

# Study Guide and Commentary

## ACIM<sup>®</sup> Text, Chapter 19, Section IV(B).i.9–18

### *The Obstacles to Peace* *The Attraction of Pain*

**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 So Far

When a holy relationship begins, peace enters, uprooting the belief in sin and replacing it. That peace is now seeking to rise up in the relationship partners, fill every aspect of their lives, and spill out into the world. Peace is working from *within* them, trying to get out. To do so, it must flow over these obstacles. The first is the desire to get rid of peace, which is fueled by the attraction to sin and guilt.

The second obstacle is the belief that the body is valuable for what it offers. There is a symbiotic relationship between the first two obstacles. The attraction to guilt and the desire to get rid of peace *hide* the second obstacle, this addiction to the bodily identity, from our consciousness. At the same time, that bodily addiction is the foundation and *generating source* of the first obstacle. Our egos resist peace because they recognize that to *have* peace, we must relinquish our belief in the value of the body.

#### Overview of This Section

This sub-subsection takes us one step deeper in the layers of ego obstacles: Just as the result of sin is guilt, the result of guilt is *pain*—the pain of punishment for our apparent sin. Underneath the search for bodily pleasure, the ego is really seeking bodily pain, which reinforces our belief in sin and guilt, feeding our fear even more. This is “the attraction of pain.”

## Paragraph 9

9. <sup>1</sup>Your little part is but to give the Holy Spirit the whole *idea* of sacrifice. <sup>2</sup>And to *accept* the peace He **gives [gave]** instead, *without* the limits that would hold its extension back, and so would limit *your* awareness of it. <sup>3</sup>For what He gives *must* be extended if *you* would have its limitless power, and use it for the Son of God's release. <sup>4</sup>It is not *this* you would be rid of, and having it you *cannot* limit it. <sup>5</sup>If peace is homeless, so are you and so am I. <sup>6</sup>And He Who *is* our home is homeless *with* us. <sup>7</sup>Is this your **wish [will]**? <sup>8</sup>Would you forever be a wanderer in search of peace? <sup>9</sup>Would you invest your hope of peace and happiness in what *must* fail?

### • Study Question •

1. *Based on the previous discussion (in this obstacle and the previous one) what does giving the idea of sacrifice to the Holy Spirit mean?*
  - A. *You give Him your belief that you purchase Heaven through the sacrifice of bodily pleasure.*
  - B. *You give Him your belief that Heaven is purchased for you by Jesus' sacrifice on your behalf.*
  - C. *You give Him your erroneous belief that all that must be sacrificed is pain.*
  - D. *You give Him the sacrifices that He asks for, in the trust that they will be of manageable size.*
  - E. *A and B*
  - F. *A and C*

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At this point, the Holy Spirit is asking us to give Him “the whole *idea* of sacrifice” (9:1). This raises several questions in my mind as I read:

- (1) What does it mean by “the whole idea of sacrifice”?
- (2) Why the emphasis on the word “idea”? And
- (3) What does it mean to give this to the Holy Spirit? So let's try to answer those questions.

**Question #1:** The phrase, “the whole idea of sacrifice,” must be a reference to the remarks about sacrifice that have been made earlier in Section IV. In 19.IV(B).2, the “sacrifice” we believe God is calling us to make is the seeking fulfillment through bodily pleasure. Before that, in 19.IV(A).17, Jesus refuted the idea that his body could be a sacrifice that atoned for our sins. The phrase here includes both of these.

**Question #2:** The word “idea” is emphasized because Jesus wants to include every shade of meaning of sacrifice, especially both the mistaken idea that God demanded a

sacrifice of his body for sins, and the idea that *we* are called to sacrifice bodily pleasure to find inner peace.

**Question #3:** What does it mean, then, to give this idea to the Holy Spirit? Note that we are giving the Holy Spirit *an idea*, not anything material. I believe it simply means that we stop believing that Jesus sacrificed himself for us, or that we are called to sacrifice in any way. In essence, Jesus is asking us to stop *thinking* in terms of sacrifice. There is no sacrifice at all involved, on Jesus' part, or on ours.

Let go of the whole idea of sacrifice and, instead, "*accept* the peace He gave" in its place. In the words of Michael Stillwater's chorus, "I open my mind to peace." Note again the subtle change of tense: not "the peace He *gives*" but "the peace He *gave*" (9:2). It isn't a peace waiting to be given, but a gift you have *already received*. All it waits for is your acceptance.

