

Study Guide and Commentary ACIM Text, Chapter 3, Section VI

Judgment and the Authority Problem

Overview of the Section

We have been discussing how knowledge lies beyond perception, and how perception is based on *judgment*. The talk of judgment leads fairly naturally to a discussion of “the Last Judgment,” which is usually understood to be a meting out of punishment for sins. We discussed this outmoded Christian concept previously, at the end of Chapter 2, but this section gives a whole new meaning to the term. It then goes on to tie in a completely new but related concept, “the authority problem.”

Note: *The choice for separation.* Often in this chapter, the Course tells us how we *chose* separation and perception, rather than union and knowledge. Here is a summary of most of such passages in the chapter:

“...those who do not choose to see.” (T-3.I.6:7)

“When it [the mind] chooses to be separated it chooses to perceive. “ (T-3.IV.5:3)

“The mind chooses to divide itself when it chooses to make its own levels. “ (T-3.IV.5:8)

“Minds have chosen to see themselves as separate.” (T-3.V.9:2)

“The choice to judge rather than to know is the cause of the loss of peace.” (T-3.VI.2:1)

“You choose to separate yourself from your Author.” (T-3.VI.8:7)

Paragraph 1

1. ¹We have already discussed the Last Judgment, but in insufficient detail. ²After the Last Judgment there will be no more. ³Judgment is symbolic because beyond perception there is no judgment [Ur: symbolic only in the sense that everybody is much better off *without* judgment]. ⁴When the Bible says “Judge not that ye be not judged,” it means that if you judge the reality of others [Ur: at all] you will be unable to avoid judging your own.

• Study Question •

1. *How does Jesus' interpretation of the Bible statement in 1:4 differ from what you may have heard or thought it meant?*

The section discusses several aspects of judgment. It seems to promise more discussion of “the Last Judgment” (1:1), but it isn't what we might expect. Rather than further correction of our mistaken ideas, such as was given in T-2.VIII, this section expands on the idea when “perception becomes impossible” there is no more judgment: “beyond perception there is no more judgment” (1:3; compare with T-3.V.8:1–2). The Last Judgment is “last” in the literal sense, because after that point *there is no more judgment* (1:2).

The reinterpretation of Matthew 7:1 in 1:4 is another example of the way the Course removes all thought of a vindictive God from the Bible. Traditionally, Christians have understood this verse to mean that if we judge other people, *God* will judge us and, presumably, punish us. Jesus here says that the words actually mean that if we judge others we will “be unable to avoid judging” *ourselves*. It is an application of the idea that innocence is either total or non-existent; if we allow for guilt in anyone, we have opened the door to finding it in ourselves. Jesus proceeds to expand on this idea in the following paragraph.

Paragraph 2

2. ¹The choice to judge rather than to know is the cause of the loss of peace. ²Judgment is the process on which perception but not knowledge rests. ³I have discussed this before in terms of the selectivity of perception, pointing out that evaluation is its obvious prerequisite. ⁴Judgment always involves rejection. ⁵It never emphasizes only the positive aspects of what is judged, whether in you or in others [Ur: **whether it be in or out of the self**]. ⁶What has been perceived and rejected, or judged and found wanting, remains in your mind [Ur: **in the unconscious**] because it has been perceived. ⁷One of the illusions from which you suffer is the belief that what you judged against has no effect. ⁸This cannot be true unless you also believe that what you judged against does not exist. ⁹You evidently do not believe this, or you would not have judged against it. ¹⁰In the end it does not matter whether your judgment is right or wrong. ¹¹Either way you are placing your belief in the unreal. ¹²This cannot be avoided in any type of judgment, because it implies the belief that reality is yours to select *from*.

• Study Question •

2. *Consider some situation in which you have felt a loss of peace, and apply the idea from sentence 1 to it. Try to see how, in that situation, you are choosing to “judge rather than to know.”*

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Judging is something we do by choice, and that *choice* causes our loss of peace (2:1); the peace is not taken away by what we judging. All perception rests on judgment (2:2). Perception is always selective, so we must judge in order to select some things and reject others (2:3). When we judge anything, a totally positive judgment is impossible (2:5); we are always *rejecting* some parts or aspects of what we see (2:4). We are attempting to get rid of aspects we do not like by rejecting them. Part of our mind mistakenly believes that by judging against something, or rejecting it, we have gotten rid of it so that it no longer has any effect (2:7). Thus, we are actually deciding what is real and what is not. That is our basic mistake: Reality is not ours to select from (2:12).

