

Study Guide and Commentary

ACIM® Text, Chapter 28

The Little gap

Section II

Reversing Effect and Cause

Explanation of underlining, italics and footnote formats can be found at the end of the commentary.

Overview of Section II

I meant to mention this point at the start of the last section, but now is soon enough: Chapter 28 is titled, “The Little **gap**.” The word **gap** is a key word in this entire chapter, occurring 42 times. I suggest you note it as you read and, if you don’t mind marking your book, highlight the word each time it occurs. I am going to make the word print in **bold** each time it occurs in both the Text I include and in my commentary.

Section I hammered home the idea that our mind is the cause of the world we see. Section II continues the cause/effect theme, focusing on the way we have, in the separation process, twice reversed effect and cause (or tried to). First, we made ourselves our own cause, and God became our effect. Then, having caused the making of the world, we again switched cause with effect, and came to see the world as our cause, ourselves as its effect. Now, in the process of salvation, we must reverse the whole process step by step.

Paragraph 1

Without a cause there can be no effects, and yet without effects there is no cause. ²The cause a cause is *made* by its effects;¹ the Father *is* a father by His Son. ³Effects do not create their cause, but they establish its causation. ⁴Thus the Son gives fatherhood to his Creator, and receives the gift that he has given Him. ⁵It is because he is God’s Son that he must also be a father, who creates as God created him. ⁶The circle of creation has no end. ⁷Its starting and its ending are the same. ⁸But in itself it holds the universe of all creation, without beginning and without an end.

The opening line states the obvious: You cannot have effects if there is no cause, and yet, if there is no cause, effects cannot exist. Cause and effect either both exist, or neither

¹ In other words, a cause becomes a cause by virtue of having effects.

exists. If I have a sudden pain in my foot there must be a cause. Perhaps I dropped a brick on it; perhaps a dog bit me. An effect requires a cause. The reverse is also true: If I drop a brick on my foot, pain will follow. If there is no pain, nothing fell onto my foot. I may have imagined it or dreamed it, but there was no effect and therefore no cause (1:1).

The second sentence then asserts an intriguing idea: What *makes* a cause into a cause is its effects (1:2). (This probably seems abstract, but there is a point. Bear with it.) This is just another version of what 1:1 said: "without effects there is no cause." But then it adds a specific example: "the Father *is* a father by His Son." The capitalization makes it clear this is referring to God and His creation: us.

It isn't that effects *create* their cause; of course not. By their existence, however, they establish that causation has occurred (1:3). So, in that sense, the Son of God (us; God's creation) "gives fatherhood to his Creator" (1:4). The existence of the Son of God establishes the fact that God is a Father. Or, moving a bit away from male-centric language, the creation gives "creatorhood" to its Creator.

The rest of the sentence adds that the creation receives the gift it has given to the Creator (1:4). Let me try to unpack that. The gift we gave to the Creator is "creatorhood." So if we in turn receive the same gift, we are somehow given the ability to create like God. We are fathers or creators because we are extensions (Sons) of God, and we inherit the ability to create as He does (1:5). That is a rather amazing assertion!

What does it mean to create? What do we create? Do we create in this world? Is extending love creating? These questions and other related questions have bothered Course students frequently. I've included an Addendum to this section's commentary that attempts to draw together many of the things the Course has to say about creations and creating (it's a lot; this is just a sample). I hope you find it interesting.

God creates us, we create in turn, our creations create, and the circle of creation returns eventually to its source in God; it is an endless circle (1:6). It all begins and ends in God. Not that we create God, but we do *extend* God!

"Being *must* be extended. That is how it retains the knowledge of itself. Spirit yearns to share its being as its Creator did. Created by sharing, its will is to create. It does not wish to contain God, but wills to extend His Being.

The extension of God's Being is spirit's only function" (T-7.IX.2:6-3:1 (FIP), (T-7.VIII.2:4-3:3 (CE))).

What you believe you are determines your gifts, and if God created you by extending Himself as you, you can only extend yourself as He did" (T-7.I.5:2 (FIP), (T-6.VIII.5:3 (CE))).

