

Study Guide and Commentary

ACIM[®] Text, Chapter 7, Section VI

From Vigilance to Peace

Legend for Text paragraphs:

blue text = Material from ACIM 3rd edition (FIP)
bold blue text = words emphasized in all caps in Urtext
red text = alternate or omitted material from the Urtext
light blue text = editorial comments
~~striketrough blue text~~ = Not in Urtext, in FIP edition

Overview of the Section

The preceding section ended in telling us that the Sonship can only be appreciated as *one*. The mind of Christ is shared by all of our brothers and sisters. Section VI proceeds to consider the wholly false perception we may have of a fragmented Sonship, with parts capable of being different from other parts. It stresses that we cannot be at peace with such a perception, and must become vigilant *against* the perception of separateness. Such vigilance must continue until our perception becomes unified, totally free of separation, and only then can we be fully at peace.

Paragraph 1

1. [Ur: You can appreciate the Sonship *only* as one. This is part of the law of Creation, and therefore governs *all* thought.] ¹~~Although you can love the Sonship only as one~~ you can **perceive** it [Ur: *perceive* the Sonship] as fragmented. [fragmented, but] ²It is **impossible**, however, to see something in part of it that you will not attribute to all of it. ³That is why attack is **never** discrete, and why it **must** be relinquished entirely. ⁴If it is **not** relinquished entirely it is not relinquished at all. ⁵Fear and love [Ur: *are equally reciprocal*. They] make or create, depending on whether the ego or the Holy Spirit begets or inspires them, but they *will* return to the mind of the thinker and **they will** affect his total perception. ⁶That includes his concept of God, of His creations and of his own. ⁷He will not appreciate **any** of them if he regards them fearfully. ⁸He will appreciate **all** of them if he regards them with love.

• Study Question •

1. *Attack can never be restricted to part of the Sonship. If you regard someone in your life as more valuable, worthy and special than other people, how will this affect your concept of other people, that person, God, His creations, your creations?*

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The first two lines appeared at the end of the preceding section. I repeat them here because there is an obvious parallel between how we can *appreciate* of the Sonship and how we can *perceive* the Sonship. The Sonship is *one*, period. It cannot be fragmented. All appreciation of it will always be based on that oneness. In other words, you can't truly appreciate *part* of the Sonship and not appreciate other parts. Whatever your thought about the Sonship is will affect the entire Sonship. Even if you *perceive* the Sonship as fragmented, which is certainly possible (1:1), and believe that you can interact with a part of the Sonship without affecting the rest of the Sonship, you simply can't do it. You cannot "see something in part of it that you will not attribute to all of it" (1:2).

This is why "attack is *never* discrete" (1:3). "Discrete" does not mean "careful or unobtrusive"; that is the word "discreet." Sounds like, but very different. "Discrete" means "completely separate." Jesus is basically saying that you cannot attack *anyone* without attacking *everyone*, because the Sonship is one. This, in turn, is why we must let go of attack *entirely, totally*. "If it is not relinquished entirely it is not relinquished at all" (1:4).

Fear and love, Jesus says, "are equally reciprocal"; that is, they operate like a boomerang. If you send out fear you'll get fear back; if you send out love, you'll get love back (1:5). And either one will affect *your total perception*; they will color everything you see: your concept of God, your concept of all of God's creations (other people especially), and your concept of your *own* creations (1:6). If your perception of any part of the Sonship is based on fear, you will be unable to truly appreciate *anything*, including God. But if you look through the eyes of love you will appreciate *all* of them (1:7–8).

It's all or nothing. There is no in between. You cannot perceive evil in anyone—not even Hitler or Osama ben Laden or Ted Bundy—that will not pollute the way you see your loved ones, yourself, and even God. *The Sonship is One*.

Paragraph 2

2. ¹The mind that accepts attack **cannot** love. ²That is because it believes it can **destroy** love, and therefore does not understand what love **is**. ³If it does not understand what love **is**, it **cannot** perceive itself as loving. ⁴This loses the awareness of being, induces feelings of unreality and results in utter confusion. ⁵Your [own] thinking has done this because of its power, but your [own] thinking can also save you **from** this because its power is not of your making. ⁶Your ability to **direct** your thinking as you choose **is** part of its power. ⁷If you do not believe you can do this you have **denied** the power of your thought, and thus rendered it powerless [powerless] in your belief.

