

Study Guide and Commentary

ACIM® Text, Chapter 18, Section IX

The Two Worlds

Legend:

Sans serif text = Material from ACIM 3rd edition (FIP)

Italic sans serif text = words emphasized in all caps in Urtext

Bold sans serif text = alternate or omitted material from the Urtext

Typewriter text = editorial comments

~~strike through sans serif text~~ = Not in Urtext, in FIP edition

Overview of the Section

This section builds upon the allegory of the little garden presented in the last section; one clue is that various synonyms of the phrase “little part” such as “tiny segment” occur seven times in the first few paragraphs. It speaks of the ego’s kingdom of “barren sands.” Clearly, it is referring to the very small part of our true Self that we have attempted to separate off and to identify as exclusively our own—our ego identity, fenced off from all else by our body.

Philosophically, this is a very important section of the Text. It itemizes multiple layers of the mind. It presents a unique theory of the origin of the physical world. It sets forth the Course’s theory of perception, particularly the purpose and function of our physical senses. And it gives a description of the spiritual journey we have all embarked on.

Practically, however, it is a very difficult section. Due to its highly theoretical nature it is especially hard to relate to our daily lives. And it is more than typically obscure; its use of pronouns with uncertain referents makes interpretation daunting. Nevertheless, careful study and some effort in applying what it says to our own thoughts can bring us deep encouragement and help us through what otherwise might seem very dark times in our lives.

Paragraph 1

1. ¹You have been told to bring the darkness to the light, and guilt to holiness. ²And you have also been told that error must be corrected at its source. ³Therefore, it is the tiny part of yourself, the little thought that seems split off and separate, the Holy Spirit needs. ⁴The rest is fully in God’s keeping, and needs no guide. ⁵Yet this wild and delusional thought needs help because, in its delusions, it thinks it is the Son of God, whole and omnipotent, sole ruler of the kingdom it set apart to tyrannize by madness into obedience and slavery. ⁶This is the *little* part [**of you**] you

think you stole from Heaven. ⁷Give it back to Heaven. ⁸Heaven has not lost it, but *you* have lost sight of Heaven. ⁹Let the Holy Spirit remove it from the withered kingdom in which you set it off, surrounded by darkness, guarded by attack and reinforced by hate. ¹⁰Within its barricades is still a tiny segment of the Son of God, complete and holy, serene and unaware of what you think surrounds it.

• **Study Question** •

1. *Paragraph 1* discusses bringing this "wild and delusional thought," this "little part," to the Holy Spirit. What is this little part?
 - A. Your body, the tiny barricade.
 - B. Your brother.
 - C. What you think of as yourself.
 - D. Your special relationship.

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The first sentence refers to statements from Chapter 14 and elsewhere (see Appendix 1), a principle that is repeated over and over in the Course: we must bring our darkness to the light; we must bring our guilt into the presence of the Holy Spirit for forgiveness. Jesus brings it up again here as the basis for what he wants to say next: that because of this principle ("Therefore..."), what the Holy Spirit needs from us is the "tiny part," the "little thought that seems split off" (1:2). The principle about bringing darkness to the light implies this because the little part is our darkness and our guilt; the illusion of a little self is the very core of our guilt, the very source of our error, and that is just what we must bring to God. That is where correction is needed (1:3).

"The rest" (1:4) refers to the rest of our larger Self, the ocean in which the little self is just a ripple; the sun of which the tiny part is a sunbeam. And it is just fine, thank you! Our Self is at home in God; it "needs no guide" because it is not lost. The ego illusion, however, the part of mind that thinks it is all of us, *does* need help. It is "wild and delusional," and like the classic asylum inhabitant who thinks he is Napoleon, this self "thinks it is the Son of God, whole and omnipotent, sole ruler of [its] kingdom" (1:5).

In a practical sense, what this means is simply that each one of us thinks that the self we are currently aware of is all of us; it is all that we are. The Text is referring to that very basic assumption we are all making, all of the time: "I am me; this is all there is to me. I am aware of my self." Jesus is telling us that what we treat as a core fact is in reality a *wild delusion*. When he says, "Give it back to Heaven" (1:7), he is asking us to recognize that no separate self exists; the only reality is the One Self. Remember, "Heaven is... merely an awareness of perfect oneness, and the knowledge that there is nothing else" (T-18.VI.1:5-6). To return the little self to Heaven, then, means to re-open ourselves to that awareness of perfect oneness.

In reality, there is no need to "return" the little part to Heaven in the sense of giving back something that was taken away, or restoring a missing part of Heaven; "Heaven has not lost it" (1:8). Our little self is just as much at home in Heaven as "the rest"; in fact, even inside the ego's fences there "is still a tiny segment of the Son of God, complete and holy, serene and unaware of what you think surrounds it" (1:10). Reality has not been

altered by our illusions! Everything remains as God created it. Nothing has changed; only the illusion of change has occurred.

However, we have “lost sight of Heaven” (1:8) and thus we have lost sight of the Oneness (1:8). We need to bring our poor, separated self to the Holy Spirit so that He can free it from the prison we have made for it, and restore the Oneness to our awareness once again (1:9). To me, this means that our *experience* is that we are giving back this “stolen part” of ourselves to God, but in reality, what is happening is that the Holy Spirit is cleansing our mind of the delusion of separateness.

Paragraph 2

2. ¹Be you not separate, for the One Who *does* surround it has brought union to you, returning your little offering of darkness to the eternal light. ²How is this done? ³It is extremely simple, being based on what this little kingdom really *is*. ⁴The barren sands, the darkness and the lifelessness, are seen only through the body's eyes. ⁵Its bleak sight [***Its vision***] *is* distorted, and the messages *it* transmits to you who *made* it to limit your awareness *are* little and limited, and so fragmented they are meaningless.

• Study Question •

2. *This paragraph describes barren sands, darkness and lifelessness. What are these?*
- A. *The physical world that your eyes see.*
 - B. *Your judgments about the world.*
 - C. *How your holy relationship looks in the period of discomfort.*
 - D. *The landscape of Sedona, Arizona.*

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“Be you not separate”! That is the fundamental appeal to us here. According to 1:9–10, we *think* we are the tiny kingdom, surrounded by darkness, and we believe we must guard ourselves with attack, fortified by hate. But what actually *does* surround us (2:1) is the Holy Spirit. “Union” is being brought to us by the Holy Spirit, Who surrounds our little kingdom (2:1). The tie-in between bringing darkness to the light and bringing our “little offering” to Him is very clear here (2:2).