The idea of sacrifice *limits* your acceptance of peace. How can you be fully at peace if you are anticipating some kind of loss? So, as long as you cling to the idea of sacrifice, you cannot be fully aware of the peace that has already been planted in your heart. You still think that extending peace to some people will cause you loss, so you hesitate to use the power of the peace you possess. If you don't extend it, you don't know you *have* it (9:3).

In the Gospel of Mary Magdalene, just prior to leaving them, Jesus asks his disciples to spread the good news of the Kingdom of God:

...the Son of Humanity already exists within you. Follow him, for those who seek him there will find him. Go forth, now, and proclaim the Good News concerning the Kingdom.<sup>1</sup>

But his disciples, after he leaves, say to one another:

How are we to go into the rest of the world proclaiming the Good News about the Son of Humanity's Realm? If they did not spare him, how will they ever leave us alone?<sup>2</sup>

We can see here how the belief that Jesus "sacrificed" himself for us can keep us from extending peace to the world. If *he* had to suffer like that, what's going to happen to *me*?

Peace is not what you want to get "rid of," nor can you really limit its extension (at least not forever) (9:4). To get rid of peace is like evicting it from our minds and making it homeless—a ridiculous notion, of course, but it's what we try to do. And in that attempt we are trying to put a core part of our own being out on the streets. We are trying to make *ourselves* homeless (again, ridiculous idea), and if we could actually do so, we would be making Jesus and God homeless as well, because They are one with us (9:5–6). It's an

<sup>1</sup> Bourgeault, Cynthia. *The Meaning of Mary Magdalene: Discovering the Woman at the Heart of Christianity*, page 45.

<sup>2</sup> Bourgeault, Cynthia. *The Meaning of Mary Magdalene: Discovering the Woman at the Heart of Christianity*, page 53.

impossibility, which is why he says we "*cannot limit it*" (peace), and why the attempt "*must fail*" (9:9).

Look at it objectively. Is this really your will—to be without peace, to destroy the peace of Heaven? Do you really want to wander forever "in search of peace" (9:7–8)? Of course not! So then, stop putting your hope for peace in your body, stop thinking you have to sacrifice something, and *accept the peace* God has given.

## Paragraph 10

10. <sup>1</sup>Faith in the eternal is *always* justified, for the eternal is forever kind, infinite in its patience and wholly loving. <sup>2</sup>It will accept you wholly, and give you peace. <sup>3</sup>Yet it can unite only with what *already* is at peace in you, immortal as itself. <sup>4</sup>The body can bring you neither peace nor turmoil; ~~neither joy nor pain~~ **[not pain nor joy]**. <sup>5</sup>It is a means, and *not* an end. <sup>6</sup>It has *no* purpose of itself, but only what is *given to it* **[it to do]**. <sup>7</sup>The body will seem to *be* whatever is the means for reaching the goal that you *assign* to it. <sup>8</sup>Only the mind can set a purpose, and only the mind can see the means for its accomplishment, and justify its use. <sup>9</sup>Peace and guilt are both conditions of the mind, to be *attained*. <sup>10</sup>And these conditions are the home of the emotion that ~~calls~~ **[called]** them forth, and therefore is compatible with ~~them~~ **[it]**.

### • Study Question •

2. *The eternal can join only with that part of you that is at peace like itself. Based on this, what can the eternal not join with?*
- A. *The mind.*
  - B. *The body.*
  - C. *The emotions.*

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You will recall that the Course spoke of "the eternal" in the previous sub-section, 19.IV(B). To review what was said there:

Peace is extended from you only to the eternal, and it reaches out from the eternal in you (T-19.IV(B).4:1).

We said then that "the eternal" refers to our spirit, our true Self, which, as a creation of God, is eternal, as are all of God's creations. It is the eternal in us that reaches out to the eternal in others. But later in that section, what "reaches out" from us is characterized in several different ways: truth; love; the union of the Father and the Son; the Holy Spirit. All of these are aspects of what the Course means by "the eternal." It appears to refer to all that is real, all that is of God and in God.