• Study Question •

2. *When you attack you cannot know love, but the same power of thought that caused this problem can correct it. Why does accepting attack imply that you believe you can destroy love (see 2:1-2:2)?*



If you accept the thought of attack in your mind, you must believe that you can block out the thought of love, replacing it with attack in regard to someone you perceive as a separate, discrete fragment of the Sonship. But you *cannot* block or destroy love; you

don't understand what love is. You don't recognize that *you are love*. And because you don't recognize your own being and don't know what love is, you cannot truly be loving toward anyone or anything. In a nutshell: If you harbor attack toward any part of the Sonship, you are unable to truly love any part of it. You have had to believe that you are something other than love, and that makes true love impossible for you. (2:1–4)

One result of this is that you experience “feelings of unreality.” Have you ever felt unreal? The Course's dictum, echoing Descartes' “I think, therefore I am,” is, “I love, therefore I am.” Only when we know ourselves as love do we feel truly alive.

The good news is that the same power of thought that has brought about this dilemma is capable of undoing it (1:5). Our minds were created by God, and are part of God. You still have the “ability to direct your thinking as you choose” (1:6). If you doubt that, it's only because you have used the very power that you are denying to deny it! (1:7).

This ability to direct our own thinking is the basis of the Course's teachings about *vigilance*. Vigilance is a key topic of this section. The next few paragraphs discuss the stratagems of the ego in perpetuating our belief in separateness, fear, and attack; then, the section goes on to show the Holy Spirit's way out through mental vigilance.

Paragraph 3

3. ¹The ingeniousness of the ego to preserve itself is enormous, but it stems from the very power of the mind [**which**] **the ego denies**. ²This means that the ego attacks **what is preserving it**, which must result in [*must be a source of*] extreme anxiety. ³That is why the ego **never** recognizes [*Ur: knows*] what it is doing. ⁴It is perfectly logical but clearly insane. ⁵The ego draws upon the one source that is totally inimical to its existence *for* its existence. ⁶Fearful of perceiving the **power** of this source, it is forced to **depreciate** it. ⁷This threatens its **own** existence, a state which it finds intolerable. ⁸Remaining logical but still insane, the ego resolves this completely insane dilemma in a completely insane way. ⁹It does not perceive *its* existence as threatened[,] by projecting the threat onto *you*, and perceiving your being [*Ur: being*] as **nonexistent**. ¹⁰This ensures **its** continuance if you side **with** it, by guaranteeing that you will **not** know your **own** Safety [*safety*].

• Study Question •

3. *Paragraph 3 speaks of the ego's contradiction of relying on the power of your mind yet being forced to depreciate that power. Why is the mind's power something that is "inimical"¹ to the ego's existence?*
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¹ Inimical—tending to obstruct or harm; unfavorable

² It's worthwhile to think for a moment about how to reconcile the idea that mind cannot attack with the equally emphasized idea that we must give up “attack thoughts.” Indeed, in speaking of the way that our body can attack another body, the Course makes a point that the *thought* of attack originates in the mind! “Yet what but mind directs the body to attack?” (W-pI.161.6:6). Doesn't that place the responsibility for the attack on the mind? In our courts, a person who hires another person to commit a crime is as guilty as the

We should never underestimate the power of the ego because “it stems from the very power of the mind” (3:1). Yet the fact that the ego is empowered by our powerful minds, capable of creating as God creates, is its greatest weakness, because the ego *denies* the very power of the mind that preserves its existence. It has to deny it. To acknowledge the mind’s power would be to acknowledge that we are created in the image and likeness of God. So the ego exists in a state of “extreme anxiety,” aware it is under attack and never realizing that it is attacking itself! (3:1–3)

The power of the mind is “inimical” (see footnote 1) to the ego’s existence (3:5). Its position is extremely precarious. The ego wants to use the power of the mind to establish itself, but if it admits the mind’s power, that very power will bring an end to the ego. The ego is therefore forced to “depreciate” the mind’s power (3:6). It tries to convince us that our minds are powerless, that we cannot overcome our addictions or break our bad habits, or that we cannot understand spiritual truth, that we are spineless, incompetent beings, destined to a mediocre existence, powerless to overcome our own egos. And yet, in doing so, the ego “threatens its own existence” (3:7). If it affirms the power of the mind, we can use that power to transcend the ego; if it denies the power of the mind, it undercuts the source of its own existence. The ego seems to be caught in its own insane trap.

Caught in an insane dilemma, it resolves it in an insane way (3:8). It blindly projects the threat to *its* existence onto *you*, onto your being. It perceives the reality of your being as nonexistent! (3:9) The ego’s hope here, I believe, is that when we are confronted with a vacuum within ourselves—when we become unaware of our own being—we will identify with the ego. In the (apparent) absence of our Real Self (our “safety”) we will think we *are* the ego, thus ensuring its continuance (3:10).