I envision this, not as a static circle, but as a flowing current of love that circulates over and over, endlessly. The circle contains “the universe of all creation” (1:8).²

Paragraph 2

2 Fatherhood is creation. ²Love *must* be extended. ³Purity is not confined. ⁴It is the nature of the innocent to be forever uncontained, without a barrier or limitation. ⁵Thus is purity not of the body, nor can it be found where limitation is. ⁶The body can be healed by its effects, which are as limitless as is itself.³ ⁷Yet must all healing come about because the mind is recognized as not within the body, and its innocence is quite apart from it, and where all healing is. ⁸Where, then, is healing? ⁹Only where its cause is given its effects.⁴ ¹⁰For sickness is a meaningless attempt to give effects to causelessness and make it be a cause.⁵

Fatherhood is just another way of referring to creation. It is perhaps the best analogy. Human fathers literally extend their own being in their children (of course, so do mothers) (2:1). God, though, is not a human father. God *is* love, and of necessity, “love *must* be extended” (2:2). Love would not be love if it did not extend to touch and enliven others. In a way, a parent extends his or her being as a child in order to have an object for their love! The love produces the child.

The next concept, that “purity is not confined” but is unlimited (2:3–4), is not so self-evident, at least not to me. I’m not sure *why* “it is the *nature* of the innocent to be forever uncontained” (2:4, my emphasis). I suppose that being limited behind barriers somehow mitigates against innocence. Perhaps a barrier could prevent me from performing some action that expresses or grows out of my innocence.

As I think upon this, it seems to me as if “purity” is a kind of code word for our innocent, uncorrupted Being. If the body were a limit upon our purity, it could drag us down into some kind of “sin.” And, in fact, that is exactly what we believe has happened. We will explore in more depth our belief that we are the victims of our own bodies in 28.VI, “The Secret Vow.”

² See also: “Beyond the body, beyond the sun and stars, past everything you see and yet somehow familiar, is an arc of golden light that stretches as you look into a great and shining circle. ²And all the circle fills with light before your eyes. ³The edges of the circle disappear, and what is in it no longer is contained at all. ⁴The light expands and covers everything, extending to infinity, forever shining and with no break or limit anywhere. ⁵Within it everything is joined in perfect continuity. ⁶Nor is it possible to imagine that anything could be outside, for there is nowhere that this light is not.

11 This is the vision of the Son of God (T-21.I.10:1-11:11 (CE))

³ “Its” and “itself” in this sentence refer to “purity.”

⁴ This means: Only where healing’s cause—purity—is given its effects.

⁵ “Causelessness” seems to refer to our separation from God and making of the world, which did not really happen. Sickness, which is self-punishment for these supposed sins, is an attempt to prove they really did happen.

At any rate Jesus makes the flat assertion that innocence must be unlimited, and then bases on that assumption the idea that purity cannot be of the body (2:5), because the body *is* a limit.⁶ The *effects* of purity can heal the body because those effects are as limitless as purity itself (2:6).

But there is a precondition to that healing. We must recognize that, “the mind is...not within the body.” The innocence of our purity has no dependence upon the body. Therefore, healing can flow from the purity of mind, where all healing resides, to the body (2:7). As long as we believe that our minds are *in* our bodies, we will be unable to accept our own innocence because of the actions our bodies have taken, and our guilt for what we think we have done.

So then, “where *is* healing?” (2:8). It occurs only when we attribute all the “effects,” which as we’ve seen includes our sickness and suffering, to their actual cause, namely, our mind (2:9). Sickness is our attempt to make the body into a cause, as if it just “got sick” on its own and our mind has no responsibility for that, but is at the mercy of the body, while the reality is that our bodies are the effects of our minds (2:10).

Paragraph 3

3 Always in sickness does the Son of God attempt to make himself his cause, and not allow himself to be his Father’s Son. ²For this impossible desire, he does not believe that he is Love’s effects, and must be cause because of what he is. ³The cause of healing is the only Cause of everything. ⁴It has but *one* Effect. ⁵And in that recognition, causelessness is given no effects, and none are seen. ⁶A mind within a body and a world of other bodies, each with separate minds, are your “creations”; you the “other” mind, creating with effects unlike yourself. ⁷And as their father, you must be like them.