Faith in this, Jesus says, "is *always* justified (10:1). This is by contrast with the body, which, despite our faith in it, has never paid off and must eventually fail (9:9). The

eternal is kind, patient, and loving—infinately, endlessly so (10:1). This is where we must turn, where we are meant to turn, the only place worthy of us:

No one created by God can find joy in anything except the eternal; not because he is deprived of anything else, but because nothing else is worthy of him. What God and His Sons create is eternal, and in this and this only is their joy (T-8.VI.3:2-3).

Our faith in one another must be faith in the eternal in one another. We are to have *no* faith in what the ego makes, and *only* in what God created. As we turn to the eternal in ourselves and in one another, we experience total acceptance and total peace (10:2). The eternal, I think, is simply another name for God. The Hebrew name of God, *Yhwh*, which the KJV translates as LORD, is translated by the French Bible (Louis Segond) as *L'Éternel*, the Eternal. So I'll capitalize the word where I think it refers to that larger whole that we think of as God.

The Eternal calls to the eternal in us. That which is of God in us is all that can respond to and unite with the Eternal. Love calls to love: "Accept your Father's gift. It is a call from Love to Love, that It be but Itself" (W-pI.pII.7.5:1-2). Our love calls, and Love hears only that.

This, as I said, is contrasted with the body, which cannot bring "peace nor turmoil; not pain nor joy" (10:4). Of itself it can do nothing; it is a means (used by the mind), not an end (10:5).<sup>3</sup> Its only purpose is the one given to it by our mind (10:6–8). We assign a goal to it, and the body becomes the means for reaching that goal (10:7). Are we seeking to achieve peace, or are we seeking to find guilt? Either one can be the goal our minds are seeking, and the body adapts to the chosen purpose (10:9). Peace arises from love, and is compatible with it; guilt arises from fear, and is compatible with it. Love and fear are the two emotions that call forth the conditions of the mind that we seek (10:9–10). The body is simply the neutral means, or *tool*, used by the mind to seek a goal dictated by the emotion that is driving it.

## Paragraph 11

11. <sup>1</sup>But think you which it is [fear or love] that is compatible with you. <sup>2</sup>Here is your choice, and it *is* free. <sup>3</sup>But all that *lies* in it *will* come with it, and what you think you are can *never* be *apart* from it. <sup>4</sup>The body is the great *seeming* betrayer of faith. <sup>5</sup>In it lies disillusionment and the seeds of faithlessness, but *only* if you **ask [asked]** of it what it *cannot* give. <sup>6</sup>Can **your [this]** mistake be reasonable grounds for depression and disillusionment, and for retaliative attack on what you think has failed you? <sup>7</sup>Use not your *error* as the justification for your faithlessness. <sup>8</sup>You have *not* sinned, but you *have* been mistaken in what is faithful. <sup>9</sup>And the correction of *your* mistake will *give* you grounds for faith.

<sup>3</sup> See section 8.VIII, "The Body as Means or End".

• **Study Question** •

3. Sentence 6 says, "Can your mistake be reasonable grounds for...retaliative attack on what you think has failed you?" What does this mean?
- A. When you are unhappy you attack your holy relationship partner, whom you think has failed you.
  - B. When you are unhappy you attack God, Whom you think has failed you.
  - C. When you are unhappy you attack your body with sickness, pain and death, since you think it has failed you.
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Which emotion is “compatible with you”, love or fear (11:1)?<sup>4</sup> You can choose between the two emotions in complete freedom; nothing is coerced (11:2). But the choice has far-reaching consequences. The choice for love recognizes our eternal nature and brings peace; the choice for fear identifies us with the body and brings guilt, pain, and death. “...all that *lies* in it *will* come with it, and what you think you are can *never* be apart from it” (11:3). Your choice between the emotions determines your self-image, your concept of your self. Listen to love and your concept of yourself is immortal, expansive, open, beneficent. Listen to fear and your concept of yourself is physical, contracted, closed, and condemning.

Our bodies, if we trust in them to save us and make us happy, end up seeming to betray our faith in them, leaving us deeply disillusioned, but that’s only because we are asking them to do something they cannot do, to give what they *cannot* give (11:4–5). It’s not the body’s fault, it’s ours. It’s like asking a four-year-old boy to cook dinner for us and then being angry when the food gets burned, undercooked, or worse. It’s beyond his capabilities. It would be terribly unjust to whip the boy for his "failure," but that's what we do to our bodies! It's *our mind's* mistake when we become disillusioned with the body's inability to bring us lasting peace and happiness, but we take out our anger on the body, which is entirely unjust (11:6). We "retaliate" against the body by making it sick.

