Ur: psyche], which was made rather than created. ²It is capable of asking [Ur: valid] questions but not of perceiving meaningful [Ur: wholly valid] answers, because these would involve knowledge and cannot be perceived. [Ur: The endless speculation about the meaning of mind has led to considerable confusion because the mind is confused.] ³The mind is therefore confused, because only One-mindedness can be without confusion. ⁴A separated or divided mind *must* be confused. ⁵It is necessarily uncertain about what it is. [Ur: A divided mind is uncertain by definition.] ⁶It has to be in conflict because

it is out of accord with itself. [Ur: Intrapersonal conflict arises from the same basis as interpersonal. One part of the psyche perceives another part as on a different *level*, and does not understand it.] ⁷This makes its aspects strangers to each other, [Ur: *without recognition*] and this is the essence of the fear-prone condition, in which attack is always possible. ⁸You have every reason to feel afraid as you perceive yourself. ⁹This is why you cannot escape from fear until you realize that you did not and could not create yourself. ¹⁰You can never make your misperceptions true, [Ur: and when he at last *perceives* clearly, he is *glad he can't*.] and your creation is beyond your own error. ¹¹That is why you must eventually choose to heal the separation.

• Study Question •

3. *I believe the “aspects” of mind mentioned in sentence 3:7 are parts of what the Course calls the separated mind. One such aspect of my mind is the ego, which seems to be something separate from my “right” mind. The picture of the separated mind is confusing because such a mind is confused. Have you ever experienced being afraid of yourself “as you perceive yourself” (3:9)?*
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There are more clear indications here that the “ego” in this discussion is the Freudian ego, not the Course’s version as seen later on. Here, the ego can ask “valid questions,” but the Course later states, “The ego does not know what a real question is” (T-8.IX.1:3, see also T-9.VII.7:1). The ego here is simply the conscious mind, asking questions and making decisions, managing impulses from above and below, a part of mind shut off from unlimited super-consciousness.

This ego is the part of our “self” that asks questions (3:1), but which cannot perceive “meaningful answers” (3:3). Notice that Jesus points out that this “post-separation self” was “made rather than created” (3:1). He will be expanding on what that means in T-3.V.2. From earlier references we already know enough to realize that if the little self is made rather than created, then although it may seem real to us, it is not real in God’s Mind (T-2.VIII.1:5). Thus the various “parts” of mind are just describing how we *experience* ourselves, and do not reflect anything true about us.

In our separated state of mind, confusion, questioning and uncertainty are inevitable (3:3–5). The separated self is incapable of knowledge, being restricted to perception (3:2). The separated mind is “uncertain about what it is” (3:5) and “out of accord with itself” (3:6). Because of this split condition, the mind is prone to fear (3:7) because its aspects are “strangers to each other” (3:7). Most of us have probably felt, at times, as though one part of our mind simply couldn’t understand another part of our mind, as if we had some kind of multiple personality disorder. The conscious part of mind (“the questioning aspect” (3:1)) is a stranger to the “real” part, and vice versa. We sometimes

find ourselves afraid of what is lurking in some other part of our mind, seemingly beyond our control.

We have fear because we perceive our Self as fragmented into conflicting parts, and also because we perceive ourselves as deformed by our own efforts to create ourselves. Realizing that we cannot have created ourselves (3:8–9) is therefore the antidote to fear. We cannot make misperceptions true. We cannot foul up our own creation (3:11). Therefore, since we cannot change what God created us to be, we must eventually choose to heal the separation (3:11) by recognizing that separation never happened.