A question naturally arises in our minds as we hear this appeal: How can I do that? How can I not be separate? How can I return my little, separate self to the Oneness of Christ? Jesus replies: “It is extremely simple” (2:3). Most of us don’t believe him. It does not seem simple to us, but that is because we are not looking at it properly. We try to figure it out from the wrong starting point: the reality of the self we seem to be and the reality of the world this self lives in. Jesus says the solution must be “based on what this little kingdom really is” (2:3). And what he is going to show us in the next several paragraphs is that the self we seem to be is not real, and the world we seem to live in is equally unreal. Only “the body’s eyes” see this dark world, and the sight of the body’s

eyes is so “distorted” that what they show us is “little and limited, and so fragmented” that it is “meaningless” (2:4-5). The only evidence we have for the reality of the separate self is what our physical senses show us, and their evidence is completely unreliable.

The assertion that the messages we receive through our physical senses are meaningless is hard to swallow, which is why Jesus will spend considerable time attempting to persuade us of this fact. It is a key fact. Because, if what our body’s eyes show us is real and meaningful, or if we continue to believe that it is real and meaningful, there is no answer to the question, “How can I not be separate?” If we really are independent beings clomping around in disconnected bodies, separation is inescapable.

Paragraph 3

3. ¹From the world of bodies, *made* by insanity, insane messages seem to be returned to the mind that made it. ²And these messages bear witness to this world, pronouncing it as true. ³For *you* sent forth these messengers [the senses] to bring this *back* to you. ⁴Everything these messages relay to you is quite external. ⁵There are *no* messages that speak of what lies underneath, for it is *not* the body that could speak of this. ⁶Its eyes perceive it not; its senses remain quite *unaware* of it; its tongue cannot relay *its* messages. ⁷Yet God can bring you there, if you are willing to follow the Holy Spirit through seeming terror, trusting Him not to abandon you and *leave* you there. ⁸For it is not *His* purpose to frighten you, but only *yours*. ⁹*You* are severely tempted to abandon *Him* at the outside ring of fear, but *He* would lead you safely through and *far* beyond.

• Study Question •

3. *What is the purpose of the body’s eyes (there may be more than one right answer)?*
- A. *To convince you that the world is true.*
 - B. *To show you the loveliness of God's creation.*
 - C. *To conceal the real world.*
 - D. *To return to the mind the insane messages that the mind itself conceived.*
 - E. *To check out potential mates.*

Paragraph 3 continues this theme of what the body's eyes see, launching into a whole discussion of the relationship between guilt and physicality. The first half of this paragraph describes the purpose of the body's eyes.

I skipped over a key point in the last paragraph, which said that we made the body to limit our awareness (2:5). That point is reiterated here in the words “the world of bodies, made by insanity” (3:1). It goes even farther to say we made, not only the body, but the world. Some people think that when the Course speaks of our making the world that it is referring to our making our *perception* of the world, that is, it means only that we give the world all the meaning that it has for us. Naturally the Course agrees with that statement;

it is Lesson 2 in the Workbook. But it seems clear to me that this isn't all that the Course means when it says we made the world. Here, it says we made "the world of bodies," a world that is "external" (3:4). What can that mean but the entire physical world? The eyes see separate bodies no matter how we interpret the actions of those bodies, no matter what emotional reactions we have to those bodies. The whole point here is that the picture we see, the picture of separation, is not real. The bodies we see with the body's eyes are not real. Unreal eyes are showing us an unreal world; we *made* the body's senses to convince us of the reality of this world.

The world made by insanity sends insane messages back "to the mind that made it" (3:1). These messages convince our mind that the world we see is real (3:2), because that is the message that our minds, in their mad desire for separation, have asked for (3:3). We call our senses "physical senses." Why? Because everything they convey to us is physical (3:4). The body cannot deliver messages to us of "what lies underneath," that is, the non-physical world (3:5-6).

The title of the section, "The Two Worlds," is a strong clue that we are talking about two different worlds here. One is the world seen by the body's eyes and otherwise perceived by its various senses; the other world, obviously, is one the body's eyes can't see at all: "its senses remain quite unaware of it" (3:6). As will become clear shortly, we are talking about what the Course calls "the real world" (see 9:1 and 11:3). When you read about the real world here and elsewhere, bear in mind what is said here: the body's senses cannot perceive it at all. So the real world is not simply this physical world seen differently; it is a world that is not physical at all, a world that is invisible to the body's eyes.

Even though our bodily senses cannot help us find the real world, "God can bring you there" (3:7). That's the overall message of this section: How do we escape from the illusory world of separation into the real world of absolute union? God can do it! But there is a condition: "God can bring you there, if you are willing to follow the Holy Spirit through seeming terror, trusting Him not to abandon you and leave you there" (3:7).

Now there's an inviting prospect, right? "Come travel with the Holy Spirit through seeming terror!" (I suppose this might appeal to the same people who seek out movies like "The Texas Chain Saw Massacre" or "Friday the 13th." But most of us want to avoid terror at all costs.) The key word, of course, is "seeming"; like the special effects at Universal Studios theme park, the falling walls and raging fires are only illusions. Our difficulty comes to the degree we forget that and think that they are real. And we do that largely because our ego wants the fear (3:8) and uses it to keep us separate.

This speaks to our experience. When, led by the Holy Spirit, we begin to explore the hidden aspects of our minds, the unpleasant ego motivations, and the subterranean anger and attack thoughts buried in our unconscious, we really are "severely tempted" to draw back, and to bid the Holy Spirit a hasty adieu with a hurried, "Thanks, but no thanks!" (3:9). As soon as we begin to watch our minds we run into that "outside ring of fear." That's really what Jesus is starting to talk about here: the various levels of the unconscious mind. That's the journey he is leading us on, from the conscious level of separate identities to the deeply buried but ever-present reality of Christ consciousness.

Paragraph 4

4. ¹The circle of fear lies just below the level the body sees, and *seems* to be the whole foundation on which the world is based. ²Here are all the illusions, all the twisted thoughts, all the insane attacks, the fury, the vengeance and betrayal that were made to keep the guilt in place, so that the world could *rise* from it and keep *it* hidden. ³Its [guilt's] *shadow* rises to the surface [the physical world], enough to hold its [guilt's] most external manifestations [the physical world] in darkness, and to bring despair and loneliness to it [the physical world] and keep it [the physical world] joyless. ⁴Yet its [guilt's] *intensity* is veiled by its [guilt's] heavy coverings [the physical world], and kept *apart* from what was made [the physical world] to keep it [guilt] hidden. ⁵The body cannot see this [guilt], for the body *arose* from this [guilt] for its [guilt] protection, which depends [**which must always depend**] on keeping it [guilt] *not* seen. ⁶The body's eyes will *never* look on it [guilt]. ⁷Yet they will see what it [guilt] dictates.

• Study Question •

4. *This extremely important paragraph discusses three levels. Please arrange these three levels starting from the most superficial and going to the deepest.*
- A. *The circle of fear.*
 - B. *The guilt.*
 - C. *The level the body sees.*

The first level of mind we encounter is “the circle of fear,” which “lies just below the level the body sees” (4:1); this is the same as “the outside ring of fear” we just talked about (3:9). Robert Perry has drawn up a diagram of various levels of the mind as seen in the Course (see Appendix 2). It is based mostly on T-31.V, “Self-concept Versus Self,” but I believe this “circle of fear” corresponds to what Perry calls the “Victim” and “Ego” layers. These are the level at which the ego operates, and when we begin to peel away the top layer, that hides this stuff, the reaction is often fear and an unwillingness to really look at it. That’s how we “abandon” the Holy Spirit; we refuse to recognize the ego within us.