Sickness is anger taken out upon the body, so that it will suffer pain. (T-28.VI.5:1)

None of this is a sin: “You have *not* sinned” (11:8). We’ve just made a mistake. We put our faith in the body, asking it to make us happy, and then believed it had not kept faith with us by doing what we asked of it. We put our faith in the wrong thing, and all we need to do is correct that mistake, putting our faith in the eternal instead of the temporal. That faith will pay off; the Eternal will “*give* you grounds for faith” (11:9).

## Paragraph 12

12. <sup>1</sup> It is impossible to seek for pleasure through the body and <i>not</i> find pain. <sup>2</sup> It is essential that this relationship be understood, for it is one the ego sees as proof of sin. <sup>3</sup> It is not <i>really</i> punitive at all. <sup>4</sup> It is but the
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<sup>4</sup> You may want to re-read the section that discusses these two emotions in detail, T-12.V.

inevitable result of equating yourself *with* the body, which is the *invitation* to pain. <sup>5</sup>For it invites *fear* to enter and become your *purpose*. <sup>6</sup>The attraction of guilt *must* enter with it, and *whatever* fear directs the body to do *is* therefore painful. <sup>7</sup>It will share the pain of *all* illusions, and the illusion of pleasure will *be* the same as pain.

• **Study Question** •

4. *According to this paragraph, how are we tempted to interpret the pain that results from seeking physical pleasure?*
- A. *As pleasurable.*
  - B. *As evidence that we are being punished for our sins.*
  - C. *As proof that we have sinned*
  - D. *As justification for faith in the body.*
  - E. *A and C.*
  - F. *B and C.*

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When we seek for pleasure through the body we will find pain, because pleasure-seeking equates us with the body, invites fear to become our goal, brings in the attraction of guilt to serve this goal, and so the body's pursuits are really governed by the attraction of guilt.

The teaching of this opening line (12:1) is probably distressing to most of us. Its meaning is crystal clear: “It is impossible to seek for pleasure through the body and *not* find pain” (12:1). But it is distressing because we don’t want to believe it. Then Jesus rubs salt in the wound: “It is essential that this relationship be understood” (12:2). In other words, we can’t just skip over this or ignore it; we have to *understand* it. We may ask, “Surely not *all* seeking for pleasure through the body brings pain?” But “impossible” makes it quite clear that he means *all*” of it.

How often, though, have you heard someone say, perhaps with humorous intention, “Why is it that everything I like is bad for me?” Phrases like, “Sinfully delicious,” “Decadent desserts,” and “guilty pleasures,” all point to a realization that our pleasure-seeking usually (the Course would say “always”) has an unpleasant cost. I certainly don’t want to give up all bodily pleasure cold turkey, like an ascetic monk. If the Course were being legalistic about this, I’d probably have to stop studying it! But it’s clear that some kind of adjustment in our attitudes toward, and use of, our bodies is being called for.

The common examples I gave above are just the things we are conscious of; the implication of the Course’s teaching is that our search for bodily pleasure *always* delivers pain in the end. I believe that the pain it is talking about is not necessarily the *direct* result of the bodily indulgence. I think the worst pain is *indirect*. This becomes clearer in the remainder of the paragraph.

First, there is the latter half of sentence 2, which says that understanding the relationship between seeking pleasure and finding pain is essential because “it is one the ego sees as proof of sin” (12:2). We can understand that, I think. He is talking here about

the pain of guilt. There is a lot of guilt that comes to us because we have sought some illicit or unhealthy or unwise physical pleasure. Our egos pounce on these misadventures, pronounce them to be sin, and belabor us with guilt.