Paragraph 4

4. ¹Right-mindedness is not to be confused with the knowing mind, because it is applicable only to right perception. ²You can be right-minded or wrong-minded, and even this is subject to degrees, clearly demonstrating that knowledge is not involved. ³The term “right-mindedness” is properly used as the correction for “wrong-mindedness,” and applies to the state of mind that induces accurate perception. ⁴It is miracle-minded [Ur: *miraculous*] because it heals misperception, and this is indeed a miracle in view of how you perceive yourself. [Ur: *Only the sick need healing. The Soul does not need healing, but the mind does. Freud gave a very graphic but upside-down account of how the divisions of the mind arose from the bottom up. Actually, this is impossible, because the unconscious cannot create the conscious. You cannot create something you can't know....The ego did not arise out of the unconscious. A lower-order perception cannot create a higher-order one...because it doesn't understand it. But a higher-order perception can create a lower-order one by understanding it in terms of misperception.*]

• Study Question •

4. *“One-mindedness” is the state of mind without confusion (3:3). This paragraph mentions “wrong-mindedness” and “right-mindedness.” What seems to be the relationship between these three states of mind; that is, how would you describe each of them?*

The author takes pains to distinguish the three kinds of “mindedness” here (wrong-, right-, and—) from the preceding paragraph—One-mindedness). The term right-minded (or right-mindedness) occurs only eleven times in the Course, and only one more time in the Text (T-4.II.10:1–2), after which it drops from sight until the end of the Manual for Teachers. The first sentence really seems to be the main thought of the paragraph: Right-mindedness is not knowledge, and we need to avoid confusing them (4:1).

To me this is a caution well worth heeding. Many people who gain a taste of right perception mistakenly imagine they have attained knowledge. This is like someone with a Learner's Permit claiming to know how to drive. The permit just qualifies you to train and apply for a Driver's License. The disparity between perception and knowledge is

even greater, since knowledge refers to a kind of knowing that transcends the perceptive senses entirely. To mistake right perception for knowledge is more like imagining we know what sex is like because we've read about it!

I remember a Christian mystic once who wrote that he did not want a teacher who had written the definitive Guidebook to Heaven; he wanted a teacher who had been there. A guidebook is objective "knowing," which is really only a kind of perception; the teacher with firsthand experience knows. Yet, the knowledge the Course is talking about is even more intimate than firsthand experience; it arises only through identification and union.

Summarizing, then: Wrong-mindedness is the ego mind, the misperceiving mind; right-mindedness is the correction for that, the mind that perceives truth (this can have degrees (4:2) or be partial); One-mindedness is knowledge. The eventual goal is knowledge; the focus of the Course is correcting wrong-mindedness and bringing us to right-mindedness. Attaining right-mindedness is the necessary preparation for receiving the gift of knowledge from God.

Paragraph 5

5. ¹Perception always involves some misuse of mind [Ur: will], because it brings the mind into areas of uncertainty. ²The mind is very active [Ur: because it has will-power]. ³When it chooses to be separated it chooses to perceive [Ur: When it willed the Separation it willed to perceive]. ⁴Until then it wills [Ur: willed] only to know. ⁵Afterwards it can only choose ambiguously [Ur: it had to will ambiguously], and the only way out of ambiguity is clear perception. [Ur: The ego is as frail as Freud perceived it. The later theorists have tried to introduce a less pessimistic view, but have looked in the wrong direction for their hope. Any attempt to endow the ego with the attributes of the Soul, is merely confused thinking. Freud was more clear-sighted about this, because he knew a *bad* thing when he perceived it, but he failed to recognize that a bad thing cannot exist. It is therefore wholly unnecessary to try to get out of it.] ⁶The mind returns to its proper function only when it wills to know. ⁷This places it in the service of spirit, where perception is changed [Ur: is meaningless. The superconscious is the level of the mind which wills to do this. (Freud was particularly distorted on this point, because he was getting too far *up* for comfort according to his own perception.)] ⁸The mind chooses to divide [Ur: *did* divide] itself when it chooses [Ur: willed] to make its own levels [Ur: *and* the ability to perceive them]. ⁹But it could not entirely separate itself from spirit, because it is from spirit that it derives its whole power to make or create. ¹⁰Even in miscreation the mind [Ur: will] is affirming its Source [Ur: source], or it would merely cease to be. ¹¹This is impossible, because the mind belongs to spirit which God created and which is therefore eternal.