What is judgment? It isn't just condemnation; it has a much broader meaning. The *American Heritage Dictionary* has two interesting definitions that I think convey the meaning of the word as it is used here:

The mental ability to perceive and distinguish relationships; discernment.

The capacity to form an opinion by distinguishing and evaluating.

Notice the use of the word “distinguish” in both definitions. Judging involves separating the “good” from the “bad,” the “desirable” from the “undesirable.” In judging *reality*, we are distancing ourselves from reality and slicing it into pieces, which makes the kind of knowledge the Course speaks of, that is, direct experience of reality, impossible. Judgment such as this is the basis of perception, but the antithesis of knowledge (2:2).

Why does judging cause us to lose our peace? I think these first few paragraphs are an attempt to explain why: We attempt to shoulder the job of deciding what reality is and what it is not, which is a huge responsibility! Our peace is destroyed by “the strain of constant judgment” (5:6).

Judging always means that we are *rejecting* some part of reality. Yet, the thing judged against still remains in our minds, in the dumping ground of our unconscious (2:6). Therefore, it exists. If something exists, it has effects. The only way a thing could have zero effects is if that thing does not exist. Therefore, since things we judge against remain in our minds, they do exist, and they do have effects (2:6–8).

Obviously, Jesus says, we believe that what we judged *exists*, or we wouldn't have judged it to begin with (2:9). So our belief that judging against something nullifies its effects *must* be false, because the thing does exist, and therefore has effects. Judging is pointless because it cannot possibly do what we want it to do; it cannot make the things we do not like go away.

It doesn't even matter if our judgments are right or wrong (2:10)! Any kind of judgment means we believe in something unreal (2:11). Either we are believing in something that does not exist, or we are believing that something which *does* exist *does not*. At a minimum, when we judge we believe that we have the ability to *select from* reality—to choose what is real and what is not real—and *that* is a belief in something unreal, since *we have no such ability* (2:12).

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I think some part of our mind knows that the whole process of judgment is a house of cards that rests on an unstable foundation. Who do we think we are, that we can stand in judgment on reality? Here we are, doing what amounts to playing God, and we know perfectly well that we don't have a clue what we are doing! No wonder we're a bit nervous. We may try to convince ourselves that our peace has been taken away by *the thing* we are judging, but in fact it is the judging itself that has undermined our peace.

Paragraph 3

3. ¹You have no idea of the tremendous release and deep peace that comes from meeting yourself and your brothers totally without judgment. ²When you recognize [Ur: If you will look back at the earlier notes about] what you are and what your brothers are, you will realize that judging them in any way is without meaning. ³In fact, their meaning is lost to you precisely *because* you are judging them. ⁴All uncertainty comes from the [Ur: a totally fallacious] belief that you are under the coercion of judgment. ⁵You do not need judgment to organize your life, and you certainly do not need it to organize yourself. ⁶In the presence of knowledge all judgment is automatically suspended, and this is the process that enables recognition to replace perception.

• Study Question •

3. *Make a personal exercise out of 3:1–2. Put the sentences in the first person and substitute the names of individuals in place of the general nouns and pronouns. For instance: “I have no idea of the tremendous release and deep peace that will come from meeting John Doe totally without judgment. When I recognize what I am and what John is, I will realize that judging myself or John in any way is without meaning.” Repeat those lines several times for each person, and meditate on their meaning. Imagine yourself meeting the person truly without judgment. Let yourself feel the sense of release and deep peace that comes with letting go of judgments.*



If loss of peace comes from our choice to judge (2:1), then choosing to *not* judge restores that peace (3:1). I love this thought! Imagine meeting your brother “totally without judgment” (3:1). Imagine meeting *yourself* that way! In just thinking about it, I get a sense of what that kind of peace would be like. Yet, if I “have no idea” (3:1) of that peace, I must be in such a constant state of judgment that I cannot truly imagine what it must be to be without it.

Most likely, it is similar to the hum of an air conditioner that we have become accustomed to. We don't realize how the sound is affecting us until—one day—it stops. Suddenly it seems as if a weight has lifted; the muscles in our shoulders relax. We *had no idea* what the absence of that sound would be like, but what a relief when it comes! The absence of judgment will be like that.