Paragraph 4

4. ¹The ego **cannot afford to know anything** [and cannot afford you knowing your safety—see 3:10)]. ²Knowledge is total [which means knowing anything equals knowing totality], and the ego **does not believe in totality**. ³This unbelief is its origin, and while the ego does not love **you** it *is* faithful to its own antecedents, begetting as it was begotten. ⁴Mind **always** reproduces as it was produced. ⁵Produced by fear, the ego **reproduces** fear. ⁶This **is** its allegiance, and this allegiance makes it treacherous to love **because** you *are* love. ⁷Love **is** your power, which the ego **must** deny. ⁸It must also deny everything this power gives you *because* it gives you everything. ⁹No one who has everything **wants** the ego. ¹⁰Its own maker, then, **does not want it**. ¹¹Rejection is therefore the only decision the ego could **possibly** encounter, if the mind that made it knew **itself**. ¹²And if it recognized [knew again] **any** part of the Sonship, it *would* know itself.

• Study Question •

4. *The ego must reject the love and knowledge that are your natural state. Therefore, if you knew yourself, you would reject the ego. Why, according to this paragraph, would you be afraid to know anything, be afraid to believe in totality, be afraid of love, or deny the gift of love?*



“The ego cannot afford to know anything” (4:1). It’s an illusion, a lie, and to know anything is to know the *truth*, which would undo the lie. It was born in fear (4:5) and therefore is propagated in fear, and propagates fear. It cannot know *anything* because “knowledge is total” (4:2); that is, knowing anything means knowing everything. It’s the either-or situation again, the black or white. The Sonship is One or it isn’t. You can’t attack one without attacking everyone. Know the truth about one person and you know the truth about everyone. The ego does not believe that; it “does not believe in totality.” It believes in fragmentation and separateness. That belief *is* the origin of the ego (4:3): “The ego is the mind’s belief that it is completely on its own” (T-4.II.8:4).

Fear and love are opposites. The ego’s allegiance to fear makes it treacherous to love; but love is what you are, love is your power, and the ego, to exist, must deny your real power (4:6–7). It must deny the gifts your power gives you. So the ego tells you that you are not loving and not loveable.

The moment you realize the truth of what you are, the grandeur of your being, the immense power of your mind, you will *know* in that moment that you do not want the ego. “Rejection is...the only decision the ego could possibly encounter, if the mind that made it knew itself” (4:11). So knowing ourselves is the key. Knowing the truth of our being is the key. And the *way* to know ourselves is by recognizing the truth about “any part of the Sonship” (4:12)—that is, truly recognizing the Christ in a brother or sister, seeing past the lie of their egos and their bodies to the radiance of their being.

Paragraph 5

5. ¹The ego therefore opposes **all** appreciation, **all** recognition, **all** sane perception and **all** knowledge. ²It perceives their threat as total, because it senses that all commitments the mind makes **are** total. ³Forced, therefore, to detach itself from you [*who are mind*], it is willing to attach itself to anything **else**. ⁴But there *is* nothing else. [*It does not follow, however, that the mind cannot make illusions.*] ⁵The mind can, however, make up illusions, and if it does so [*But it does follow that if it makes illusions*] it will **believe** in them, because **that is how it made them**.

• Study Question •

5. *In order to preserve its existence, the ego opposes everything truly positive. Based on this paragraph, why are we unwilling to make total commitments?*

Always ask yourself, “What’s the ‘therefore’ there for?” “The ego *therefore* opposes...” (5:1). The reason for the ego’s opposition to all appreciative, sane perception was given in the preceding paragraph: If the mind recognizes *any part* of the Sonship, it would know itself, and that would be the end of the ego. *Therefore*, the ego “opposes *all* appreciation, *all* recognition, *all* sane perception and *all* knowledge” (5:1). It cannot let any part of it through to consciousness, because any part of it would contain the whole of it! The ego knows that once the mind commits to the truth, the commitment is total, leaving no room for the ego (5:2).

The ego is forced to detach itself from the mind, and thus from *you*, since you *are* mind (5:3). Instead, it tries to attach to something else, *but there is nothing else* (5:4). The mind therefore makes up illusions and attaches to *them*. The mind makes illusions by believing in them, so of course, they seem real to us (5:5).

Summing up the strategy of the ego from these three paragraphs, we see that the ego:

- Fears the mind's power to undo it and therefore depreciates and denies the power of the mind;
- Views our true Self as non-existent, and tells us that we must identify with ego;
- Denies that we are love, and denies that we have everything;
- Opposes any form of appreciation of ourselves or of others;
- Leads us to attach ourselves to the illusion of the ego.

Paragraph 6

6. ¹The Holy Spirit undoes illusions without attacking them, [merely] because He cannot perceive them at all. ²They therefore do not exist for Him. ³He resolves the **apparent** conflict they engender by perceiving **conflict** as meaningless. ⁴I have said before that the Holy Spirit perceives the conflict **exactly as it is**, and it *is* meaningless. ⁵The Holy Spirit does not want you to **understand** conflict; He wants you to realize that, **because** conflict is meaningless, it is not understandable [*cannot be understood*]. ⁶As **I** have already said, understanding brings appreciation and appreciation brings love. ⁷Nothing else **can** be understood, because nothing else is real and therefore nothing else **has** meaning.