• Study Question •

5. *In what way are even our miscreations veiled affirmations of our Source?*

The mind as God created it is meant to function in the realm of knowledge, where there is complete certainty. Perception involves a *misuse* of the mind because perception is notoriously *uncertain*. We think we perceive an object, for instance, but even in physical terms that isn't true. Some light strikes an object and is reflected. It reaches the lens of our eye and is focused into an upside-down image on the back of the eyeball. Nerve endings there translate the light into electrical impulses that travel to the brain, which then somehow compares and matches those impulses to similar sets of impulses received in the past. When a match is found, triggers a recognition pattern: "Ah! I see a cup." No, you do not perceive the cup; you perceive light reflected from the cup. But not even that, you are reacting to those electrical impulses; no, wait a minute, you're really reacting to that neural pattern in your brain!

The mind gets involved in sorting things out and trying to assign meaning to them, and that, I believe, is the "misuse" of the mind being referred to here. The mind was not designed to judge, which is what interpretation must do.

The choice to be separate is the choice to perceive (5:3). Perception is a substitute for knowledge made necessary by the separation. Knowledge is direct apprehension through union; we know something by *being* that something. If that something is separate from us, we need perception to carry some kind of transmission of information across the gap. Our eyes detect reflected light; our ears detect vibrating air (or other media such as water). The same thing is true with touch, taste and smell. All of these are interpretive, indirect means of gaining information. All perception takes part in a context of separateness.

Once the mind has chosen to be separated, "it can only choose ambiguously" (5:5). Notice that this phrase is in contrast to the previous sentence's words: "Until then it will only to know." We either know, or we choose ambiguously, using our perception. The only way back, the only way out of the ambiguity of perception, is "clear perception" (5:5). Again: Perception must be cleared up before we can know anything (T-3.III.1:2).

The way back is the result of the choice to know (5:6), which will eventually bring us back to our proper function of operating from knowledge and certainty. The choice, the will to know, places the mind in the service of spirit, and in that service, perception is changed (5:7). This opens the way to regain knowledge. When the mind is totally given over to spirit and to knowledge, perception becomes "meaningless."

The separation between mind and spirit is only apparent; they cannot be entirely separated (5:8–10). The mind proves its union with spirit even in the very act of miscreation, because what it makes in its madness is made *using the power given it by spirit*. Placing the mind in service of spirit is really just a reaffirmation of the unbroken, eternal union of mind with spirit (5:11). That is how God created mind and spirit; therefore, that is how they are. Our minds can *think* they can separate from God; they can

think they have done so; but they *cannot* in reality do it. If the mind were to separate from God in reality, it would simply “cease to be” (5:10), and that is, in a word, “impossible” (5:11).

Paragraph 6

6. ¹The ability to perceive made the body possible, because you must perceive *something* and *with* something. ²That is why perception involves an exchange or translation, which knowledge does not need. ³The interpretative function of perception, [Ur: actually,] a distorted form of creation, then permits you to interpret the body as yourself in an attempt to escape from [Ur: which, although depressing, was a way out of] the conflict you have induced. ⁴Spirit [Ur: The superconscious], which knows, could not be reconciled with this loss of power, because it is incapable of darkness. ⁵This makes spirit [Ur: This is why it became] almost inaccessible to the mind and entirely inaccessible to the body. ⁶Thereafter, spirit is [Ur: It was] perceived as a threat, because light abolishes darkness merely by showing you it is not there. ⁷Truth will always overcome [Ur: destroy] error in this way [Ur: sense]. ⁸This cannot be an active process of correction [Ur: destruction at all] because, as I have already emphasized, knowledge does not do anything. ⁹It can be perceived as an attacker, but it cannot attack. ¹⁰What you perceive as its attack is your own vague recognition that knowledge can always be remembered, never having been destroyed. [Ur: This is not a literal remembering as much as a re-remembering. (That is largely for Bill {who loved puns} The unconscious should never have been reduced to a “container” for the waste products of conflict. Even as *he* perceives his psyche, every level has a creative potential, because nothing man creates can wholly lose this.)]