The visible world appears to substantiate the chaos of attack and fear we find in these hidden layers of mind (4:1). Fear seems justified by what the world shows us. Attack (in self-defense, of course) is a necessary response to the threats of the world around us. Yet initially we fail to see that we have things backward. Our fear and attack has not come about because of the world around us. Rather, the world around us has arisen from the mind’s fear and attack (4:2), and serves to hide the very thing that is the source of fear, attack and the world: guilt

The rest of this paragraph is full of pronouns whose referent is unclear; I've tried to help clarify that with some editorial comments in square brackets.¹

The physical world is the shadow of our mind's guilt that rises to the surface (4:3). As we read back in Chapter 13:

The world you see is the delusional system of those made mad by guilt
(T-13.Int.2:2).

Or, as Ken Wapnick used to say, "The world is crystallized guilt."

The twisted thoughts and insane attacks, the fury and vengeance and betrayal that lurk in our minds all serve to preserve guilt within us, "so that the world could arise from it [guilt] and keep it [guilt] hidden" (4:2). Guilt is what makes the world so often seem a place of misery, despair, and loneliness, devoid of joy (4:3). Yet, despite the pervasive influence of guilt on our lives, we remain, for the most part, unaware of it. It is covered up by the illusion of victimhood we live in that seems to justify our anger and despair (4:4).

None of this is evident to physical sight, because the body itself is part of the protective covering that our egos have manifested to obscure the guilt (4:5). The ego knows that it *must* hide our guilt from us, because keeping guilt hidden is necessary to ensure its continued existence. If the guilt is exposed and looked at openly, it dissolves. The body's eyes do not see guilt, but they *do* "see what it dictates," and only that (4:6).

The point of all this, I think, is to realize that in order to reclaim our union with God (which has never ceased), we have to get past these protective layers of the ego. We have to own and acknowledge the ego within ourselves, with its fear, fury, hatred, attack, rage, vengeance, and betrayal, recognize it as the smoke-screen it really is, past the belief in our own guilt for abandoning God (which is impossible), to the realm of spirit. When we begin to turn within and encounter the madness of the ego, we recoil. We're afraid that the Holy Spirit will reject us because of what we see. Rather, He will stay with us and lead us past all that, "safely through and far beyond" (3:9).

Paragraph 5

5. ¹The body will remain guilt's messenger, and will act as it [guilt] directs as long as *you* believe that guilt is real. ²For the *reality* of guilt is the illusion that seems to make it [the body] heavy and opaque, impenetrable, and a *real* foundation for the ego's thought system. ³Its [the body's] thinness and transparency are not apparent until you see the light *behind* it. ⁴And then you see it as a fragile veil before the light.

¹ Others have attempted to do this in print, notably, *A Course in Miracles for Dummies*, by Thomas Wakechild, which substitutes nouns for pronouns all through the Text. While some of this book might be useful, in my opinion Mr. Wakechild has egregiously misunderstood this paragraph, and his substitutions are more confusing than helpful.

• **Study Question** •

5. **Paragraph 5** says that the body will remain guilt's messenger, meaning that the body will see what guilt directs it to see. Let's say you are looking at someone's body, which would normally look opaque to you. Yet now you let go of your guilt and see their body anew. What will that body look like now?
- A. *Thin, svelte.*
 - B. *A fragile veil.*
 - C. *Beautiful, holy.*
 - D. *Childlike.*

Because the body came from guilt and was made to serve guilt, it is of absolutely no help in spiritual awakening “as long as *you* believe that guilt is real” (5:1). By implication, however, once your belief in guilt is removed, the body can become a servant of holiness. Indeed, the very mass and solidity of the body, Jesus says, is actually caused by our mind’s belief that guilt is real (5:2)! When guilt is removed, the light of God can once again shine through, through the body, which will no longer hide the light behind it (5:3).

In discussing “The Laws of Chaos” in T-23.II, Jesus tells us that the solidity of not only our bodies, but of the very ground beneath our feet, is a manifestation of the ego’s madness:

You who believe you walk in sanity with feet on solid ground, and through a world where meaning can be found, consider this: These *are* the laws on which your "sanity" appears to rest. These *are* the principles which make the ground beneath your feet seem solid. And it *is* here you look for meaning. These are the laws you made for your salvation. They hold in place the substitute for Heaven which you prefer. This is their purpose; they were made for this. There is no point in asking what they mean. That is apparent. The means of madness must be insane (T-23.II.13:4-12).

What reveals the body as transparently “thin” is the sight of “the light *behind* it” (5:3). This reveals the body as nothing more than “a fragile veil before the light” (5:4). This calls to mind an analogy I used in my workshop on “I Need Do Nothing”: The giant stage shows at Radio City Music Hall in New York sometimes show a scene such as a cityscape projected on a screen. It appears to be solid, and dancers dance before it. Suddenly, lights come on *behind* the screen, which is really a thin, mesh veil, and an entirely different scene is revealed behind the curtain, while the scene on the screen becomes transparent and then disappears. That is the effect Jesus is describing here. When we dismiss guilt as an illusion, and look past it, look *through* it to the light behind it, suddenly everything changes. Those who have incorporated this mind-set into themselves and made it part of themselves no longer see bodies as solid realities. Instead, according to Chapter 31:

By focusing upon the good in him [*your brother*], the body grows decreasingly persistent in your sight, and will at length be seen as little more than just a shadow circling round the good. And this will be your concept of yourself,

when you have reached the world beyond the sight your eyes alone can offer you to see (T-31.VII.3:3-4).

Paragraph 6

6. ¹This heavy-seeming barrier, this artificial floor that looks like rock, is like a bank of low dark clouds that seem to be a solid wall before the sun. ²Its impenetrable appearance is *wholly* an illusion. ³It gives way softly to the mountain tops that rise above it, and has no power at all to hold back anyone willing to climb above it and see the sun. ⁴It is not strong enough to stop a button's fall, nor hold a feather. ⁵Nothing can rest upon it, for it is but an *illusion* of a foundation. ⁶Try but to touch it and it disappears; attempt to grasp it and your hands hold nothing.

• Study Question •

6. *What does the cloud bank symbolize?*

Now Jesus switches the metaphor from veils and light to rocks, clouds and the sun. First, he calls the body a “heavy-seeming barrier” and an “artificial floor that looks like rock” (6:1). I find the latter analogy particularly intriguing. It calls to mind mysterious mansions with secret passages and hidden trap doors in the floor, things deliberately designed to deceive. That’s what the body is: something deliberately designed by the ego to deceive.