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I think this line means what it says: We literally have no idea what true inner peace is like! (You may want to read over Workbook Lesson 107, paragraphs 2 and 3; it really makes this idea very clear!) We may think we have enjoyed some peace at times. Yet the process of perception the Course describes in this chapter—"a continual process of accepting and rejecting, organizing and reorganizing, shifting and changing" (T-3.V.7:7), or in other words *judging*—is something we are engaged in constantly. Therefore, we have suffered the loss of peace *constantly*. As the Course says in the Manual: "God's peace is recognized at first by just one thing; in every way it is totally unlike all previous experiences" (M-20.2:2).

We think that by judging others we understand them; we know what their meaning is. But our attempts to interpret their meaning cannot work (T-3.V.5:2-4). In fact, we *lose* their meaning when we judge them (3:3).

What brings about our sense of strain and uncertainty is our belief that we *have to* judge (3:4). We think we are under "coercion," forced to judge whether or not we want to. There seems to be no other way to exist. How could we possibly get along without judgment, which is an essential part of perception itself? And yet, Jesus says, "You do not need judgment to organize your life, and you certainly do not need it to organize yourself" (3:5).

I honestly cannot tell you how it is possible to organize your life, and organize yourself, without using judgment. We don't need explanations; we need the experience. But if Jesus says it is possible—*certainly* possible—it must be possible. Living without judgment means that we must depend entirely on the guidance of the Holy Spirit in place of our own judgments. The Course makes it clear that its goal for us includes letting go completely of all judgment (see for instance, Section 10 of the Manual). It contends that letting go of judgment is much easier than holding on to it. When we encounter *knowledge*, "all judgment is automatically suspended" (3:6). It becomes meaningless and unneeded. We no longer *perceive* our brothers; we *recognize* them (3:6).

Paragraph 4

4. ¹You are very fearful of everything you have perceived but have refused to accept. ²You believe that, because you have refused to accept it, you have lost control over it. ³This is why you see it in nightmares, or in pleasant disguises in what seem to be your happier dreams. ⁴Nothing that you have refused to accept can be brought into awareness. ⁵It is not dangerous in itself, but you have made it seem dangerous to you.

• Study Question •

4. *According to this paragraph, why are we afraid of our repressed thoughts? Is our fear justified? Do we have reason to be afraid of our unconscious mind?*

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To judge against is to reject. We think that the thoughts we judge against are gone from our minds, but in fact, we have only repressed them. By denying our responsibility for these thoughts, we believe we have put them out of our minds, and therefore, out of our control. They reappear as threats and dangers that seem to be external to us, and they show up in our nightmares (4:1–3). Sometimes they show up “in pleasant disguises” in dreams that *apparently* are happier (4:3). The latter category probably includes things like special love relationships, which may seem happy at the start, but end up worse than the nightmares.

I think the terms “nightmare” and “dream” refer to both the nighttime dreams we have while asleep, and to the experiences we seem to have within the world, which are another kind of dream. When something in the world terrifies us, it is really a manifestation of some thought within our mind that we have refused to accept. Workbook Lesson 265 puts it like this:

“I have indeed misunderstood the world, because I laid my sins on it and saw them looking back at me. How fierce they seemed! And how deceived was I to think that what I feared was in the world, instead of in my mind alone” (W-pII. 265.1:1–3).

When we judge against something, our fear of it makes it impossible for us to recognize that it exists in our own mind (4:4). Whatever it is we have judged, it is not truly dangerous, but because we perceive it as out of our control, it *seems* dangerous (4:5). When we realize it is not out of our control, but exists in our own mind, then we will no longer fear it because we will know we also can control it.

Paragraph 5

5. ¹When you feel tired, it is [Ur: merely] because you have judged yourself as capable of being tired. ²When you laugh at someone, it is because you have judged him as unworthy [Ur: debased]. ³When you laugh at yourself you must [Ur: you are singularly likely to] laugh at others, if only because you cannot tolerate the idea of being more unworthy [Ur: debased] than they are. ⁴All this makes you feel tired because it is essentially disheartening. ⁵You are not really capable of being tired, but you are very capable of wearying yourself. ⁶The strain of constant judgment is virtually intolerable. ⁷It is curious that an ability so debilitating would be so deeply cherished. [Ur: But there is a very good reason for this. (This, however, depends upon what you mean by good.)] ⁸Yet if [Ur: If] you wish to be the author of reality, [Ur: which is totally impossible anyway,] you will insist on holding on to judgment. ⁹You will also regard judgment with fear [Ur: use the term with considerable fear], believing that it will someday be used against you. ¹⁰This belief can exist only to the extent that you believe [Ur: To whatever extent it is used against you, it is due only to your belief] in the efficacy of judgment as a weapon of defense for your own authority.