When we are sick, the Course says it is an attempt to make ourselves our own cause, instead of just allowing ourselves to be the Effect of God’s creation (3:1). It is only an *attempt* because it is impossible *not* to be God’s Effect. We, however, choose not to believe that we are “Love’s effects”; we think that, because of what we are (which refers, I believe, to what we *think* we are: separate, sick, and sinful), we must be our own cause (3:2). But “the only Cause of everything” is Love, which is “the cause of healing” (3:3).

That unique Cause has only a single Effect (3:4). God, or Love, is the only Cause that exists; we are not and can never be a cause. I think it would be accurate to say that the separation seemed to arise because the tiny, mad idea arose in our mind that we could become a cause like God. And we cannot do that. The moment we recognize that God is the only Cause, with only one Effect, we simultaneously recognize that “causelessness,” our mad idea, had zero effects. When our mind grasps that we stop *seeing* effects to our madness (3:5). We stop seeing the world attacking us. We stop seeing sickness. We stop seeing “other” people as separate. We stop seeing “a world of other bodies, each with

⁶ The body is a limit imposed on the universal communication (T-18.VI.9:1 (CE), T-18.VI.8:3 (FIP))

separate minds” (3:6). We recognize we made all this up, believing we are a mind other than God’s, capable of creating effects unlike ourselves. Our effects are these separate bodies, bodies that get sick. Since we created them (or think we did), we must be like them: a separate mind locked in a separate body, subject to sickness (3:7). Healing likes in our recognition of the one true Cause.

Paragraph 4

4 Nothing at all has happened but that you have put yourself to sleep and dreamed a dream in which you were an alien to yourself, and but a part of someone else’s dream. ²The miracle does not awaken you, but merely shows you who the *dreamer* is.⁷ ³It teaches you there is a choice of dreams while you are still asleep, depending on the purpose of your dreaming. ⁴Do you wish for dreams of healing or for dreams of death? ⁵A dream is like a memory, in that it pictures what you wanted shown to you.⁸

None of all this really happened. The only thing that happened is “that you have put yourself to sleep and dreamed a dream in which you were alien to yourself,” that is unlike your True Self, just “a part of someone else’s dreams” (4:1). That “someone else” is a vague term, deliberately so, I think. Whenever we believe what we are, feel, or experience is the result of someone or something outside of us, we are seeing ourselves a part of a dream we didn’t dream up, and “someone else” must have dreamed it: another person, the world at large, or God...it doesn’t matter. Just *not me*.

This is what the miracle shows us: who the dreamer is, which is *me*. It doesn’t wake us up (4:2). We are still dreaming, but it has become *lucid* dreaming. We know we are the dreamer, and what we see and experience as the world is our dream. Because we know we are the dreamers, we also know we have a choice about what we are dreaming! It all depends on the purpose we give to the dreaming (4:3). Do we want “dreams of healing or dreams of death” (4:4)? We can see whichever we want, because just as in the last section we saw that memory shows us what we choose to see, a dream “pictures what you wanted shown to you” (4:5).

This isn’t going to occur overnight. We are unlearning a mindset that we’ve had all our lives, and perhaps for multiple lifetimes. I think our ego minds are going to continue throwing out evidence that what the Course is saying isn’t true. We’re going to have to continue to affirm that it *is* true, that there is only One Cause of all that is, that bodies are

⁷ The miracle shows you that the dreamer is *you*, not the *world*. The previous sentence’s statement that you have had a dream in which you were but “a part of someone else’s dream” is a reference to T-27.IX.2:1-2: “No one can waken from a dream the world is dreaming *for* him. He becomes a part of someone *else’s* dream.”

⁸ T-28.I.2:3-4: “Why would you cling to it in memory if you did not *desire* its effects? Remembering is as selective as perception, being its past tense.” The point in this earlier passage is that memory shows you what you desire to see. The point in the above passage is that dreams are like that too.

not the reality of us, and that we are making it all up. It's a long learning process and will take a lot of time. When we learn the lesson thoroughly "is only a matter of time, and time is but an illusion" (T-13.I.9:5 (CE), T-13.I.5:5 (FIP)), part of the dream we've been making up.