• Study Question •

6. *Your mind often interprets your body as your self. It sees “you” as something located in a body. Why, from this perspective, does the mind perceive spirit as a threat (see 6:5–6)?*
7. *Read 3.III.5:8–10; 3.V.3:1; and 3.IV.6:8. What idea is repeated (in slightly different words) in each of these passages?*

How did our bodies come about? I believe that first, the separation of mind from spirit introduced conflict in the mind. We desired to escape the mind’s conflict, and that led to our need to see ourselves as bodies instead of as minds (6:3).

Separation produced perception out of a need to replace knowledge with the ability to perceive. Perception requires a perceiver and something to perceive. The perceiver always perceives something *other than itself*. The body met that need.

Perception always involves two: perceiver and perceived. This element of separateness means perception involves “an exchange or translation” (6:2), or an

“interpretative function” (6:3). As I pointed out above with vision, an object reflects light, the light is translated into electrical impulses, then the impulses are interpreted into neural patterns which the brain can recognize.

The observer is always at least one step removed from what is being observed; interpretation is how information crosses that gap. As I pointed out before, you never perceive *directly*; your mind must always *interpret* the signals it receives. That subtle step is what allows the ego to slip in all its illusions! This is what “permits you to interpret the body as yourself” (6:3). Thus, perception is what makes it possible for us to think we are bodies. If we were operating from knowledge, in which spirit exists, that confusion would be impossible (6:4).

Spirit, therefore, seems to be “almost inaccessible to the mind” (6:5). The mind cannot relate to the knowledge of spirit. The word “almost” here hints that the mind is almost—*but not quite*—out of reach of spirit. With the help of the Holy Spirit, the mind can be trained, once again, to correspond to knowledge and to accept it.

Spirit actually is inaccessible to the *body* (6:5). This, I think, has some interesting implications for all kinds of consciousness therapies that attempt to reach spirit *through the body*, such as yoga, breathing techniques, or even psychedelic drugs. Though such therapies are very useful in uncovering hidden emotions, repressed thoughts, and altered states *in the mind*, and though they often can be very effective in opening the mind to spirit, based on what the Course says here I question whether any kind of bodywork can actually, *in and of itself*, bring us into contact with spirit.

The ego needs the body. The ego is incompatible with spirit and, although it knows something is there, it can't access spirit to tell what it is. This explains why we are afraid of our true selves (T-4.II.8:8). Spirit threatens the ego because its light would make the darkness vanish (6:6). The ego would disappear if mind connected with spirit again, and the ego fears that dissolution. When we identify with ego, we must protect this “I” from spirit—or so it seems.

What is intriguing is that the effect spirit has on ego “cannot be an active process of correction” (6:8). Spirit is not actually *doing anything* because “knowledge does not do anything” (6:8). Thus, spirit isn't pursuing us; it is not threatening the ego; it does not “abolish” the ego. Not really. Spirit just *is*; spirit is just being itself. *To the ego* spirit appears as an attacker, but spirit “cannot attack” (6:9). What we perceive as attack is just our mind's own “vague recollection” that knowledge is still there, waiting to be remembered and never having been destroyed (6:10).

Heaven is not in an uproar over the terrible crimes of the ego. To spirit, which knows, the crimes never happened. “Not one note in Heaven's song was missed” (T-26.V.5:4). The divine Police Force is not out to track us down and bring us to justice. There is no divine Police Force; it isn't needed. There is no threat from the side of spirit; only a gentle reminder, a soft calling drawing us back to home, back to Heaven, and back to peace.