One thing we need to be clear about: The pain that results from pleasure-seeking “is not *really* punitive at all” (12:3). It’s not a punishment from God! “You have *not* sinned, but you *have* been mistaken” (11:8). When we seek pleasure through the body, we are equating ourselves with the body, and the “inevitable result” is pain (12:4). Ernest Holmes, the founder of Religious Science, said it well when he wrote, “There is no sin but a mistake, and no punishment but an inevitable consequence.”<sup>5</sup>

Why is pain the inevitable result of equating ourselves with the body? “For it invites *fear* to enter and become your *purpose*” (12:5). If we are bodies, we are vulnerable. We are fragile. We are in constant danger. We are going to die. Fear enters and it drives our lives, directing the body to do things that leads to even more pain (12:6). We are attracted to the perception of guilt in others, and unconsciously are moved to see guilt in ourselves. We are dedicated to illusions, and inevitably become *disillusioned*, enduring the pain of that disappointment (12:7). Even the things that we experience as pleasure fail to make us happy, lead to guilt, and fail to last.

In a nutshell, being a body sucks.

## Paragraph 13

13. <sup>1</sup>Is not this inevitable? <sup>2</sup>Under fear’s orders the body *will* pursue guilt, serving its master whose attraction to guilt maintains the whole illusion of its existence. <sup>3</sup>This, then, *is* the attraction of *pain*. <sup>4</sup>Ruled by this perception the body becomes the servant of pain, seeking it dutifully and obeying the idea that pain is pleasure. <sup>5</sup>It is this *idea* [pain is pleasure] that underlies all of the ego’s heavy investment in the body. <sup>6</sup>And it is this insane relationship that it keeps hidden, and yet feeds upon. <sup>7</sup>To *you* it teaches that the body’s pleasure is happiness. <sup>8</sup>Yet to *itself* it whispers, “It is death.”

### • Study Question •

5. *What form does our pursuit of pain, guilt and fear take (based on this obstacle and the previous one)?*
- A. *The pursuit of physical pleasure.*
  - B. *The way our eyes search for evidence of sin, guilt and bodies in the world.*
  - C. *Masochism, which though uncommon is still the focus of this passage.*
  - D. *Study of the Course, which seems at times like masochism.*
  - E. *A and B*

<sup>5</sup> “Science of Mind,” page 110.



The discussion about the relationship of pain and pleasure continues.

“Isn’t this relationship of pursuit of bodily pleasure to guilt, fear, pain and death inevitable?” (13:1) If we are identified with the body, we will experience fear. Fear will demand that we use the body to pursue guilt, because fear (a.k.a the ego) needs guilt to maintain the illusion of its existence (13:2). That leads us with equal inevitability to pain. “This, then, *is* the attraction of *pain*” (13:3). It’s not just guilt the ego is attracted to; beyond that, our egos are attracted to pain. Yikes! we are all masochists.

So, with this depraved mentality of the ego driving it, our body “becomes the servant of pain, seeking it dutifully and obeying the idea that pain is pleasure” (13:4). The ego, it seems, actually *likes pain*, and because the body is such a great source of pain, the ego is heavily invested in it (13:5). In our conscious minds, of course, we *don’t* like pain. The ego is insane, but *we’re* not. Therefore, while feeding on the guilt and pain, the ego has to hide its motivation from our conscious awareness (13:6). So our egos teach us that the pursuit of pleasure is the pursuit of happiness, while secretly whispering to itself, “It is [the pursuit of] death” (13:7–8). Death is where it wants to lead us.<sup>6</sup>

**Paragraph 13** presents an interesting process behind the body's seeking, which goes something like this: Fear orders the body to pursue guilt, which results in physical pain. Thus, we are *really* attracted to physical pain and it--pain--is why we are so invested in the body. We think we value the body for the pleasure it brings, but our egos secretly value the body for the *pain* it brings, ending in death.

## Paragraph 14

14. <sup>1</sup>Why should the body be *anything* to you? <sup>2</sup>Certainly what it is *made* of is not precious. <sup>3</sup>And just as certainly *it* has no feeling. <sup>4</sup>It transmits *to you* the feelings that you *want*. <sup>5</sup>Like any communication medium the body receives and sends the messages that it is given. <sup>6</sup>It has *no* feeling for them. <sup>7</sup>All of the feeling with which they are invested is given by the sender and the receiver. <sup>8</sup>The ego and the Holy Spirit both recognize this, and both also recognize that here *the sender and receiver are the same*. <sup>9</sup>The Holy Spirit *tells* you this with joy. <sup>10</sup>The ego *hides* it, for it would keep you unaware of it. <sup>11</sup>Who would send messages of hatred and attack if he but understood he sends them to *himself*? <sup>12</sup>Who would accuse, make guilty and condemn *himself*?