Then, he compares the body, which seems as solid as a rock, to a “bank of low dark clouds that seem to be a solid wall before the sun” (6:1). This is a great analogy that we can all relate to. The dark clouds only *appear* to be impenetrable; we know very well that they are just insubstantial mist (6:2). We can see the mountain tops rising above the clouds, and we may have experienced climbing a mountainside (or perhaps taken off in a plan) and passing effortlessly through the clouds to see the sun, radiant as ever (6:3). They can’t even prevent a button or even a feather from falling through them; they are powerless illusions of solidity, and they can support *nothing* (6:5). You can’t touch them or grasp them; you close your hand on nothing (6:6).

That, Jesus is telling us, is what the body is: nothing. This is beyond anything quantum physics may tell us about atoms being 99% space or matter really not being solid at all. The Course is saying that our bodies and the ground beneath our feet are really comprised of non-physical guilt stuff. The Bible foreshadowed this two millennia ago when it said, “By faith we understand that the universe was created by the word of

God, so that what is seen was not made out of things that are visible.” (Hebrews 11:3 ESV).²

Paragraph 7

7. ¹Yet in this cloud bank it is easy to see a whole world rising. ²A solid mountain range, a lake, a city, all rise in your imagination, and *from* the clouds the messengers of your perception return to you, assuring you that it is *there*. ³Figures stand out and move about, actions seem real, and forms appear and shift from loveliness to the grotesque. ⁴And back and forth they go, as long as you would play the game of children’s make-believe [**“make believe”**]. ⁵Yet however long you play it, and regardless of how much imagination you bring to it, you do *not* confuse it with the world below, nor seek to make it real.

• Study Question •

7. *The metaphor now adds on children looking up at the clouds and imagining that they see a whole landscape in them, "a whole world rising." What is the "whole world" a metaphor for?*
- A. *The ego's thought system.*
 - B. *Heaven.*
 - C. *This world.*
 - D. *The little garden.*

“Yet,” he says; that is, despite the fact that the cloud bank can’t support a feather and can’t even be grasped and held, when we look at a bank of clouds it is easy for us to imagine mountains, animals, cities. We let our eyes assure us that what we imagine is really there (7:1–2).

We may wonder whether Jesus is here referring just to the literal cloud bank that he is using to make his point, or whether he shifts back and forth from literal clouds to the physical body and world to which he is comparing the clouds. I think it is a little of both. When he talks of figures standing and moving about, actions that seem real, forms shifting “from loveliness to the grotesque,” it’s hard for me to believe he isn’t referring quite directly to our perceptions of the world that stop at the physical, blind to the light behind the bodies we see (7:3). The forms and actions we see are like children playing make-believe with clouds!

And yet he clearly ends the paragraph talking about children making up stories about the clouds in the sky, choosing to play a game of ““make believe”” (7:4). The point he wants to make here is that, with the literal clouds, no matter how long we play the game and how much imagination we pour into it, *we never confuse the clouds with our physical*

² A book I’ve been reading recently, *Infinite Potential*, by Lothar Schäfer, really underscores this point over and over. It’s based on quantum physics but goes beyond the physical entirely to the spiritual. I’ve included several quotes as another Appendix, #3. I seem to be into appendices this week!

reality. We never try to make the cloud-kingdom into something real (7:5). We need to learn from this to do the same thing “with the dark clouds of guilt” (8:1).

Paragraph 8

8. ¹So should it be with the dark clouds of guilt, no more impenetrable and no more substantial. ²You will *not* bruise yourself against them in traveling through. ³Let your Guide *teach* you their *unsubstantial* nature as He leads you *past* them, for *beneath* them is a world of light whereon they cast no shadows. ⁴Their shadows lie upon the world *beyond* them, still *further* from the light. ⁵Yet from them *to* the light their shadows *cannot* fall.

• Study Question •

8. *Now the clouds are guilt. Earlier, the clouds were the body. How can the clouds be both guilt and the body?*
- A. *The metaphor has switched. The clouds did symbolize the body but now symbolize guilt.*
 - B. *The world, you could say, is permeated with the clouds of guilt, because people in the world feel a lot of guilt.*
 - C. *The physical world is literally made of the material of guilt, of the clouds of guilt.*
 - D. *Jesus lost track of what he was using the clouds to symbolize.*

We must realize that the clouds of guilt are just as insubstantial and just as permeable as the clouds in the sky (8:1). They *look* solid. They *seem* awesome. But they are nothing, and they cannot impede our progress on our spiritual journey unless we *want* to continue playing childish games. We can walk right through them; they can't bruise you any more than a cloud could (8:2).

I used the word “insubstantial” but Jesus says the clouds of guilt are “*unsubstantial*.” Both words exist, and there are subtle differences. Both, I think, are applicable to our clouds of guilt.

insubstantial |,ɪnsəb'stʌnCHəl|

adjective

lacking strength and solidity: *the huts are relatively few and insubstantial* | *insubstantial evidence*.

• not solid or real; imaginary: *the flickering light made her face seem insubstantial*.

unsubstantial |,ʌnsəb'stʌnCHəl|

adjective

having little or no solidity, reality, or factual basis.

Guilt has “no...factual basis.” It isn't solid or real; it's imaginary. The Holy Spirit wants to lead us *past* these clouds, showing us the “world of light” that lies below them,

devoid of any shadows of guilt (8:3). The clouds of guilt stand between the light and the world beyond them, so they cast shadows on the world (8:4). But “from them *to* the light their shadows *cannot* fall” (8:5)

This whole imagery of the world being made to reflect and protect guilt goes a long way toward explaining why the world is the way it is. It explains a lot about why we are advised not to seek to change the world, but to change our minds *about* it. It helps us understand why we needn’t waste our time trying to find light *in* the world, but rather invest it in using inner vision to see beyond the physical, beyond bodies, to spirit.

Paragraph 9

9. ¹This world of light, this circle of brightness is the real world, where guilt meets with forgiveness. ²Here the world *outside* is seen anew, *without* the shadow of guilt upon it. ³Here are *you* forgiven, for here you have forgiven everyone. ⁴Here is the new perception, where everything is bright and shining with innocence, washed in the waters of forgiveness, and cleansed of every evil thought you laid upon it. ⁵Here there is no attack upon the Son of God, and *you* are welcome. ⁶Here is your innocence, waiting to clothe you and protect you, and make you ready for the final step in the journey inward. ⁷Here are the dark and heavy garments of guilt laid by, and gently replaced by purity and love.

• Study Question •

9. *Based on the previous paragraphs (see especially 3 and 8), how do you get past the clouds of guilt to the real world?*
- A. *You simply fall, like a button or feather, since the clouds of guilt cannot stop anything from falling through them.*
 - B. *You stop playing the children's game of make-believe, imagining you see real things in the shifting cloud-shapes.*
 - C. *You let the Holy Spirit lead you through the circle of fear, through the guilt and onto the real world.*
 - D. *You look to the light and let the shadows fall far behind.*
 - E. *You look at clouds from both sides now.*

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Here, the “circle of brightness” behind the veil is identified as the real world (9:1). When you arrive here you have passed beyond guilt, so this place is “where guilt meets with forgiveness.” From the real world we can look upon “the world *outside*” in a new way, without any shadow of guilt (9:2).