Paragraph 5

5 An empty storehouse with an open door holds all your shreds of memories and dreams. ²Yet if you are the dreamer, you perceive this much at least: that you have caused the dream, and can accept another dream as well. ³But for this change in content of the dream, it must be realized that it is you who dreamed the dreaming that you do not like. ⁴It is but an effect that you have caused, and you would not *be* cause of this effect. ⁵In dreams of murder and attack are you the victim, in a dying body slain. ⁶But in forgiving dreams is no one asked to be the victim and the sufferer. ⁷These are the happy dreams the miracle exchanges for your own. ⁸It does not ask you make another; only that you see you made the one you would exchange for this.

The storehouse in our minds where we kept these memories and dreams is abandoned—empty, the doors left open. Only “shreds” are left (5:1), like one might find in a dilapidated shed in a ghost town. Realizing I am the dreamer enables me to know I caused the dream and have the power to choose a different dream (5:2). The change in the dream depends entirely on my realizing that I'm a dreamer who has been dreaming the nightmare I don't like (5:3). I can see I have been the cause of these undesirable effects, and that I no longer want them (5:4).

I've been seeing “dreams of murder and attack,” with me as the dying victim (5:5). The happy, forgiving dreams I now want to see, offered me by the miracle, contain no victims, no sufferers (5:6–7). The miracle does not expect *me* to make these happy dreams. All *I* have to do is to see that I made the unhappy one I want to exchange for the happy one (3:8).

To sum up the paragraph: Realizing that I am the dreamer who has been making up the unhappy dream is the only thing I must do to be healed.

Paragraph 6

6 This world is causeless, as is every dream that anyone has dreamed within the world. ²No plans are possible, and no design exists that could be found and understood. ³What else could be expected from a thing that has no cause? ⁴But if it has no cause, it has no purpose. ⁵You may cause a dream, but never will you give it real effects. ⁶For that would change its cause, and it is this you cannot do. ⁷The dreamer of a dream is not awake, but does not know he sleeps. ⁸He sees illusions of himself as sick or well, depressed or happy, but without a stable cause with guaranteed effects.

We make up our dreams, but in so doing we have “caused” nothing, no actual effects, because a dream is not real (6:5). That’s how Jesus can say, “this world is causeless” (6:1). In a dream such as this world, plans cannot be made, and no design or purpose can be found or understood (6:2). This, no doubt, is why so many people end up feeling that life has no real meaning: in this world, it doesn’t! “What else could be expected from a thing that has no cause” (6:3)? Something unreal and causeless cannot possibly have a purpose (6:4). We cannot change ourselves because we are God’s creations. If we could give our dreams *real effects*, it would change *us*, which isn’t possible (6:6). No cause, no plan, no design, no purpose, no effects. Wow!

When we are dreaming we generally don’t know we are asleep; it seems like we are awake (6:7). In the dream we may see illusions of ourselves as sick or well, depressed or happy, but none of those things have “a stable cause with guaranteed effects” (6:8). They are dream states and nothing more. They can change in an instant. In fact, such dramatic, inexplicable changes are one of the identifying characteristics of dreams.

Paragraph 7

7 The miracle establishes you dream a dream and that its content is not true. ²This is a crucial step in dealing with illusions. ³No one is afraid of them when he perceives he made them up. ⁴The fear was held in place because he did not see that he was *author* of the dream, and not a figure *in* the dream. ⁵He gives himself the consequences that he dreams he gave his brother. ⁶And it is but this the dream has put together and has offered him, to show him that his wishes have been done. ⁷Thus does he fear his *own* attack, but sees it at another’s hands. ⁸As victim, he is suffering from its effects, but not their cause. ⁹He authored not his own attack, and he is innocent of what he caused.

When you experience a miracle you realize that you *are* dreaming, and the content isn’t real (7:1). Therefore you are not locked into the laws of this world, because the world is a dream, and in dreams there *are* no absolute laws. You can be sick on instant and well in the next, for instance. If this world is a dream, *anything* can happen! This realization is crucial when you are dealing with illusions (7:2). (Jesus keeps hammering this point, doesn’t he?)

When we realize we are making it all up, none of it can frighten us (7:3). Fear took hold only because we didn’t realize we were the dreamer, not the dream (7:4). In our mistaken guilt we believed we had injured our brother or sister, and now we were suffering the same consequences, victims of our karma. We didn’t realize we were doing it to ourselves; there was no judging God punishing us. We were punishing ourselves (7:5).