<sup>6</sup> “For the ego does want to kill you, and if you identify with it you must believe its goal is yours” (T-13.II.5:6).

• **Study Question** •

6. *According to this paragraph, when you feel physical pain, what has happened?*
- A. *You have attacked another, and through that have sent a message of pain to yourself, using the body to deliver that message.*
  - B. *The world has sent you a message, which you have mistakenly allowed to be transmitted to you by your body.*
  - C. *You have identified with an illusion, which is painful.*

The chemicals in the human body, it has been said, are worth about one dollar, although if you tanned the skin you might be able to sell it for \$3.50.<sup>7</sup> So when the Course says “what it is *made* of is not precious” (14:2), it is quite correct. From that perspective, why should we care about it (14:1).

The next assertion is a bit harder to swallow: That the body delivers only the feelings that we *want* (14:3–4). Everything in our experience screams that the body *creates* certain feelings and feeds them to the mind. The Course is asserting that our mind selects the feelings and evokes them from the body, which functions as nothing more than a “communication medium,” receiving messages from our mind and sending back the messages it has been instructed to send (14:5).

The body itself “has no feeling” for the messages (14:6). That means, to me, that any feeling attached to the messages comes *from our mind* and not from the body. Remember here that all the five senses are a part of the body, so this applies to everything your eyes see, your ears hear, and your touch feels. You see something and you have an emotional reaction, a feeling. Does that come from outside through your body? Or does the emotional reaction come from your mind? Are you seeing something objectively, or are you seeing it and feeling what you feel because you asked for that feeling? It isn't the body's fault.

It's important at this point to get that the Course is *not* negative about the body. It strives to make clear that the body is not the culprit, but the mind. The body is neutral. There is an extended passage in Chapter 23 that really drive this home, and I recommend reading it now: T-28.VI.1:1–4:2.

All of the feeling (emotion) in the messages comes from the sender and receiver. Both the ego and the Holy Spirit know that this is true, and that the mind is both sender and receiver (14:7–8). Note the italics in sentences 9 and 10: the Holy Spirit “tells” us this, but the ego “hides” it from us. The Holy Spirit wants us to know how perception really works. The mind sends out feelers, asking for a certain type of response: love, or fear. The body accommodates with sensations that match the request, and sends back the same message it received. But the ego wants to *hide* the fact that the feelings originate in the

<sup>7</sup> See this web page: <http://chemistry.about.com/b/2011/02/06/how-much-are-the-elements-in-yourbody-worth.htm> Others have argued that if you take into account the complex compounds synthesized in the body, it might be worth as much as six million dollars. But the basic building blocks are definitely cheap.

mind. The ego wants us to believe that the external, physical world *causes* the emotions we feel.

Why does the ego hide this? The final two sentences make it abundantly clear:

Who would send messages of hatred and attack if he but understood he sends them to himself? Who would accuse, make guilty and condemn himself? (14:11–12)

Clearly, if we grasped the truth of the situation, we would stop asking for messages of hatred and attack. We would stop accusing one another, making one another guilty, and condemning one another, because we would realize that we are doing it *to ourselves*.

## Paragraph 15

15. <sup>1</sup>The ego's messages are *always* sent *away* from you, in the belief that for your message of attack and guilt will someone *other* than yourself suffer. <sup>2</sup>And even if *you* suffer, yet someone *else* will suffer more. <sup>3</sup>The great deceiver recognizes that this is not so, but as the "enemy" of peace, it urges you to *send out* all your messages of hate and free *yourself*. <sup>4</sup>And to convince you this is possible, it bids the body search for pain in attack upon another, calling it pleasure and *offering* it to you as freedom *from* attack.

### • Study Question •

7. *This paragraph sketches a process whereby the ego tricks us into attacking our bodies with pain. According to this paragraph, what is the real, deep-down, underlying reason that you project your guilt onto someone else?*
- A. *You want to get rid of your guilt, and do not realize that you cannot get rid of it in this way.*
  - B. *You want to collect guilt and punish your body with it.*
  - C. *You want to free yourself and escape attack.*
  - D. *A and C.*

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The ego tries to convince us that when we send out messages of guilt and judgment will cause *the other person* to suffer (15:1). Maybe we will suffer too, a little, but the other person will *really* suffer (15:2)! Our egos ("the great deceiver") know darn well that this isn't so, that *we* will suffer more than anyone, but it urges us to project all our guilt and attack onto others, promising that projecting these things will *free us* from them (instead, it increases them), because it desires to shatter our peace and keep it from us (15:3).