• Study Question •

5. *Make a summary list of the negative effects of judgment that have been discussed in paragraphs 2 through 5.*
6. *What is the reason that we hold on to our judgment, according to 5:8–10?*

Who would have thought that *feeling tired* was a result of judgment, especially judging myself as *capable* of being tired? That laughing at someone is a sign that we have judged him or her to be unworthy? (5:1–3) Judging another or oneself is “disheartening” (5:4)—we feel drained, discouraged and demeaned by it. I still need to remind myself of this teaching fairly often; I don’t easily connect my tiredness to thoughts of judgment, but that is what this is saying. Actually, it gets quite extreme. It says, “You are not really capable of being tired” (5:5), a mind-boggling concept. Tiredness comes from a single source: “the strain of constant judgment” which “is virtually intolerable” (5:6). To me, that is a line worth memorizing, and one I need to call to mind more often.

We judge ourselves as “unworthy” or “debased” (as the Urtext put it), and then, to make myself feel better, I judge someone else in the same way. “Debased” means lowered in status. We are evaluating ourselves and others as “missing the mark,” which is the very definition of the biblical term “sin.”

Judging tires us out! It is “debilitating” (5:7), a word that means something that saps our strength and energy. Why, then, is it “so deeply cherished” by us? The reason takes us to one of the root causes of our difficulties, which the Course calls “the authority problem.”

The Course is linking our addiction to judging to a deep-seated ego craving to be in charge of the universe, to replace God. As has been said before, particularly in T-2.I, “The Origin of the Separation,” we have attempted to become our own creator. We want to be independent of God, autonomous, and to do so we have to believe that we created ourselves without God’s help. The ego’s desire for autonomy comes up again in T-4.II, and in T-11.V, where we are told: “The ego’s goal is quite explicitly ego autonomy” (T-11.V.4:4). We are, so we wish to believe, the author of our own reality, the captain of our soul (5:8). The reason we *value* judgment is that we think it is an effective “weapon of defense for [our] own authority” (5:10). We also *fear* judgment at the same time because we are afraid it will be used as a weapon *against* us (5:9).

We aren’t normally conscious of this hidden motive behind our judging, but it does crop up, even in popular sayings. Have you ever heard someone who was being judged lash back at their accuser by saying, “Who died and made you God?” It shows an awareness of the fact that the person doing the judging is taking on an authority they have no right to—exactly what the Course is saying here.

Paragraph 6

6. ¹God offers only mercy. ²Your words should [Ur: *always*] reflect only mercy, because that is what you have received and that is what you should give. ³Justice is a temporary expedient, or an attempt to teach you the meaning of mercy. ⁴It is judgmental [Ur: *Its judgmental side arises*] only because you are capable of injustice.

Lest we have any doubt what the Course is talking about when it is discussing judgment, this brief paragraph makes it clear: We are to offer mercy to our brothers and sisters, rather than condemnation (6:1–2). How often have *my words* reflected something other than mercy? God offers nothing but mercy to me; how can I offer anything else to my brothers?

The phrase, “Justice is a temporary expedient” (6:3), is a very cursory treatment of the concept of justice. Here, I think Jesus is using the term *justice* in its traditional sense of fair treatment, along the lines of Old Testament justice: “an eye for an eye.” That was a major improvement over the earlier tribal practice of massive retribution, where someone’s offense might result in the massacre of his or her entire family or village. In that sense, even “an eye for an eye” was a lesson in mercy. But it is only “a temporary expedient,” a short stop along the way to true mercy (3:3); justice includes some elements of judgment only because that is necessary to correct our tendency toward *injustice* (3:4).

The Course expounds at length on justice in later sections (Chapter 25, Sections VIII and IX particularly, and the early sections of Chapter 26 as well). There, it says that justice and love cannot be separated, and that true justice is to give everyone their due—and everyone is due everything!

You have the right to all the universe; to perfect peace, complete deliverance from all effects of sin, and to the life eternal, joyous and complete in every way, as God appointed for His holy Son. This is the only justice Heaven knows, and all the Holy Spirit brings to earth (T-25.VIII.14:1–2).

God’s version of justice is not judgmental in any sense of condemnation or vengeance (T-25.VIII.3:1–2). It does not punish. In God’s justice, “no one can lose” (T-25.IX.5:4).