That self-punishment was what our dreams have been out-picturing (7:6). We thought the attack was coming from outside, so we feared it, not realizing it was coming from

ourselves (7:7). We saw ourselves as victims of external attack, rather than as attack's cause (7:8). That left us feeling innocent; the attack wasn't our fault (7:9).

Paragraph 8

8 The miracle does nothing but to show him that *he* has done nothing.²What he fears is cause without the consequences which would *make* it cause.³And so it never was.⁴The separation started with the dream the Father was deprived of His effects, and powerless to keep them since He was no longer their Creator.⁵In the dream, the dreamer made himself, but what he made had turned *against* him, taking on the role of its creator as the dreamer had.⁶And as he hated *his* Creator, so the figures in the dream have hated *him*.⁷His body is their slave, which they abuse because the motives he has given it have *they* adopted as their own, and hate it for the vengeance it would offer them.⁹

In the end, as was said before in 28.I.1:1, “the miracle does nothing.” It just demonstrates to us that *we* have done nothing, there is no cause for our guilt (8:1). The consequences we believe we are suffering aren't real, they are a dream. And since there are no consequences, there can't be a cause (8:2). “And so it (the cause of our guilt) never was” (8:3). It never existed.

So Jesus summarizes the steps of our “fall from grace” (8:5–7):

1. The Father was deprived of His effects; He was no longer their creator
2. The dreamer made himself (and the world)
3. The effects of his dream turned against him, taking on the role of creator as the dreamer had done
4. As the dreamer hated the Father, the figures in his dream hated him
5. In the dream, he gave his body the motives of attack on God, so the figures in his dream adopt the same motives and abuse his body and hate it out of vengeance

It's important to keep these steps clearly in mind, because the way down is the way back. We are going to retrace our steps, in reverse order, and really the first step back is the only one we must do ourselves, as will become clear as we go on .

⁹ Why do the “dream figures”—the other bodies in our lives—mistreat our body? Three explanations are given. First, we, as the dreamer, have endowed those dream figures with the same hateful, abusive motives that we have given our own body. Second, our body's hateful motives have been directed at them, and so they naturally want to return that hate. Third, we have dreamt them out of the larger pattern of effect turning against its cause. The origin of the dream was our belief that we had become independent of our Cause and had turned against Him. Now our dream follows that same pattern: our effects (the figures in our dream) seem to be independent of their cause (us) and appear to be our cruel master.

Paragraph 9

9 It is their vengeance on the body which appears to prove the dreamer could not be the maker of the dream. ²Effect and cause are first split off and then reversed, so that effect becomes a cause; the cause, effect. ³This is the separation's final step, with which salvation, which proceeds to go the other way, begins. ⁴This final step is an effect of what has gone before, appearing as a cause. ⁵The miracle is the first step in giving back to cause the function of causation, not effect.¹⁰ ⁶For this confusion has produced the dream, and while it lasts will wakening be feared. ⁷Nor will the Call to wakening be heard, because it seems to be the call of fear.

The fact that we see things or people in this world attacking our bodies seems to prove we could not possibly be the maker of the dream (9:1). We have (9:2):

- Split cause and effect apart (we aren't the effects of God)
- Swapped them, so that we've become a cause, and God the effect
- Then we see the same swap happening with what we imagine to be *our* effects, now seen as causes affecting us.

That reversal of effect and cause is the final step of separation, and thus the first step we must take back is to reverse that reversal (9:3). Salvation begins here. The reversal is itself the effect of the preceding steps we saw in paragraphs 7 & 8. That effect now appears to be a cause (9:4). We see ourselves as at effect of the world, and the world is the cause of our pain and suffering. *We* are the cause of the world, not vice versa, and the miracle re-establishes us as the cause and not the effect (9:5).

This confusion of effect and cause has produced the dream of the world, and we are going to continue being afraid of waking up as long as the confusion lasts (9:6). When we become aware of the inner Call to wakening, we won't listen, because it seems to be a fearful call to further guilt (9:7), an invitation to accept punishment. We have to recognize that our dreams have had no effect, that we have done nothing, nothing to be guilty about. Our mental cause of the dream has had no consequences.