The ego therefore instructs us to use our senses to perceive guilt in others. This is what is going to make us happy. This is what, supposedly, proves our own innocence, or

at least our lesser guilt. But what we end up experiencing is the pain and guilt that arises from attacking someone else (15:4).

## Paragraph 16

16. <sup>1</sup>Hear not its madness, and believe not the impossible is true. <sup>2</sup>Forget not that the ego has *dedicated* the body to the goal of sin, and places in it *all* its faith that this can be accomplished. <sup>3</sup>Its sad disciples chant the body's praise continually, in solemn celebration of the ego's rule. <sup>4</sup>Not one but *must* believe that *yielding* to the attraction of guilt is the *escape* from pain. <sup>5</sup>Not one but *must* regard the body as himself, *without* which he would die, and yet *within* which is his death equally inevitable.

### • Study Question •

8. *Sentence 3 says, "Its sad disciples chant the body's praise continually, in solemn celebration of the ego's rule." Please give an example, from your life, from someone else's life or from our contemporary culture, of the ego's disciples chanting the body's continual praise.*

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“Hear not its madness. (16:1). The “its” refers to “the great deceiver” mentioned in 15:2, which, as is clear, is a description of the ego, the subject of 15:1. So this is an injunction to disregard the mad urgings of the ego to send out messages of hate and attack on each other. (Remember, to judge another or see them as guilty is a form of attack.) It asks us to *not* believe the ego when it claims that attacking others is pleasure, and a way to be free from attack ourselves.

Instead, we are asked to recall the ego's purpose for our bodies: they are dedicated to the goal of sin. The ego is utterly convinced that its goal is possible. It believes that *sin* is possible, that we can do (or have done) something so awful, so permanent, that we will become separate from God, and it motivates us, deceptively, to use our bodies lovelessly, for attack (16:2). There are people whom the Course refers to, in 16:3, as the body's “sad disciples.” They “chant the body's praise continually,” not realizing that in doing so they act “in solemn celebration of the ego's rule.” It seems that the Course is referring to the way we can become obsessed with some or many of the various aspects of the body and its care: food, clothing, sex, sporting ability, appearance, comfort, health, reversing the signs of aging, and so on. When these things become a central focus, we are, without realizing it, worshipping the ego. For the body is the ego's symbol:

The body is the symbol of the ego, as the ego is the symbol of the separation (T-15.IX.2:3).

To worship the body is to worship the ego. I do not believe that any of the above things are wrong, in moderation. Of course we must pay attention to eating good food, having decent and attractive clothing, enjoying sex and sports, caring for our health and

comfort, etc. But it is far too easy to go overboard in any and all of these areas. As Jesus admonished us 2000 years ago:

*“So I tell you to stop worrying about what you will eat, drink, or wear. Isn't life more than food and the body more than clothes?”*

*“Look at the birds. They don't plant, harvest, or gather the harvest into barns. Yet, your heavenly Father feeds them. Aren't you worth more than they?”*

*“Can any of you add a single hour to your life by worrying?”*

*“And why worry about clothes? Notice how the flowers grow in the field. They never work or spin yarn for clothes. But I say that not even Solomon in all his majesty was dressed like one of these flowers. That's the way God clothes the grass in the field. Today it's alive, and tomorrow it's thrown into an incinerator. So how much more will he clothe you people who have so little faith?”*

*“Don't ever worry and say, 'What are we going to eat?' or 'What are we going to drink?' or 'What are we going to wear?' Everyone is concerned about these things, and your heavenly Father certainly knows you need all of them. But first, be concerned about his kingdom and what has his approval. Then all these things will be provided for you.” (Matthew 6:25–33 God's Word Translation)*

The reason to “stop worrying about what you will eat, drink, or wear,” is that such over-concern with the body leads inevitably to a belief that heaping guilt on other people is the way to escape from pain (16:4). We may not see the connection at first but it is there. That kind of concern is a clear indicator that we regard our bodies as ourselves, that without the body we would die, and yet within it, death is “equally inevitable” (16:5).<sup>8</sup>

Identification with the body is party and parcel of a belief in separate egos, living in separate bodies, and competing with one another for everything—particularly for food, clothing, shelter, and so on. Bodily identification is the root of all war. It is the root of oppression, slavery, crime, racism, and greed. And when we are dedicated to our bodily identity, we are dedicated to death.