• Study Question •

6. *The Holy Spirit dispels conflict by realizing that it is meaningless and not understandable. If someone comes to you and says, "I have this terrible conflict and I really want you to understand the bind I am in," what would this paragraph suggest you do?*

We think that we need to attack our egos, fight against them in order to become spiritual. The Holy Spirit “cannot perceive them at all” (6:1) and thus sees no need of attack. From His perspective there is nothing there to attack; the “enemy” doesn’t exist (6:2). Gary Simmons and Rima Bonario have written a book titled, *The Art of Living with Nothing and No One Against You*. The idea here is similar. What we are is mind-spirit; that is the reality (a reality the ego has hidden from our awareness). The ego—which *seems* to be what we are—actually does not exist. It’s an illusion. There is no power in the ego against which we need to fight! The same is true of other people’s egos as well, which is what the Simmons/Bonario book is getting at—we *have* no enemies except in our perception. To have conflict you must have two separate, opposing forces. If there is only One, if there is no separation, then *there can be no conflict*.

So the Holy Spirit deals with the apparent conflicts brought on by clashing egos and failing bodies by perceiving them as meaningless (6:3–4). This really is the answer to so many of our “profound” questions, such as, “Why does God allow children to suffer and

die? Why is life so tragic? How can I resolve the conflict with my spouse/ex/parents/siblings/boss? Why do good people get sick? Why did God take my child?" To the Holy Spirit, the questions are meaningless because they deal with illusions. There is no separation, therefore no conflict. There is no death, either! As the Course said in the last chapter, "...nothing is accomplished through death, because death is nothing. Everything is accomplished through life, and life is of the mind and in the mind. The body neither lives nor dies, because it cannot contain you who are life" (T-6.V.1:2-4). We are not bodies. Jesus, speaking of his body's death on the cross, says that the destruction of his body *does not matter*:

Assault can ultimately be made only on the body. There is little doubt that one body can assault another, and can even destroy it. Yet if destruction itself is impossible, anything that is destructible cannot be real. Its destruction, therefore, does not justify anger (T-6.I.4:1-4).

I elected, for your sake and mine, to demonstrate that the most outrageous assault, as judged by the ego, does not matter (T-6.I.9:1).

There is no death, but there *is* a belief in death (T-3.VII.5:11).

This doesn't mean that we can ignore the biblical injunction to "Weep with them that weep" (Romans 12:15). There is no death, but the *belief* in death is very real, and people—all of us, even the most spiritual among us—experience suffering when we lose a loved one, especially in an untimely or unexpected manner. But we can avoid the trap of trying to "understand" how or why it happened (6:5). It is essentially meaningless; it just happens, and we assign it all the meaning that it has for us (Workbook lesson #2). And when someone comes to us with such a troubling question, we can attempt to steer them away from trying to understand it. It isn't understandable because, in the realm of spirit and reality, *nothing happened*.

Only what is real can be understood and appreciated (6:6–7), and love is the world's reality (T-12.I.10:1). If an illusion *could* be understood, it would be real and no longer an illusion. To me, explanations such as, "Some day we'll understand," or, "God must have needed her in heaven," just don't cut it. I'd much rather realize that what seems to have occurred "does not matter," that "nothing real can be threatened," and that in the end, all illusions disappear.

Paragraph 7

7. ¹If you will keep in mind what the Holy Spirit offers you, you cannot be vigilant for anything *but* God and His Kingdom. ²The **only** reason you may find this hard to accept is because you may still think there **is** something else. ³Belief does not require vigilance **unless** it is conflicted. ⁴If it **is**, there **are** conflicting components within it that have led to [engendered] a state of war, and vigilance has therefore **become** essential. ⁵Vigilance has no place in peace. ⁶It is necessary against [only against] beliefs that are **not** true, and would never have been called upon by the Holy Spirit if you had not believed the untrue. ⁷[Ur: **But you cannot deny that**] When you **believe** something, you **have** made it true **for you**. ⁸When **you** believe what God **does not know**, your thought seems to **contradict** His, and this makes it appear **as if you are attacking Him**.

• Study Question •

7. *You only need to be vigilant when you have conflicting beliefs. Will you reach a place on this earth when you no longer need to be vigilant?*

Being vigilant for God and His Kingdom is the same thing as what Jesus commanded in Matthew 6:33: “But strive first for the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things [such as food, drink, and clothing] will be given to you as well.” The theme of mental vigilance harks back to Chapter 6, Section V.C, “The Lessons of the Holy Spirit: Be Vigilant only for God and His Kingdom.” If we recognized, truly, that “Nothing unreal exists” (T-In.2:3), that only God and His Kingdom are real, we could not possibly focus our minds on anything else (7:1). But we “still think there is something else” (7:2); therefore, we still need to be vigilant, watching where our thoughts go. Our conflicted beliefs are what necessitate vigilance (7:3–4).