Paragraph 7

7. ¹I have spoken of different symptoms, and at that level there is almost endless variation. ²There is, however, only one cause for all of them: the authority problem. ³This *is* “the root of all evil.” [Ur: *Money is but one of its many reflections, and is a reasonably representative example of the kind of thinking which stems from it. The idea of buying and selling implies precisely the kind of exchange that the Souls cannot understand at all, because their own Supply is always abundant, and all their demands are fully met.*] ⁴Every symptom the ego makes involves a contradiction in terms, because the mind is

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split between the ego and the Holy Spirit [Ur: the Soul], so that whatever the ego makes is incomplete and contradictory. [Ur: Consider what a “speechless professor” means as a concept {Bill was a professor who didn’t want to teach classes}. It literally means a “nonprofessing professor,” or a “nonspeaking speaker”.] ⁵This untenable position is the result of the authority problem which, because it accepts the one inconceivable thought as its premise, can produce only ideas that are inconceivable.

• Study Question •

7. *From here through paragraph 10, the discussion switches to the source of our judgment: the authority problem. In 7:5, what is “the one inconceivable thought” which constitutes the premise of the authority problem? (See T-2.I.4:1–2; T-2.VIII.1:1; and T-3.V.3:2. For further clarification, look ahead at T-3.VII.4:6–12.)*
8. *Read through the rest of this section. Then attempt, in your own words, to define “the authority problem” which is “the root of all evil” (7.3). Hints: Examine the following passages in particular: T-3.VI.5:8–10, 7:5–8:10, 10:3–7. See also T-11.In.2:2–8.)*

The “many different symptoms” Jesus refers to here probably include our anxiety, our fears, our attacks, our depression, and so on, in “almost endless variation” (7:1). These are symptoms of our mental illness. All of them have a single cause: the authority problem (7:2). Jesus is emphatic on this point: “This *is* ‘the root of all evil’” (7:3). The remainder of this section deals with this all-important issue.

The phrase in quotes is taken from the King James Version of the Bible, I Timothy 6:10: “For the love of money is the root of all evil.” That translation seems to identify *money* as the root of all evil. However, the New International Version, a more recent translation, has changed this verse to read: “For the love of money is *a* root of *all kinds of evil*” (my italics). Money is not the sole cause of all evil things, although its misuse may lead to all sorts of evil consequences. The omitted lines from the Urtext explain that money, and the whole field of commerce (“buying and selling”), are examples of thinking based on the ego’s desire for self-creation, because that root mistake has resulted in an identity that *seems* to have lacks, that *seems* to need to take things from others, or purchase them, in order to feel whole and complete. Our True Identity has no lacks, and therefore no need for buying and selling.

In the Course, Jesus seems to be saying, “Although money was incorrectly identified as the root of all evil, the authority problem *really is* the root of all evil.” The authority problem—whatever that is, since it hasn’t been explained yet—gave birth to all the evil in the universe!

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We need to be clear, then, about what “the authority problem” is. Here’s my shortest definition: *The authority problem means having a problem with God’s authority or Authorship.* We deny that God is our Author and, instead, insist that we have created ourselves (or at least that we have made ourselves into something completely different from what God created, which amounts to creating ourselves). Earlier, in T-2.I.4:1, the Course declared that our “basic misperception” is that we believe we have usurped God’s power. The phrase, “authority problem,” in the Course, is shorthand for that basic misperception. This misperception is at the root of all the “endless variety” of symptoms of our illness (7:1–3).

Whatever the ego symptom, it will always be “incomplete and contradictory” (7:4) because the heart of the ego involves a split in our minds between the ego and the Holy Spirit—an impossibility. The general idea here is that the very foundation of the ego is an absurdity—separation from our Source and self-creation. Everything that comes from it shows the same contradictory nature.

Because it arises in a split mind, the ego itself is incomplete. It can make nothing but incomplete things. The ego itself is contradictory (How can we be separate from the infinite?); it can make nothing but contradictory things. Thus, to be an ego is an “untenable position” (7:5), a point of view that is in reality *impossible*. The premise of the ego—that on which the ego is based—is that we have usurped God’s place as Creator. That is wholly inconceivable, and therefore the ego “can produce only ideas [such as lack] that are inconceivable” (7:5).