## Paragraph 17

17. <sup>1</sup>It is not given to the ego's disciples to realize that they have dedicated themselves to death. <sup>2</sup>Freedom is *offered* them but they have not accepted it, and what is offered must also be received, to be truly given. <sup>3</sup>For the Holy Spirit, too, is a communication medium, receiving from the Father and offering His messages unto the Son. <sup>4</sup>Like **[to]** the ego, the Holy Spirit is both the sender and the receiver. <sup>5</sup>For what is sent through Him *returns* to Him, seeking itself along the way, and *finding*

<sup>8</sup> Kenneth Wapnick, in his book about this core section of the Course, sums up the message of this final sentence like this: “...we unconsciously believe that without the body we would certainly die at God's avenging hands. And yet within the body we must also die...And so we all find ourselves almost totally identified with, and invested in the body because that is what the ego has told us will keep us alive, and yet we all equally know that the body must inevitably die.” (Wapnick, *The Journey Home*, pages 158 & 159)

what it seeks. <sup>6</sup>So does the ego *find* the death *it* seeks, returning it to *you*.

• **Study Question** •

9. *Let's say that you make a solemn vow to treat your body as the temple of God, to feed it only the purest foods, to give it lots of energizing sunshine, to make it strong and beautiful, to give it an abundant amount of Chinese herbs, all in order to make it a worthy home for your mind. What have you really dedicated yourself to?*
- A. *The Holy Spirit.*
  - B. *The happy dream.*
  - C. *Death.*
  - D. *Your true home.*

•

We're dedicated to death without realizing it (17:1). In this sentence and the preceding one, we are beginning to look ahead to the Third Obstacle, which is the attraction of death. Our attraction to death is, at first, hidden from our conscious minds. It is obscured by the first two obstacles. As I mentioned at the outset of this long section, each successive obstacle is hidden by the ones before it, and in turn acts as the source of those earlier obstacles. Here, what is beginning to show up is that our belief in the merit of finding guilt in one another, and our belief in the body as the source of pleasure and pain, are really expressions of the deeper ego dedication to death.

Yes, freedom from death has been offered to everyone, including us, but that freedom has to be received and accepted to be truly given (17:2). We have to let go of the body, of identification with the body. We have to come to know that we are eternal spirits, not transient bodies.

The complete cycle of the offer of freedom has three steps: it is offered to us; we receive it; it returns to the Sender. This is how *all* messages from the Holy Spirit work: the Spirit receives a message from the Father; He then offers the message to the Son; and finally, having been received by us, the message returns to Him (16:3–5). He is “both the sender and the receiver” (16:4). The message “sent through Him *returns* to Him” (16:5).

Accept your Father's gift. It is a call from Love to Love, that It be but Itself (W-pI.pII.7.5:1-2).

It connects with what is like itself in us; messages of love find the love in us, just as the ego's messages find death and return it to us (16:6).

Our reception of the offer of freedom cannot happen until we dis-identify with our bodies and recognize the love within us as the truth of our being, so that we spontaneously offer the gift of freedom to those around us, no longer seeing attack or guilt in anyone, demonstrating that freedom for all to see, and seeing only love or a call for love wherever we look. What we give, we receive.

• **Study Question** •

10. *Please write a paragraph about this section. This one will be a little different than usual. We will not try to summarize the sections or even particular themes in it. Instead, write about your thoughts, feelings and reactions to this section's idea that our conventional uses for the body (the seeking of pleasure, the directing of our eyes and the communication of attack to others) are really motivated by the ego's need to collect guilt, find pain and death, and reinforce fear.*
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## Answer Key

1. E
2. B
3. C
4. F
5. E
6. A
7. B
8. Anything that would have to do with our preoccupation with food, clothing, sex, appearance, comfort, health, etc.
9. C
10. Each reader will have their own personal reaction to the Course's teaching in this section.