As Jesus puts it in his pun addressed to Bill, we are “re-membering” ourselves—re-uniting the various levels of self we have imagined to be separate.

Paragraph 7

7. ¹God and His creations remain in surety, and therefore know that no miscreation exists. ²Truth cannot deal with errors that you want [Ur: with unwilling error, because it does not will to be blocked out. But] ³I was a man who remembered spirit and its knowledge. [Ur: Tell Bill that when he refused to misperceive he was indeed behaving as I behaved.] ⁴As a man I did not attempt to counteract error with knowledge, but [Ur: so much as] to correct error from the bottom up. ⁵I demonstrated both the powerlessness of the body and the power of the mind [Ur: by uniting *my* will with that of my Creator, which naturally remembered the Soul and its own real purpose]. ⁶By uniting my will with that of my Creator, I naturally remembered spirit and its real purpose. ⁷I cannot unite your will with God's for you, but I can erase all misperceptions from your mind if you will bring it under my guidance. ⁸Only your misperceptions stand in your way. ⁹Without them your choice is certain. ¹⁰Sane perception induces sane choosing. [Ur: The Atonement was an act based on true perception.] ¹¹I cannot choose for you, but I can help you make your own right choice. ¹²"Many are called but few are chosen" should be, "All are called but few choose to listen." ¹³Therefore, they do not choose right. ¹⁴The "chosen ones" are merely those who choose right sooner. ¹⁵Right minds [Ur: Strong wills] can do this now, and they will find rest unto their souls. ¹⁶God knows you only in peace, and this *is* your reality.

• Study Question •

8. *Jesus promises to "erase all misperceptions" from our minds if we do what? (7:7) Do you recall where, in the last chapter, he suggested the same thing?*

This paragraph contrasts the absolute certainty of divine reality and the confusion in which we habitually exist. God, and that which is created by God, cannot doubt; they "remain in surety, and therefore know that no miscreation exists" (7:1). If miscreations did exist in that realm of knowledge, they would be real, and therefore not "miscreations" at all, but creations.

There is no communication between reality and illusion. Truth, or reality, cannot deal *directly* with errors (7:2) we are choosing. This is why the approach the Course takes is an indirect approach, correcting errors "from the bottom up" (7:4).¹ It does not attempt to restore knowledge directly; it erases our misperceptions (7:7–8), which allows us to once again choose knowledge.

¹ The notion of correcting error "from the bottom up" is mentioned often in the Course. Here, thanks to Robert Perry's research, is a list of the references: T-3.IV.7:4; T-1.VI.3:1; T-5.III.1:3; T-5.III.5:6; T-2.IV.2:2; T-2.V.1:6; and C-4.3:1. This concept maintains that one cannot dispel the ego with knowledge, but only through dispelling false perception with true perception. The inability of knowledge to dispel the ego explains why some spiritual masters, with many evident experiences of profound knowledge, have still had remarkably intact, and blatantly active, egos.

If we want to hold on to our errors, there is nothing that God can do about it directly. As Jesus says in 7:7, he cannot unite our will with God's *for us*. Salvation cannot be imposed on anyone. As long as we choose error, we will have error. Each of us must make the choice for truth. Each of us must remember spirit and its knowledge, as Jesus did (7:3). Jesus can *assist* and *nourish* the process of choosing, but he cannot make the choice; that is up to you and to me.

How did Jesus "wake up" from the dream? He tells us that he did *not* "attempt to counteract error with knowledge" (7:4). Knowledge can't counteract error; it can't *do* anything. So Jesus did not fight for the truth; he demonstrated it (7:5). By his life, as well as by his death and resurrection, he showed that the body is powerless (his body and the bodies of others) and the mind is all-powerful. What he did was to unite his will with God's (7:6). He *chose* to align himself with the will of God, and *that* is what enabled him to remember spirit and the real purpose of spirit (7:6).