¹⁰. The miracle, in other words, establishes your causation within the dream (by showing that your mind can see a different meaning in the dream and produce healing effects within the dream), as a precursor to reestablishing God's causation in reality.

Paragraph 10

10 Like every lesson that the Holy Spirit requests you learn, the miracle is clear. ²It demonstrates what He would have you learn, and shows you its effects are what you want. ³In its forgiving dream are the effects of yours undone, and hated enemies perceived as friends with merciful intent. ⁴Their enmity is seen as causeless now, because they did not make it. ⁵And you can accept the role of maker of their hate, because you see that it has no effects. ⁶Now are you freed from this much of the dream: The world is neutral, and the bodies which still seem to move about as separate things need not be feared. ⁷And so they are not sick.

The Course asserts over and over that the lessons it teaches are clear, not difficult to understand (10:1). Our ego's dislike and resistance is what makes them seem difficult or obscure. The miracle isn't just words, it is a *demonstration* of the lesson, so we can see that its effects are something we want (10:2). The miracle's "forgiving dreams" undo the effects of our misguided dreams, such as sickness, and transforms our perception of "hated enemies" into "friends with merciful intent" (10:3). The word "perceived" is key, I think. The actions of the hated enemy may change, or they may not, but our perception of them changes. When the ego's need to attack is gone, and we no longer project our self-punishing thoughts onto the other person, our perception of attack will change to one of a call for help. It is our need to attack that shapes our perception of attack:

If you maintain that an appeal for help is something else, you will react to something else, and your response will be inappropriate to reality as it is, but not to your perception of it. This is poor reality testing by definition.¹¹ There is nothing to prevent you from recognizing all calls for help as exactly what they are except your own perceived need to attack. (T-12.I.4:1-4 (CE), T-12.I.3:9-4:1 (FIP))

We now *see* (with changed perception) that "their enmity is causeless now, because they did not make it" (10:4). They didn't make it; you did. You now realize that you were "maker of their hate," and you can accept that as your role because you have also seen that what you did "has no effects" (10:5). All you made was a mirage. There is no guilt attached because nothing happened. You remain as innocent as you were when first created.

With changed perception like this, we are freed of part of the dream. We still see separate bodies, but we no longer see bodies as good or bad, causing us to experience

¹¹. "Reality testing": evaluating your interpretations against real life. In the above example, you first interpret a brother's behavior as an attempt to "attack you or desert you or enslave you," when it was actually "an appeal for healing and help." Then, rather than evaluating this interpretation against reality, you maintain it and go ahead and behave on the basis of it. This conflict between your interpretation and reality represents poor reality testing.

pleasure or pain; we see them as neutral, no longer to be feared. Because they are neutral “they are not sick” (10:6–7).

Paragraph 11

11 The miracle returns the cause of fear to you who made it. ²But it also shows that, having no effects, it is not cause because the function of causation is to have effects, and where effects are gone there *is* no cause. ³Thus is the body healed by miracles because they show the mind made sickness, and employed the body to be victim, or effect, of what it made. ⁴But half the lesson will not teach the whole. ⁵The miracle is useless if you learn but that the *body* can be healed, for this is not the lesson it was sent to teach. ⁶The lesson is the *mind* was sick that thought the body *could* be sick; projecting out its guilt caused nothing and had no effects.¹²

We are the cause of all our fears, and the miracle demonstrates that to us (11:1). But what we have done is not in fact a cause, because it had no real effects, just dreams. No effects, no cause! The miracle shows that as well (11:2).

How does a miracle heal the body? It shows that “the mind made sickness, and employed the body to be victim, or effect, of what it made” (11:3). But that is only half the lesson (11:4)! Healing the body isn’t the point; it isn’t the purpose of the miracle (11:5). The whole point of a miracle is to teach us that “the *mind* was sick that thought the body *could* be sick.” So, despite seeming evidence to the contrary, when we projected our guilt onto another, onto the world, it “caused nothing and had no effects” (11:6).

What if, when you felt fearful, you reminded yourself, “I am causing this fear, and I can choose not to cause it”?

My attack thoughts are attacking my invulnerability.