Paragraph 8

8. ¹The issue of authority is really a question of authorship. ²When you have an authority problem, it is always because you believe you are the author of yourself and project your delusion onto others. ³You then perceive the situation as one in which others are literally fighting you for your authorship. ⁴This is the fundamental error of all those who believe they have usurped the power of God. ⁵This belief is very frightening to them, but hardly troubles God. ⁶He is, however, eager to undo it, not to punish His children, but only because He knows that it makes them unhappy. ⁷God’s creations are [Ur: were] given their true Authorship, but you prefer [Ur: preferred] to be anonymous when you choose [Ur: chose] to separate yourself from your Author. ⁸[Ur: The word “authority” has been one of their most fearful symbols ever since. Authority has been used for great cruelty, because,] Being uncertain of your [Ur: their] true Authorship, you [Ur: men] believe that your [Ur: their] creation was anonymous. ⁹This leaves you [Ur: has left them] in a position where it sounds meaningful to believe that you created yourself [Ur: to consider the possibility that they must have created themselves]. ¹⁰The dispute over authorship has left such uncertainty in your mind that it may even doubt whether you really exist at all [Ur: that some people have gone so far as to doubt whether they were ever

created at all. Despite the apparent contradiction in this position, it is in one sense more tenable than the view that they created themselves. At least, it acknowledged the fact some *true* authorship is necessary for existence].

• Study Question •

9. How does the authority problem explain the fact that we “cherish” our ability to judge (8:1–3)?

Who is my author? That is the core of the authority problem (8:1). We think we have usurped God's power (8:4), and thus we see God as our enemy, competing with us for our authorship. We project this situation onto those around us and see *them* as “literally fighting [us] for [our] authorship” (8:2–3). The next time you perceive yourself at odds with someone else's authority, stop and remember: “This is a projection of my ego's battle with God's authority.”

When I ponder this “fundamental error” a bit, it's easy to see how it leads to all kinds of problems. My problem with God's authority gets projected, and suddenly I imagine that I am in competition with *everyone*. The words you speak in innocence appear to me as a challenge to my authorship; I see you as threatening my ego autonomy. Since my position is fundamentally unsound to begin with, it is extremely sensitive to anything that seems like a threat.

We can fabricate conflict out of almost anything. My partner, Peggy, was about to paint our bathroom; at her request, I was carrying things out of the bathroom to clear the way. As I carried out a pitcher of water, Peggy innocently said, “I'm going to need that water.” And I bristled! “I thought you wanted stuff out of there!” I snapped. I saw her words as a challenge to my authority. That's how sensitive our egos are.

To think that we are contending with God over our authorship is frightening to us, although it doesn't upset God at all (8:5). He has no desire to punish us for “challenging” His authority. He is eager to “undo it” or correct our mistake (8:6) so as to restore our happiness. As God's creations we have been given God as our Author, but we have chosen to separate ourselves from God and to forget He created us, and thus we have chosen to become “anonymous” (that is, “creator unknown”) (8:7–8). That bit of mental gymnastics makes it possible for us to believe we created ourselves (8:9).

The final line, with its reference to doubting “whether you really exist at all” (8:10), probably applies to only a few among us. Most of us are not so morbidly philosophical that we question our own existence, but apparently, Bill Thetford did so (see *Absence from Felicity*, page 197). This line may have originally had him in mind.

Paragraph 9

9. ¹Only those who give over all desire to reject can know [Ur: *know*] that their own rejection is impossible. ²You have not usurped the power of God, but you *have* lost it. ³Fortunately, to lose something does not mean that it has

gone. ⁴It merely means that you do not remember where it is. ⁵Its existence [Ur: Existence] does not depend on your ability to identify it, or even to place it. ⁶It is possible to look on reality without judgment and merely know that it is there.

• Study Question •

10. Try turning the paragraph into a first-person prayer, and notice how you feel when you pray this prayer.

To “give over all desire to reject” (9:1) is the same thing as “to look on reality without judgment” (9:6). The author has not forgotten the topic of judgment in his discussion of the authority problem. The two are inextricably linked. Our judgments are merely the volleys of combat in our war to defend our self-authorship. Relinquishing judgment is the way out of hell; it leads ultimately to accepting our True Author.

God has not rejected us; that would be impossible (9:1), but to *know* He has not rejected us we have to give up rejecting others. They are just stand-ins for God; judging them is how we fight God for authorship. To know He has not rejected us, we must give up all efforts to reject God as Author (9:1); we must “look on reality without judgment” (9:6).

Perhaps we feel abandoned by God. We cannot “identify” His power; we can’t even “place it”—that is, locate it. And with God’s power not in evidence, we think God has rejected us. We are mistaken. God’s power *seems* to be gone, but it isn’t (9:3); we have just lost it or forgotten where it is (9:2, 4). It exists, independent of our ability to identify or place it (9:5). And if we are willing to let go of judgment, we will once again “merely know that it is there” (9:6).