Notice that there are two “worlds” referred to here. The world our body’s eyes see is “outside” of the real world, which implies that the real world is *inside*, within mind. Some have thought that the real world is simply the physical world seen through the eyes of forgiveness. This line from the Text might reinforce that concept:

The real world is attained simply by the complete forgiveness of the old, the world you see without forgiveness (T-17.II.5:1).

But that does not say that the real world *is* the world seen *with* forgiveness. It says you “attain” the real world by forgiving the old world. The images in the chapter we are studying make it clear (to me, at least) that by forgiving the world, we remove the veil of guilt that was hiding the real world, which is *within us all*. Now, from this new perspective in spirit, we can see the outside world in a new way, “*without* the shadow of guilt upon it” (9:2).

I think, as I said, the real world is within us. In 10:5 Jesus talks about going “still further inward,” which confirms that this is an inward, inner journey. In this inner world, forgiveness is total, for you and for everyone else (9:3). Because you now, with spiritual vision, see the spiritual reality of all things (the real world), you can perceive the outer world as bright and shining in innocence, your forgiveness having washed away “every evil thought you laid upon it” (9:4). Where once you saw sin, you now see a call for love. You accept your true Identity as Son of God, and you accept that Identity in others as well; you no longer reject it (“there is no attack upon the Son of God”) (9:5). The *real you* is welcome (9:5). You can clothe yourself with the garments of innocence, the robes of righteousness, ready for the final stage of the journey home (9:6). You change your clothing from guilt to purity and love (9:7). You take on the characteristics of your Christ Self.

Paragraph 10

10. ¹Yet even forgiveness is not the end. ²Forgiveness *does* make lovely, but it does *not* create. ³It *is* the source of healing, but it is the *messenger* of love and not its Source. ⁴Here you are led, that God Himself can take the final step unhindered, for here does nothing *interfere* with love, letting it be itself. ⁵A step *beyond* this holy place of forgiveness, a step still further inward but the one *you cannot [Ur: you cannot]* take, transports you to something *completely* different. ⁶Here is the Source of light; nothing perceived, forgiven nor transformed. ⁷But merely *known*.

• Study Question •

10. *The Holy Spirit has led you to the real world. From there you take one more step inward, and you reach the Source of light. How do you take this step?*

- A. *You don't; God takes it for you.*
- B. *You go beyond forgiveness to love.*
- C. *You stop perceiving and decide to know.*

•

As wonderful as all this sounds, this isn't the end (10:1)! You have not yet taken up your original function of creating with God; you are merely uncovering the loveliness that has always belonged to you and all of God's creation (10:2). You are *healing* through

forgiveness. Forgiveness is the source of healing, a messenger of love, but it is not the *source* of love; God is love's Source (10:3).

The Holy Spirit is leading us, through forgiveness, to the real world, and only when we have arrived there will God be able to "take the final step unhindered" (10:4). We will have removed all the blocks to the awareness of and flow of love (compare with T-Int.1:6–7). This step *beyond* forgiveness, still further inward, is emphatically *not* a step we can take (10:5); we can only prepare for it and make ourselves ready. This final step "transports you to something *completely* different" (10:5).

Here we are talking about Heaven, or Nirvana, or Absolute Oneness. It is the "Source of light," not just light but light's *Source*. It is what Paul Tillich called the Ground of all Being, what H. Emilie Cady says is not "a being" but "beingness." There is no perception because perception requires two, a perceiver and the perceived, and here there is only One. Nothing here is forgiven because there is nothing to *be* forgiven; there is only God. There is no transformation happening or needed because everything is perfect (10:6). It is a state where everything is "merely *known*" (10:7), which speaks of the kind of direct knowledge that comes from perfect identification: We *are* what we know. Like God, "I am that I am." We say, "God is," and then we cease to speak, for saying that, we are saying, "I am."

Workbook Lesson 169 describes it like this:

Oneness is simply the idea God is. And in His Being, He encompasses all things. No mind holds anything but Him. We say "God is," and then we cease to speak, for in that knowledge words are meaningless. There are no lips to speak them, and no part of mind sufficiently distinct to feel that it is now aware of something not itself. It has united with its Source. And like its Source Itself, it merely is.

We cannot speak nor write nor even think of this at all. It comes to every mind when total recognition that its will is God's has been completely given and received completely. It returns the mind into the endless present, where the past and future cannot be conceived. It lies beyond salvation; past all thought of time, forgiveness and the holy face of Christ. The Son of God has merely disappeared into his Father, as his Father has in him. The world has never been at all. Eternity remains a constant state (W-pI.169.5:1-6:7).

"No part of mind sufficiently distinct to feel that it is now aware of something not itself." Wow! I've united with my Source, and "like [my] Source Itself, [I] merely [am]."

That's what awaits after the final step, which can be taken only by God. The Workbook quickly adds, "This is beyond experience we try to hasten" (W-pI.169.7:1). The Course does not need to try to hasten this direct knowing; it just needs to *get us ready for it*.

Paragraph 11

11. ¹This course will *lead* to knowledge, but knowledge itself is still beyond the scope of our curriculum. ²Nor is there any need for us to try to speak of what must forever lie beyond words. ³We need remember

only that whoever attains the real world, beyond which learning cannot go, *will* go beyond it, but in a different way. ⁴Where learning ends there God begins, for learning ends before Him Who is complete where He begins, and where there *is* no end. ⁵It is not for us to dwell on what cannot *be* attained. ⁶There is too much to learn. ⁷The readiness for knowledge still must be attained.

• **Study Question** •

11. Paragraph 11 refuses to say much about the realm of knowledge. Why (there may be more than one right answer)?

- A. Because knowledge is beyond the scope of this course.
- B. Because knowledge lies beyond words.
- C. Because all we need do is attain the real world and we will go beyond it to knowledge.
- D. Because all we need do is attain readiness for knowledge.
- E. Because knowledge is so subjective that it would be hard to say anything about it that would be true for everyone.

•

The Course will *lead* to this direct knowing (which is what it means by “knowledge”), but this kind of knowledge is “beyond the scope of our curriculum” because this kind of knowledge cannot be *learned* (11:1). It’s what the ancient Greeks called *gnosis*, the centerpiece of Gnosticism.³ Jesus says we don’t need to try to figure out exactly how to describe this because it “must forever lie beyond words” (11:2). We’d just be wasting time and energy trying to find words for what is indescribable. The Course refers again to our “journey beyond words” in the “Introduction to Lessons 181-200.” All we need to remember, he says, is that though *learning* can’t take us past the real world, everyone who reaches that place “*will* go beyond it, but in a different way” (11:3). What that way is, is not our concern; it’s God’s (11:4).