If your mind were completely at peace, vigilance would be superfluous (7:5). We have to be vigilant against false beliefs, and we have plenty of those (7:6). Whenever we experience upset there is a false belief behind it somewhere (7:6). Our job is to uncover those false beliefs and to *stop believing in them*. Our peace of mind cannot be taken from us by anything external; the cause is always our own conflicting beliefs. When I think that someone, or some situation, has disturbed my peace, what am I believing about myself that isn't true? Whatever it is, however false it is, if I believe it, it will appear to be true for me (7:7). Believing what is false seems to put me into conflict with God (7:8).

The vigilance the Course is calling for is very similar to what psychology calls “shadow work.” Robert Brumet, in *Birthing a Greater Reality*, says:

The source of our unhappiness is always within our self. Circumstances and other people can be a trigger or catalyst for our difficulty, but our *response* to any experience is always *our responsibility*.

And behind that response is a thought—a false belief about myself or about the other person, or both. These false beliefs are what we must watch for and root out.

One such false belief is that we are guilty; that we have “attacked God” by our erroneous beliefs. If God says I am His perfect creation, and I say I'm flawed, I'm calling God a liar. If I deny that the person who seems to be upsetting me is God's perfect creation, same thing!

Paragraph 8

8. ¹I have repeatedly emphasized that the ego **does** believe it can attack God, and tries to persuade you that **you** have done this. ²If the mind **cannot** attack, the ego proceeds perfectly logically to the belief that you must be a body [Ur: to the position that **you cannot be mind**]. ³By not seeing you as **you** are, it can see **itself** as it **wants** to be. ⁴Aware of its weakness the ego wants your allegiance, but **not** as you really are. ⁵The ego therefore wants to engage your mind in its **own** delusional system, because otherwise the light of **your** understanding would [Ur: *will*] dispel it. ⁶It wants no part of truth, because the ego itself is not true [Ur: because the truth is that **it is not true**]. ⁷If truth is total, the **untrue cannot** exist. ⁸Commitment to either **must** be total; they cannot coexist in your mind

without splitting it. ⁹If they cannot coexist in peace, and if you **want** peace, you **must** give up the **idea** of conflict **entirely** and for **all time**. ¹⁰This requires vigilance **only** as long as **you do not recognize what is true**. ¹¹While you believe that two totally contradictory thought systems **share** truth, your need for vigilance is apparent.

• **Study Question** •

8. *Does it seem safe or anxiety-producing to think about believing that there is no such thing as conflict, that one or both sides of every conflict is totally non-existent and without effects?*

The ego is quite content when you feel as though you are in disagreement with God. It wants you to believe that *you* have attacked God, feel guilty for it, and therefore, stay away from God (8:1). But “the mind *cannot* attack” (8:2). This is a principle the Course emphasizes by stating it over and over: (T-5.V.5:3; T-7.VIII.4:3-4; T-17.VII.3:4; T-18.VI.3:5; T-18.VI.4:3; T-19.II.1:4; W-pI.136.20:5-6; W-pI.161.6:1-2). If mind is all One, and formless, how could it attack? *What* would it attack?² To the ego that just proves that you can’t possibly be mind (8:2); you must be a body.

The ego must see you *not* as you are: not a mind but a body that can attack and be attacked (8:2). The beliefs that you are a body, that you are capable of attacking and being attacked, and that you have somehow attacked God (you may think of it simply as having somehow *offended* or *displeased* God), are the kind of false beliefs that lie behind

² It’s worthwhile to think for a moment about how to reconcile the idea that mind cannot attack with the equally emphasized idea that we must give up “attack thoughts.” Indeed, in speaking of the way that our body can attack another body, the Course makes a point that the *thought* of attack originates in the mind! “Yet what but mind directs the body to attack?” (W-pI.161.6:6). Doesn’t that place the responsibility for the attack on the mind? In our courts, a person who hires another person to commit a crime is as guilty as the person who actually did the crime. If the mind directs the body to attack, how can the Course claim that “minds cannot attack”? The Course actually insists that *all* the attack we perceive is in our mind!

"If you will recognize that all the attack you perceive is in your own mind and nowhere else, you will at last have placed its source, and where it begins it must end" (T-12.III.10:1).