Paragraph 10

10. ¹Peace is a natural heritage of spirit [Ur: the Soul]. ²Everyone is free to refuse to accept his inheritance, but he is not free to establish what his inheritance is. ³The problem everyone must decide is the fundamental question of [Ur: his own] authorship. ⁴All fear comes ultimately, and sometimes by way of very devious routes, from the denial of Authorship. ⁵The offense is never to God, but only to those who deny Him. ⁶To deny His Authorship is to deny yourself the reason for your peace, so that you see yourself only in segments [Ur: He has thrown away the reason for his own peace, and sees himself only in pieces]. ⁷This strange perception [Ur: position] is the [Ur: an] authority problem.

• Study Question •

11. Compare the following two passages, which show opposite sides of a coin (judgment/gratitude). Pay attention to the word “strain”:

“The strain of constant judgment is virtually intolerable.” (T3.VI.5:6)

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"Gratitude is due him for both his loving thoughts and his appeals for help, for both are capable of bringing love into your awareness if you perceive them truly. And all your sense of strain comes from your attempts not to do just this." (T-12.I.6:2-3)

What attitude can replace our judgment of authority figures if we listen to the Holy Spirit and accept our common Authorship from God (see 10:6)?

Recall that near the beginning of this section we read the statement: "The choice to judge rather than to know is the cause of the loss of peace" (T-3.VI.2:1). Peace is our natural heritage (10:1). If we have lost our peace, it is because we have chosen to refuse our peace by choosing to judge. Yet that does not change the fact that peace is our inheritance (10:2). Peace belongs to us *because* God is our Author (10:6). We are not responsible for creating ourselves; we are not responsible for deciding what is real and what is not. That's God's job, and God has done it perfectly. *That* is the source of our peace.

"Nothing real [nothing that God created] can be threatened.
Nothing unreal [nothing that we have made without God] exists.
Herein lies the peace of God." (T-Int.1:2)

Fear comes (that is, we lose our peace) from the denial of God's Authorship. Always (10:4). The chain of causation may take a lot of devious twists and turns between that denial and the particular form that fear takes, but fear can always be traced back, ultimately, to our denial that God is our Creator. Therefore, "the fundamental question of authorship" is "the problem everyone must decide" (10:3).

Very likely, you have never thought that you had a problem with accepting God as Creator. The Course is saying you *do* have a problem with it. Every form of fear you have ever experienced, or every thought of judgment towards yourself or towards another, witnesses to your denial of God's Authorship, because if you *did* fully accept God as Creator, fear and judgment would be impossible in any form. God is perfect and wholly loving. Would He create anything that can be endangered? Would He not, in His love, ensure the perfect safety and security of all His creations? Of course He would, and in fact He has! Therefore, if I am in fear, I must believe that I am not His creation. Would He create anything less than perfect? Of course not! Then if I judge anything, I must believe that God did not create it. That is how the Course reasons here. My fundamental problem is my denial of God's Authorship.

This does not bother God! It only bothers "those who deny Him" (10:5), in other words, ourselves. We have not hurt God; we have only hurt ourselves. We have made our peace of mind impossible by seeing the Son of God in fragments (10:6), fragments that are at war with one another and vying for authorship. The wording of the Urtext is perfect here; it's a shame the editors changed it: "He has thrown away the reason for his own peace, and sees himself only in pieces." "This strange perception" (10:7), this seeing the

Son of God as fragmented, “*is* the authority problem.” It’s what happens to our self-perception when we reject God’s authorship.

Paragraph 11

11. ¹[Ur: Neither you nor Bill can find peace while this authority problem continues. But the truth is still that there *is* no problem about this] There is no one who does not feel that he is imprisoned in some way. ²If this is the result of his own free will he must regard his will as not free, or the circular reasoning in this position would be quite apparent. ³Free will must lead to freedom. ⁴Judgment always imprisons because it separates segments of reality by the [Ur: highly] unstable scales of desire. ⁵Wishes [or desires] are not facts. ⁶To wish is to imply that willing is not sufficient. ⁷Yet no one in his right mind believes that what is wished is as real as what is willed. ⁸Instead of “Seek ye first the Kingdom of Heaven” say, “*Will* ye first the Kingdom of Heaven,” and you have said, “I know what I am and I accept my own inheritance.” [Ur: It is *essential* that this whole authority problem be voluntarily dismissed at once and for all before Bill’s course {a course on abnormal psychology that Bill was scheduled—and didn’t want to—teach}. Neither of you understands how important this is for your sanity. You are both quite insane on this point. (This is not a judgment. It is merely a fact. (No, Helen, you *should* use the word “fact”. This is just as much a fact as God is. A fact is literally a “making” or a starting point. You *do* start from this point, and your thinking is inverted because of it.))]