"The idea for today introduces the thought that you always attack yourself first. If attack thoughts must entail the belief that you are vulnerable, their effect is to weaken you in your own eyes. Thus they have attacked your perception of yourself. And because you believe in them, you can no longer believe in yourself. A false image of yourself has come to take the place of what you are" (W-pl.25.3:1-5 (FIP)).

¹² The miracle, then, heals the body through two different ideas: first, that the mind causes sickness, and second, that when it causes sickness (by projecting its guilt upon the body), it really causes nothing, because the body is just a figure in a dream.

Paragraph 12

12 This world is full of miracles. ²They stand in shining silence next to every dream of pain and suffering, of sin and guilt. ³They are the dream's alternative, the choice to be the dreamer, rather than deny the active role in making up the dream. ⁴They are the glad effects of taking back the consequence of sickness to its cause. ⁵The body is released because the mind acknowledges, "This is not done to me, but *I* am doing this." ⁶And thus the mind is free to make another choice instead. ⁷Beginning here, salvation will proceed to change the course of every step in the descent to separation, until all the steps have been retraced, the ladder gone, and all the dreaming of the world undone.

Every time we perceive pain, suffering, sin, or guilt, right next to it there is a miracle waiting for us to see it. "This world is full of miracles" (12:1–2). Let me learn to say, "There is a miracle here if I choose to see it." To see it, I must be willing to be responsible for what I see. I have to choose to be the dreamer, to stop denying my "active role in making up the dream" (12:3). The miracle is the *effect* of my choice to be the dreamer, the causative agent (12:4).

In sickness, when I choose to be the dreamer, the cause of the appearance of sickness, acknowledging that "This is not done to me, but *I* am doing this," the body is released (12:5). My mind is now free to choose differently (12:6).

This is the first step of the return, beginning to undo the steps separation has led us down. It readies us for undoing all the remaining steps, taking us back to full recognition of God as the only Cause and ourselves as God's Effect. Once that has finished, the ladder of descent will be gone, and "all the dreaming of the world undone" (12:7). There will be no more separateness, no more distance, no more time, conflict, no more guilt, no more world—only Oneness.

As we've seen repeated numerous times in the last few sections, the secret of salvation, the one absolutely essential step, is accepting that, "This is not done to me, but *I* am doing this to myself." "I am responsible for what I see. I choose the feelings I experience." I am the dreamer of the dream. I am not the effect of the world, but its cause. Once that step is taken, all the rest follow. Without it, we're stuck in the dream.



Legend:

Light underscoring indicates emphasis that appears in the Urtext or shorthand notes.

The Text is taken from the Circle of Atonement's Complete and Annotated Edition (which I refer to as the "CE" for "Complete Edition" or "Circle Edition"). Please be aware that, even when the wording is identical to the FIP version, the division into paragraphs is often entirely different in the CE, which restores the paragraph breaks found in the original notes. This results in different reference numbering as well. I will indicate for each paragraph the corresponding sentences in the FIP edition. You should be able to locate specific sentences in that edition if you need to, with a minimum of visual clutter in the commentary. Passages that lie outside the current section will continue to have footnoted references. References to quotations are from the CE unless another version is being quoted, in which case that version is indicated.

Footnotes by the commentary author are shown in this font and size. Other footnotes come from the Complete Edition itself.

Addendum on Creation in ACIM

This Addendum explains some of the things that ACIM says about what creation is, where it can and cannot occur, and what gets created by us. This has often puzzled Course students, and as we near the end of the Text, I felt it was time to try to get this clearer in my own mind and to share my thoughts with you.

Creation Cannot Occur in This World

Creation cannot even be conceived of in the world. It has no meaning here. Forgiveness is the closest it can come to earth, for being Heaven-born, it has no form at all. (W-192.3:1–3)

In Heaven means and end are one, and one with Him. This is the state of true creation, found not within time, but in eternity. To no one here is this describable, nor is there any way to learn what this condition means—not till you go past learning to the given, not till you make again a holy home for your creations, is it understood. (T-24.VII.6:6–8 (CE), T-24.VII.6:6-10 (FIP))

In this world, it is impossible to create, but it is possible to make happy. (T-17.IV.2:1 (CE), T-17.IV.2:1 (FIP))

Our Creations Exist in Heaven, Beyond This World

"For thus am I led past this world to my creations, children of my will, in Heaven where my holy Self abides with them and Him Who has created me" (W-253.1:6)

Our Creations Are In Our Mind, Part of Our Being, and Belong to Everyone

Your creations are protected for you, because the Holy Spirit, Who is in your mind, knows of them and can bring them into your awareness whenever you will let Him. They are there as part of your own being, because your fulfillment includes them.