Here is a concise explanation taken from Robert Perry’s *A Course Glossary*:

Minds may seem able to attack each other, yet they cannot. For they are all united and attack assumes the collision of separate objects. Minds also cannot truly be attacked, for this assumes injury and minds cannot be injured, being changeless. Bodies, however, are both separate and changeable. They can attack and be attacked. Identifying with the body, then, makes the mind seem capable of attack. When the mind wants to attack, it directs the body to act out the attack. This produces guilt, which the mind then projects upon the body, blaming the body for its actions. And this causes physical sickness. Despite this illusion, mind still cannot attack. This means attack is not real, which means sin does not exist.

our unhappiness, the kind of thoughts we need to become vigilant *against*. When you harbor such thoughts you are giving life to the ego (8:3). The ego wants your support, but not the support of *you as you really are* (because who you really are would instantly dispel the ego); rather, it wants you to join in its delusion of separation from God (8:4–5). Since minds cannot attack, the only way the mind can carry out a thought of attack is to identify with an illusion: the separate body.

As long as you are committed to truth *and* untruth, you have a need to be vigilant. You must be willing to give up the idea of conflict entirely and forever. You have to realize, not only that attack is *undesirable*, but that it is *impossible*. You are not a body; you are mind (see Workbook lesson 158, first paragraph).

Paragraph 9

9. ¹Your mind is dividing its [your minds *are* dividing their] allegiance between two kingdoms, and **you** are totally committed to neither. ²Your identification with the Kingdom is totally beyond question except by you, **when you are thinking insanely**. ³What you are is **not** established by your perception, and is **not** influenced by it at all. ⁴[All] perceived problems in identification at **any** level **are not problems of fact**. ⁵They are problems of understanding, since their presence implies a belief that what you are is up to you to decide [Ur: They are problems of *understanding*, because they *mean* that you perceive *what you can understand as up to you to decide*]. ⁶The ego believes **this** totally, being fully committed to it. ⁷[Ur: But] It is **not true**. ⁸The ego therefore is totally committed to **untruth**, perceiving in total contradiction to the Holy Spirit and to the knowledge of God.

• Study Question •

9. *Can you give one example of how you think that you can alter your identity according to what you think or what you do? The example can apply to you personally or apply to another or to people in general.*

Your mind *is* divided between two thought systems (9:1), which is why you need to be vigilant. You probably doubt, to some degree, that you belong to the Kingdom of God; you are unsure that you deserve to belong. And yet your belonging to God's Kingdom is "totally beyond question except by you" (9:2). Your doubts stem from your insane thoughts of self-condemnation. You and the ego think that what you are is up to you; you are what you have made of yourself—and that isn't all that great! Yet what you are is not affected by what you believe at all (9:3). You remain as God created you (W-pI.110).

Imelda Shanklin, in her little book, *What Are You?*, put it like this:

The personal is the seen: body, conduct, situation. The impersonal is the unseen: spirit, mind, revelation...

The personal, the *who*, can be changed. You have changed it many times, and you will continue to change it. ...The *what* is not affected. That is changeless. It eternally will be what it eternally has been. It is the divinity of which Peter said in the moment of insight, "Thou art the...Son of the living God."

You or I may *perceive* ourselves to be separated from God, outside of the Kingdom, less than perfect. We may *perceive* that we have soiled the pristine, pure Self that God created, but that is not a “problem of fact” (9:4). It is a problem of *understanding*; we think we know what we are because we’ve decided, by ourselves, that we can alter God’s creation. It isn’t up to us! (9:5–7) It isn’t true! The ego, then is “totally committed to *untruth*,” and its perceptions completely contradict the truth as known by God and the Holy Spirit (9:8). These are the false perceptions we have to be on the watch for: any thought that says we are less than the holy Son of God Himself, less than wholly loving and wholly loveable, less than totally innocent, less than infinitely worthy. And let’s face it, our minds, conscious and subconscious, are filled with such insane thoughts.

Paragraph 10

10. ¹You can be perceived with meaning **only** by the Holy Spirit because your being *is* the knowledge of God. **2**Any belief you accept **apart** from this **will** obscure God’s Voice in you, and will therefore obscure God **to** you. ³Unless you perceive His creation truly you **cannot** know the Creator, since God and His creation **are not separate**. ⁴The oneness of the Creator and the creation **is** your wholeness, your sanity and your limitless power. ⁵This limitless power is God’s gift to you, because it is **what you are**. ⁶If you dissociate your mind **from** it you are perceiving the most powerful force in the universe **as if** it were weak, because you do **not** believe **you** are part of it.

• Study Question •

10. Please interpret the last sentence in this paragraph. In particular, what is "the most powerful force in the universe" and how does dissociating from it lead to seeing this powerful force as weak?



Your meaning, your power and your sanity come from accepting God's knowledge of who you are. Your very being *is* the knowledge of God; therefore, only the Holy Spirit perceives our true meaning because He is in touch with that knowledge (10:1). I think what that means is that our existence arises in the Mind of God. It’s almost as if the word “know” is a transitive verb—God *knows* us into existence, and what God knows, *is*. The Holy Spirit shares that knowledge. When we accept any belief about ourselves that does not arise from that knowledge, it will mask His Voice in us and interfere with our knowing God (10:2). Another way of explaining that is that “God and His creation are not separate” (10:3). Misperceive yourself, His creation, or any creation of God, and you will misperceive God.