Our focus isn’t on attaining ultimate *gnosis* or knowledge; it’s on learning what makes us *ready* for it (11:6–7). If we focus too much on the ultimate destination, we may fail to make ourselves ready for it. This is why Jesus said, back in Chapter 8:

Knowledge is not the motivation for learning this course. Peace is (T-8.I.1:1-2).

Paragraph 12

12. ¹Love is not learned. ²Its meaning lies within itself. ³And learning

³ An ancient Gnostic writing called *The Secret Book of John* says about the One that It is: unfathomable, since there is nothing before it to fathom it, invisible, since nothing has seen it, unutterable, since nothing could comprehend it to utter it, unnamable, since there is nothing before it to give it a name.

ends when you have recognized all it is *not*. ⁴That is the *interference*; that is what needs to be undone. ⁵Love is not learned, because there never *was* a time in which you knew it not. ⁶Learning is useless in the Presence of your Creator, Whose *acknowledgment* of you *and yours of Him* so far transcend *all* learning that *everything* you learned is meaningless, replaced forever by the knowledge of love and its one meaning.

• Study Question •

12. **True or false:** *You are ready for the last step when you have learned, through the holy relationship, everything there is to know about love. Then you are ready for God's Love.*

Do you recall that, clear back in the Introduction to the Text, Jesus said, "The course does not aim at teaching the meaning of love, for that is beyond what can be taught" (T-Int.1:6)? That's what he is saying again here: "Love is not learned" (12:1). Love's meaning is inherent in love itself (12:2). To me that means that the experience of love is enough to convey love's meaning; no words or conceptualizing can do that. You understand what love is when you love.

What are we learning then? All that love is *not* (12:3). Once we have recognized and removed everything that is *not* love, everything that *blocks* love's natural expression, learning is over (12:4). With the blocks gone, our loving nature is free to flow out in expression. We have *always* known what love is (12:5) because love "is what you are" (T-6.I.13:2), but it has been prevented from flowing out by the lies and illusions of the ego we have accepted into our minds. The interference must be undone; then we become the outlet of love into the world. That is what forgiveness consists of: removing the interference to love.

At the point where forgiveness is complete—the interference is totally removed—we have entered the real world. Again:

The real world is attained simply by the complete forgiveness of the old, the world you see without forgiveness (T-17.II.5:1).

Now we are ready for the final step. We enter into "the Presence of your Creator." We *know* we are acknowledged by God, as Jesus was: "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased" (Matt 17:5), and we acknowledge God, we *know* God. This goes so far beyond learning that "*everything* you learned is meaningless, replaced forever by the knowledge of love and its one meaning" (12:6). The experience of *gnosis* flushes everything but love and its meaning out of our minds forever!

Our entire spiritual journey is about readying ourselves for that moment, for total recall of the love we have always known.

Paragraph 13

13. ¹Your relationship with your brother [**Ur: Your relationship**] has been uprooted from the world of shadows, and its unholy purpose has been safely brought through the barriers of guilt, washed with

forgiveness, and set shining and firmly rooted in the world of light. ²From there it calls to you to follow the course it took, lifted high above the darkness and gently placed before the gates of Heaven. ³The holy instant in which you and your brother were united is but the messenger of love, sent from *beyond* forgiveness to *remind* you of all that lies beyond it. ⁴Yet it is *through* forgiveness that it will *be* remembered.

• **Study Question** •

13. *Your relationship with your brother has been carried by the Holy Spirit through the circle of fear, the barriers of guilt and set in the real world. What now must you do?*

- A. *Wait for the last step.*
- B. *Carry it back to darkness.*
- C. *Follow the course it took--let the Holy Spirit lead you through the guilt to the real world.*

•

Jesus returns to speaking directly to Helen and Bill about their relationship, but what he says applies to every holy relationship. He says their relationship has been (in some sense) uprooted from the world, beyond guilt's barriers, cleansed by forgiveness so that it is "shining and firmly rooted in the world of light" (13:1). To them (and to us) it may not seem that way, but at some deep, *unconscious* level it is true, although egos may still flare on the surface. The relationship has found its true home in the world of light, the world that lies beneath the clouds of guilt (8:3), which is the real world (9:1).

From the real world, then, within their minds, the relationship (which Jesus personifies, almost as if it is something beyond the separated consciousness of Helen and Bill, to whom it is calling) "calls to you to follow the course it took" (13:2). The relationship is calling them to *consciously* choose to follow it past the clouds of guilt and into the world of light. It is calling them to forgiveness, to removing all the barriers to love. Jesus uses a different spatial analogy here: instead of going beneath the clouds of guilt he speaks of the relationship being "lifted high above the darkness" where it arrives at the gates of Heaven, symbolic of readiness for God's final step.

The holy instant, or holy instants, that we experience are messengers of love, "sent from *beyond* forgiveness to *remind* you of all that lies beyond it" (13:3). Although the message comes from beyond forgiveness, forgiveness is the means by which the memory of God will return to us (13:4).

This personification of the relationship, to me, is a figure of speech that refers to a *part of me*, and a part of my holy relationship partner, that has (in the holy instant) acknowledged our oneness. Sometimes, when we have visited a lovely place—Portland, for instance—, and are thinking of returning there, we use a similar analogy, saying something like, "Portland is calling to me." Really, of course, *I* am calling to Portland. I experience a desire to be there. That's what I think is meant here. There is something deep within us that has changed, that has, in that holy instant, recognized the truth of love

and oneness, and that part of our mind is pushing us to *consciously* make that recognition, to move our lives in the direction of love, past all the barriers of doubt, guilt, and unforgiveness.

Paragraph 14

14. ¹And when the memory of God has come to you in the holy place of forgiveness [the real world, the circle of brightness beneath the clouds of guilt] you will remember nothing else, and memory will be as useless as learning, for your *only* purpose will be creating [in Heaven]. ²Yet this you cannot know until every perception has been cleansed and purified [through forgiveness], and finally removed forever. ³Forgiveness removes *only* the *untrue*, lifting the shadows [of guilt] from the world and carrying it, safe and sure within its gentleness, to the bright world of new and clean perception [the real world]. ⁴There is your purpose *now* [your purpose is reaching the real world, not Heaven]. ⁵And it is there that peace awaits you.

• Study Question •

14. *Your purpose now is forgiveness. When that is complete, the memory of God will return to you. When that memory returns, three things will disappear. What are those three things?*

- A. *Memory*
- B. *Creating*
- C. *Learning*
- D. *Purpose*
- E. *Perception*
- F. *Peace*

•

The editorial comments in brackets make up most of what explanation I have about this paragraph. The paragraph is an amplification of Paragraph 13. It is talking about removing love's blocks through forgiveness, readying ourselves for the experience of the *gnosis* (direct knowledge) of love, of God, of ourselves and of one another.