• Study Question •

12. *One by one, consider several people toward whom you have felt judgmental. Recognize that in choosing to judge them, you are choosing against your own peace, and make a choice to let your judgment go. Affirm that your brother or sister is God’s creation, just as you are. If it helps, visualize yourself removing nails from his or her hands, or thorns from his or her forehead, and praying that they may be healed along with you.*

We all feel, in some way, that we are imprisoned (11:1). We feel forced, compelled or limited by some person in some way; we have an authority problem. What Jesus is saying here, however, is that authority problems always arise *as a result of our own choice*. “The choice to judge rather than to know is the cause of the loss of peace” (T-3.VI.2:1).

The basic situation then, is one in which we see our will being blocked (we are imprisoned); and yet the situation arises “as a result of [our] own free will” (11:2)! Clearly, this makes no sense. The only way we could possibly deceive ourselves like this is by denying our own freedom of will (11:2). Free will cannot possibly lead to imprisonment. If I chose something, it isn’t prison; it is my choice. Thus, in order to

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believe we are imprisoned we have to convince ourselves that we cannot possibly have chosen this situation.

That is exactly what judgment does; we project our own choice and its consequences onto another mind. We see their mind as separate from our own mind, and we blame that other mind for our loss of peace (11:4). We *wish* to be independent and self-creating. That is the “unstable scales of desire” we use to separate our brothers from ourselves (11:4). But wishes aren't facts (11:5). Only what is *willed* is real (11:6–7). We are not truly separated, and we are not truly imprisoned.

All that is necessary to regain the Kingdom of Heaven (to reclaim our peace) is to *will* that it be so (11:8). We need to realize we have been choosing judgment instead of peace, and to let all judgment go. When we choose gratitude toward our brothers instead of judgment, we are proclaiming the truth of what we all are as God's creations. We are accepting our inheritance (peace, see 10:1). “You will not find peace until you have removed the nails from the hands of God's Son, and taken the last thorn from his forehead” (T-11.VI.7:1).

Answer Key

1. The usual understanding is that if we judge, God will judge us; the Course interprets it to mean that if we judge others we will not be able to avoid *judging ourselves*. To “judge the reality of others” uses the word “judge” in the sense of condemnation. We are making a decision about their reality, and declaring what that reality is. When we condemn our brothers or sisters and see them as guilty, we are evaluating what they are, and deciding that their “reality” is “sinner.” If we do that with others, we cannot avoid doing it to ourselves as well.
2. No written answer is expected.
3. No written answer is expected.
4. We are afraid of what we have refused to accept because we believe we have lost control of it. There is no real reason to fear our unconscious mind; it only *seems* dangerous.
5. Negative effects of judgment include: Loss of peace; suffering from the effects of rejected thoughts without knowing why; losing the meaning of our brothers; uncertainty; fear disguised in happier dreams or in the form of nightmares; tiredness; feeling disheartened; strain; debilitation.
6. We hold on to judgment because of our wish to be the author of reality; we use judgment to defend our own authority.
7. The inconceivable thought is that I am the author of reality, that I can create myself.
8. The authority problem is the belief that I can create myself, judge what is unreal or real, and have usurped the creative power of God; it includes refusing to acknowledge myself as God's creation. I think I am my own author, and project that belief onto others (I see them as competing with me for my authorship). I see myself only in segments (separated fragments).
9. We judge to hold on to the belief that we can author ourselves. We see others as competing with us for our authorship, so we use judgment as a weapon of defense against them.
10. Father, I thank You for telling me I have not usurped Your power. I give up any desire to reject You as my Author or to reject Your authorship of my brothers. I now know that rejection by You is impossible. Though I have not usurped Your power, I have lost it. I don't know where it is, but it is not gone. My inability to recognize Your power, or even to know where it is, does not mean that It does not exist! I now know that it is possible simply to know Your power is there, if I learn to look on reality without judgment. Amen.
11. We can offer these authority figures peace and even gratitude; we can come to see even their appeals for help as something that can bring love into our awareness.
12. No written answer is expected.