That is what he asks *us* to do. He asks us to bring our minds under his guidance, which is the same thing as aligning ourselves with the will of God. If we do that, we will remember spirit. We will remember what spirit is for, and what spirit knows (7:3; 7:6), and we will remember "naturally" (7:6), without any strain. If we align our will with God's, Jesus will assist us by erasing our misperceptions, which are the only things that stand in our way (7:7–8). As soon as we perceive sanely, it is certain that we will choose sanely (7:8–10). This is why Jesus works so hard at getting us to clear up our perceptions. Although Jesus cannot choose for us, he can *help* us make the right choice.

The message of the remaining sentences (7:11–16) is that being called by God is not a matter of being a "chosen one" in any way; we become chosen when we choose rightly. God calls everyone, and His gifts are received by all who choose to receive them. It's just a matter of time who chooses now and who chooses later. That's the only difference. Those who choose now "find rest unto their souls" (7:15). The use of the archaic word "unto" serves as a clue to help us realize that Jesus is quoting his own words from the Gospels here:

Come unto me, all [ye] that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.
Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and
ye shall find rest unto your souls (Matthew 11:28–29, KJV).

Jesus is asking us to come to him, take his yoke and learn of him; that is, to place our minds under his guidance. The image is of a yoke that joins two oxen, pulling side by side in the same purpose. Here in the Course he is giving the same call he issued back in Galilee. As we give ourselves over to his guidance, our souls will find their rest. Why? Because, as we follow his guidance, we will be freed from illusions, and we will remember our reality in spirit, where we exist "only in peace" in the perfect knowledge of God (7:16).

Answer Key

1. We are incapable of knowledge because: (1) we are not certain how we will use our abilities; and (2) because we can still perceive lovelessly. These two things contain a common theme. To not be certain how we will use our abilities seems to imply a mistrust of ourselves; i.e., seeing ourselves as unloving. And to perceive lovelessly is to mistrust others: i.e., seeing them as unloving. Both things, therefore, have to do with seeing sin or guilt where there is none. Only when we love someone do we perceive them truly (T-3.III.5:3). Until we perceive truly, we cannot know. Thus, our incapacity for knowledge derives from our unwillingness to love.
2. “The ego is a wrong-minded attempt to perceive yourself as you wish to be, rather than as you are” (2:3). We deny God as Creator, and wish to create ourselves in our own self-chosen image. That wish is the ego. The most we can do, of course, since we cannot alter God’s creation, is to perceive ourselves as other than we are. This is one way in which perception is a degraded form of creation. We take that which actually exists and perceive it as something else.
3. No written answer is expected.
4. One-mindedness is the state of knowledge, or awareness of truth; the other two belong to the realm of perception. Right-mindedness is correct perception, which is a step below knowledge but still in the realm of the perception; it is the correction for wrong-mindedness. The latter is the mind engaged in and controlled by misperception.
Note: There are several such triads of terminology in the Course, all of which parallel one another and refer to different aspects of the same three things. They represent the state in which we begin; our intermediate goal in the Course’s training program; and the ultimate state, given by God when we attain the intermediate goal:
Wrong-mindedness, right-mindedness, One-mindedness
Misperception, true perception, knowledge
The world we see, the real world, Heaven
Nightmare, happy dream, awakening
5. Even in miscreation we are affirming our Source in spirit, because we are using the power we derive from spirit to make our miscreations (5:9–11).
6. The light of spirit threatens to abolish the darkness of the ego and the body, and to show it is not there; therefore mind, identified with ego and body, sees spirit as a threat.
7. Knowledge does not do anything.

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8. If we bring our minds under his guidance. He asked for the same thing in T-2.VI.2:9: “This [our behavior] is controlled by me automatically as soon as you place what you think under my guidance.” We may wonder how we can ever correct all our misperceptions; there are so many! The method the Course proposes is bringing our minds under Christ’s guidance, which allows Jesus to erase our misperceptions.