It all comes back to the opening line prior to paragraph 1, from the Urtext: “You can think of the Sonship only as one.” Only by owning that Oneness and claiming it, allowing ourselves to see that Oneness in everything, can we experience wholeness, sanity, and limitless power (10:4). You *are* that Oneness, as I am. Accepting this truth about ourselves is the way to claim God’s gift to us (10:5).

When we judge, when we accept guilt in ourselves or in another, when we give in to fear and scarcity, we are *dissociating* (distancing) our mind from the Oneness. We *are* the

most powerful force in the universe because we are that Oneness, but when we believe we are not part of God's Oneness, we deny that power (10:6).

Paragraph 11

11. ¹Perceived **without** your part in it, God's creation is seen [perceived] as weak, and those who **see** themselves as weakened **do** attack. ²The attack **must** be blind, however, because there is nothing **to** attack. ³Therefore they make up images, perceive them as unworthy and attack them for their unworthiness. ⁴That is all the world of the ego is. **5Nothing**. ⁶It has no meaning. ⁷It does not exist. ⁸Do not **try** to understand it because, if you do, you are believing that it **can** be understood and is therefore capable of being appreciated and loved. ⁹That **would** justify its existence, which [justify it, but it] **cannot** be justified. **10You** cannot make the meaningless meaningful. ¹¹This can **only** be an insane attempt.

• Study Question •

11. Based on this paragraph and your understanding of the whole Course, a) in what sense should we try to understand the ego; b) in what sense is the ego not understandable?

We not only deny our own power when we dissociate ourselves from the Oneness, we also perceive God's creation as weak—ourselves and others. Because we think we are weak, we *attack* (probably on the theory that the best defense is an offense) (11:1). But it's a *blind* attack "because there is nothing *to* attack" (11:2). There is only the Oneness and nothing outside of that Oneness (see T-18.VI, paragraph 1³). Therefore, in order to have something to attack, we "make up images," perceive others as separate from us and unworthy of love and acceptance, and then attack them (11:3). There will be a much more detailed explanation of this later in the Text, in Chapter 13, Section V, and more extensively in Chapter 17, Section III, where the way our egos project images of "shadow figures" from our past onto people in the present.

The weakened attack images that are not there. *Nothing* is there! (11:4–5). The ego's world is just a bunch of these images, which do not exist and cannot be understood, appreciated or loved. From the Course's perspective, it's a waste of time, actually insane, to try to understand this world of images because it is meaningless (11:6–8). To expend that kind of effort on something that isn't real just demonstrates that we think the images *are* real, and can be appreciated and loved. We can't understand another person's ego because, in reality, the ego doesn't exist! Each of us makes up an ego, and we see it as we want to see it. Other people, looking at us as separate beings, perceive our egos through

³ "There is nothing outside you. That is what you must ultimately learn, for it is the realization that the Kingdom of Heaven is restored to you. For God created only this, and He did not depart from it nor leave it separate from Himself. The Kingdom of Heaven is the dwelling place of the Son of God, who left not his Father and dwells not apart from Him. Heaven is not a place nor a condition. It is merely an awareness of perfect oneness, and the knowledge that there is nothing else; nothing outside this oneness, and nothing else within" (T-18.VI.1:1-6).

their own distorted lens; they don't see the same ego we see in ourselves. But both of them are unreal. The ego isn't worth the effort to try to understand it. The only appropriate response is to recognize that it is meaningless, neither good nor bad.

Paragraph 12

12. ¹Allowing insanity to enter your mind means that you have not judged sanity as **wholly desirable**. ²If you **want** something else you **will make** something else, but because it **is** something else, it **will** attack your thought system and divide your allegiance. ³You **cannot** create in this divided state, and you **must** be vigilant **against** this divided state because **only** peace **can be** extended. ⁴Your divided mind is [minds are] blocking the extension of the Kingdom, and its extension **is** your joy. ⁵If you do not extend the Kingdom, you are **not** thinking with your Creator and creating as He created.

• Study Question •

12. 12. Paragraph 12. Why do you think it is impossible to create if your mind is divided, if you do not find anything wholly desirable?

If we spend our time analyzing the ego in ourselves or others, trying to find meaning there, we are insane (11:11). The only reason for doing so is that we “have not judged sanity as *wholly desirable*” (12:1). We're still attributing some kind of value to our ego, and to seeing the ego in others. Some part of our minds still wants the ego to be real. And if we *want* something else, we'll *make* something else (12:2). But what we make won't be real, nor will it be *us* in truth. In fact, it will attack our thought system. It will split our minds so that our thoughts pull in opposite directions (12:2).