In that final step he says that not only will everything we ever learned become meaningless (12:6), but "memory will be as useless as learning" (14:1). Learning is about striving to some kind of future knowledge, and memory is about retaining past knowledge, but when we live in the endless present of God, both become useless. Time is no more. We will be wholly occupied in the present, extending the Allness of God: "You are God's Son, one Self, with one Creator and one goal; to bring awareness of this oneness to all minds, that true creation may extend the Allness and the Unity of God" (W-pl.95.12:2).

But we cannot know that state until forgiveness has cleansed and purified our perceptions, lifting every shred of guilt from the world. "There is your purpose *now*" (14:4): exercising forgiveness to bring ourselves and every mind into the real world. That is where "peace awaits you" (14:5). We may wish for an easier, or more glamorous way, but there is none:

"Hear a brother call for help and answer him. It will be God to Whom you answer, for you called on Him. **There is no other way** to hear His Voice. There is no other way to seek His Son. There is no other way to find your Self" (P-2.V.8:4-8).

"The way to God is through forgiveness here. **There is no other way**" (W-pII.256.1:1-2).

"Forgiveness is the great release from time. It is the key to learning that the past is over. Madness speaks no more. **There is no other teacher and no other way**" (T-26.V.6:1-4).

"Release from guilt as you would be released. **There is no other way** to look within and see the light of love" (T-13.X.10:1-2).

• **Study Question** •

15. *Please summarize this section in the following way. A series of levels are presented in this section, starting with the world the body sees and ending with Heaven. For the first three levels, see question #4 (you will have to supply the fourth level yourself; see paragraphs 8-14). Please describe a little bit about each of the five levels in order, starting with the physical and ending with Heaven. If you are really ambitious, describe the whole series of levels as a journey that the Holy Spirit takes you on.*

•

Answer Key

1. C
2. A
3. A,C,D
4. C,A,B
5. B
6. The body
7. C
8. C
9. C
10. A
11. A,B,C,D
12. False
13. C
14. A,C,E
15.
 1. Physical world--manifestation of guilt, not substantial, made to hide the guilt.
 2. Circle of fear--Fear of attack and desire for retaliation.
 3. Guilt--substance of clouds, source of top layers which were made to keep it in place.
 4. Real world--world of light beneath the clouds. Free of guilt, washed in forgiveness, step away from Heaven.
 5. Heaven--achieved through last step taken by God. No forgiveness, memory, learning, perception, etc. Just knowing.

Appendix 1

Course Quotes on bringing the darkness to the light

"The journey that we undertake together is the exchange of dark for light, of ignorance for understanding" (T-14.VI.1:1).

"Attack will always yield to love if it is brought to love, not hidden from it" (T-14.VI.2:2).

"Light or darkness, knowledge or ignorance are yours, but not both. Opposites must be brought together, not kept apart" (T-14.VII.1:2-3).

"Our emphasis has been on bringing what is undesirable to the desirable; what you do not want to what you do" (T-14.VII.4:1).

"You who have not yet brought all of the darkness you have taught yourself into the light in you, can hardly judge the truth and value of this course" (T-14.XI.4:1).

"Learn of His happiness, which is yours. But to accomplish this, all your dark lessons must be brought willingly to truth, and joyously laid down by hands open to receive, not closed to take. Every dark lesson that you bring to Him Who teaches light He will accept from you, because you do not want it. And He will gladly exchange each one for the bright lesson He has learned for you" (T-14.XI.4:5-8).

"We are therefore embarking on an organized, well-structured and carefully planned program aimed at learning how to offer to the Holy Spirit everything you do not want. He knows what to do with it" (T-12.II.10:1-2).

"This Christmas give the Holy Spirit everything that would hurt you" (T-15.XI.3:1).

"Your 'guilty secret' is nothing, and if you will but bring it to light, the light will dispel it." (T-13.II.9:2)

"The light of guiltlessness shines guilt away because, when they are brought together, the truth of one must make the falsity of its opposite perfectly clear." (T-14.VIII.4:2)

"You have been willing to bring the darkness to light, and this willingness has given strength to everyone who would remain in darkness. Those who would see *will* see. And they will join with me in carrying their light into the darkness, when the darkness in them is offered to the light, and is removed forever" (T-18.III.6:2-4).