If our allegiance is divided we cannot create. Thus we must be vigilant against this divided state (12:3). This is another way of describing what mental vigilance is all about. It's not just watching out for thoughts we judge as “bad” or unloving. We have to guard against any thinking that makes egos seem real! To me, that includes things like hero worship and putting people on pedestals. It means seeing ourselves or anyone as less than equal creations of God. When our minds are so divided, we can't create; we can't extend the Kingdom, whose nature is equality and oneness, and thus we are blocking our own joy (12:4–5).

Paragraph 13

13. ¹In this depressing state the Holy Spirit reminds you gently that you are sad because you are not fulfilling your function as co-creator [co-creators] **with** God, and are therefore depriving yourself [*yourselves*] of joy. ²This is not God's choice [Will] but **yours**. ³If your mind could be [Ur: If your will is] out of accord with God's, **you would be [are] willing without meaning**. ⁴Yet because [only] God's Will is unchangeable, no [real] conflict of will is possible. ⁵This is the Holy Spirit's perfectly consistent teaching. ⁶Creation, not separation, **is** your will *because* it is God's, and nothing that opposes this means anything at all. ⁷Being a perfect accomplishment, the Sonship can only accomplish perfectly, **extending** the joy in which it was created, and identifying itself with both its

Creator and its creations, **knowing** they are one.

• **Study Question** •

13. 13. Paragraph 13. If you are depressed over your inadequate love life or occupational life or financial life, what, according to sentence 1, are you really unhappy about?

When we fail to fulfill our function as co-creators with God, we inevitably feel sad (13:1). Something in us knows what we are meant to do and is unhappy when we are not doing it. When we extend, when we share equality and oneness, we are expressing our true nature. That just *feels good*. If we are sad, it's not because God is punishing us, it's because we have chosen not to fulfill our function (13:2).

You are not fulfilling your function as co-creator with God. But this is not your will. You can only will in total accord with God. A *real* conflict of wills is impossible (13:4). "Creation...*is your will*" (13:6). Any illusion we may have of an opposing will means absolutely nothing! (13:6). The only *possible* accomplishment we can engage in is extending "the joy in which [we were] created, and identifying...with [our] Creator and [our] creations, knowing they are one" (13:7).

The Introduction to the Course teaches that "Nothing real can be threatened; nothing unreal exists". That's really what this paragraph is saying, too. Our mis-creations are meaningless; they accomplish nothing. Only our reality is real! When we think we are willing against God we are imagining things. Even if we think we are staging a revolt against God and are taking His place on the throne of the universe, it doesn't matter.

"The Holy Spirit teaches only that the "sin" of self-replacement on the throne of God is not a source of guilt. What cannot happen can have no effects to fear" (T-14.III.15:3-4).

I believe that when all this is over, when every mind has returned to its Creator and has joined again in Oneness, we will look back and realize that all the evil, sin, pain, and sickness we've perceived has occurred only in our dreams. Nothing has been lost, and nothing ever will be.

Answer Key

VI. From Vigilance to Peace

1. You will not appreciate any of them, not love any of them and fear all of them.
2. Because attack is an attempt to destroy something. As such, it is an attempt to destroy love because love is not destructive and attack is not loving. Whenever you attack and try to destroy something, therefore, you are also trying to destroy love.
3. Because the mind can use its power to choose against the ego and because the mind's natural impulses are against the ego, are blocked and violated by the ego and will lead the mind to choose against the ego.
4. Because the ego is incompatible with these things and you fear to lose it.
5. Because the ego is afraid of making total commitments, since it is dispelled by anything total.
6. See that the conflict is meaningless, is not understandable. If it could be truly understood, it could be appreciated and loved. Because it cannot be understood, appreciated nor loved, because it does not exist, you are free of it.
7. Only when your mind is totally healed, which the Course says will last for an instant before God yanks you back into Heaven.
8. Personal question.
9. One example: I find myself wishing that someone would “just go away,” and realize I am wishing them out of existence; this, I believe, makes me a “bad person.” There are millions of examples.
10. The last sentence means that when you dissociate your awareness from the limitless power that God gave you (the meaning of “the most powerful force in the universe”), then you actually perceive this power as weak because it is not whole, total, it is missing something—namely, you.
11. (a) We should try to understand its thought system so that we can see that that system makes no sense and causes us pain.
(b) We cannot understand the ego just *because* its thought system ultimately makes no sense. It is full of contradictions and chaos. It is insane.
12. Because whatever you make with a divided mind will itself be divided. It will be divided against itself, a state in which both parts of it will cancel the other part out, leaving nothing.
13. You are unhappy because you are not fulfilling your function of being co-creator with God.