Appendix 2

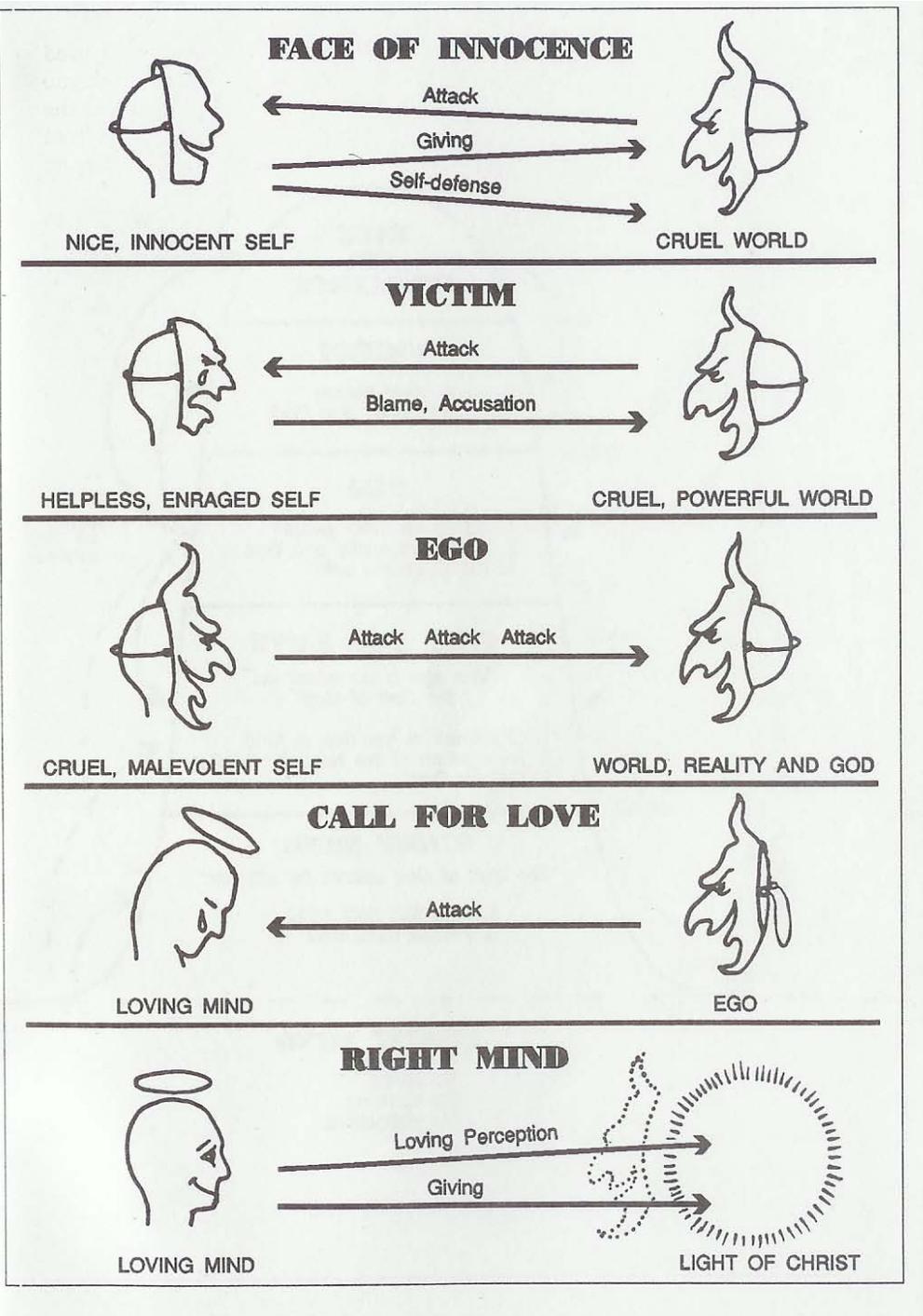
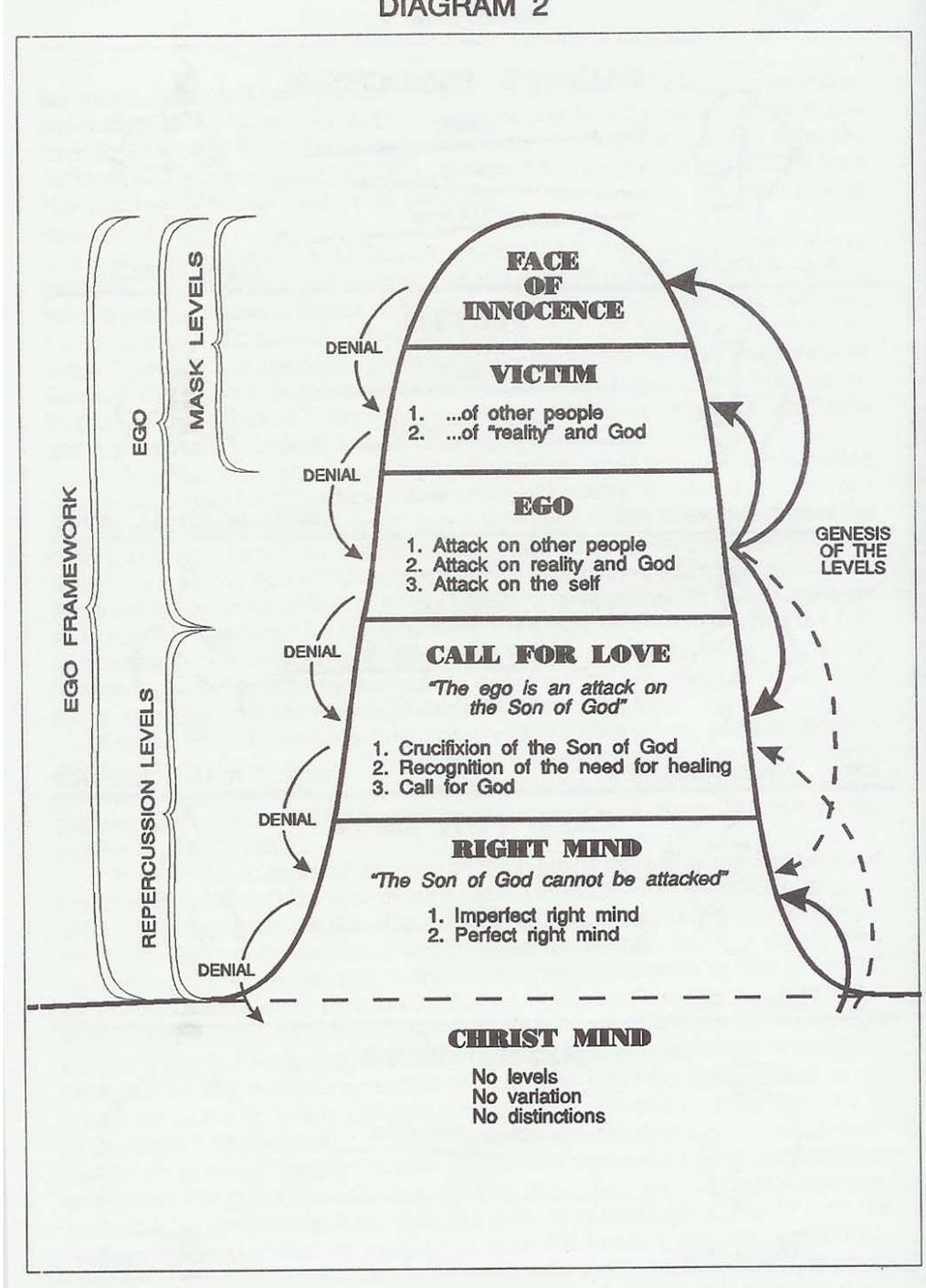


DIAGRAM 2



Appendix 3

Quotations from Lothar Schäfer's *Infinite Potential*

But this book goes much further than a description of mental processing. It argues that we don't see because we have eyes or hear because we have ears. The reverse is true. The mind created sense organs to explore the universe. As someone neatly put it, we aren't a machine that learned to think; we are thoughts that learned to create a machine.

The phenomena of quantum physics tell us that the most important part of the world is invisible; that is, outside of the realm of your senses.

Everything that exists in the visible world has first existed as a state in the cosmic field of potentiality. Nothing comes out of the blue; everything emerges out of the cosmic potentiality. We build our dreams, hopes, and visions on what is possible: finding perfect love, ending war and violence, feeling the presence of God. What would be important to learn, if it can be done, is how to use our mind to tap into the cosmic field of possibilities, in order to make our dreams a reality.

This formalism implies that the things we see in the world aren't made up of material particles, but of waves; and that the universe is an ocean of waves— not waves of matter or energy, but nonmaterial, invisible waves in the realm of potentiality. There are indications that these waves are hanging together like the water waves in an ocean, so that the nature of the cosmic potentiality is that of an indivisible wholeness— some call it the One— in which all things and people are interconnected. The things that you see in the world are somehow actualizations of waves; they are emanations out of the One.

Take Hans-Peter Dürr, for example. "As a physicist," he writes, "I have spent fifty years— my entire life as a researcher— to ask, what it is that hides behind the material. And the result is simple: there is no matter!... Basically, there is only spirit!"

The elementary particles at the bottom of things aren't lumps of matter in the ordinary sense of this word. As we shall see, they have wavelike properties, and the nature of these waves is closer to the nature of thoughts than things.

Schafer, Lothar (2013-04-02). Infinite Potential: What Quantum Physics Reveals About How We Should Live. Potter/TenSpeed/Harmony.