The creations of every Son of God are yours, because every creation belongs to everyone, being created for the Sonship as a whole. (T-7.VIII.5:4-6:1 (CE), T-7.IX.5:1-3 (FIP))

They Call to Us From Heaven

The will of your creations calls to you to share your will with them. (T-15.VIII.6:8 (CE), T-15.VIII.2:8 (FIP))

Heaven waits silently, and your creations are holding out their hands to help you cross and welcome them.

For it is them you seek. You seek but for your own completion, and it is they who render you complete. (T-16.IV.7:7–8:2 (CE), T-16.IV.8:1-3 (FIP))

Our Creations Are Extensions of Your Being

What you believe you are determines your gifts, and if God created you by extending Himself as you, you can only extend yourself as He did. (T-6.VIII.5:3 (CE), T-7.I.5:2 (FIP)).

Creation Extends God's Being; It is Spirit's Only Function

The extension of God's being is the spirit's only function. Its fullness cannot be contained, any more than can the fullness of its Creator. Fullness is extension. The ego's whole thought system blocks extension, and therefore blocks your only function. It therefore blocks your joy, and this is why you perceive yourself as unfulfilled. Unless you create, you are unfulfilled. But God does not know unfulfillment, and therefore you must create. You may not know your own creations, but this can no more interfere with their reality than your unawareness of your spirit can interfere with its being. (T-7.VIII.3:1–8 (CE), T-7.IX.3:1-7 (FIP))

Creation Cannot Be Fully Described Or Understood Here In This World

In Heaven means and end are one, and one with Him. This is the state of true creation, found not within time, but in eternity. To no one here is this describable, nor is there any way to learn what this condition means—not till you go past learning to the given, not till you make again a holy home for your creations, is it understood. (T-24.VII.6:6–8 (CE), T-24.VII.6:6-10 (FIP))

Our Creations Are In Us; Creation Is the Extension of Love (But Not In Time); Creations Are Eternal

Your creations belong in you, as you belong in God. You are part of God, as your sons are part of His Sons. To create is to love. Love extends outward simply because it cannot be contained. Being limitless, it does not stop. It creates forever, but not in time. God's creations have always been, because He has always been. Your creations have always been, because you can create only as He creates.

Eternity is yours because He created you eternal. (T-6.VIII.3:3-4:1 (CE), T-7.I.3:1-9 (FIP))

Creations Are Beings Who Love You

Your creations love you as your spirit loves your Father for the gift of creation. (T-8.V.5:3 (CE), T-8.VI.5:7 (FIP))

Creations Are Perfect Beings, Formless and Timeless, All-Encompassing

A co-creator with the Father must have a son.¹³ Yet must this son have been created like himself: a perfect being, all-encompassing and all-encompassed, nothing to add and nothing taken from, not born of size nor weight nor time, nor held to limits or uncertainties of any kind. Here do the means and end unite as one, nor does this one have any end at all. All this is true, and yet it has no meaning to anyone who still retains one unlearned lesson in his memory, one thought with purpose still uncertain, or one wish with a divided aim. (T-24.VII.7:1-4 (CE), T-24.VII.7:1-5 (FIP))

I hope you'll forgive me for this very long digression! I just felt it was important, since we are nearing the end of the Text, to get some idea about what creation is, and what, in particular, our creations are. As you have read, we are not expected to understand this fully. Creation is impossible in this world, and our creations are not part of this world, although they are part of *us*. They are part of the endless circle of the creative process that is described in the sentences that follow. 1:6 speaks of the endless, circular nature of creation, which flows out from God the Father to us, through us to our creations, and all of this, although it flows out and extends, remains within God. "Its starting and its ending are the same" (1:7). We are part of the process of extending God's Being forever. This circle of creation "holds the universe of all creation, without beginning and without an end" (1:8).

Beyond the body, beyond the sun and stars, past everything you see and yet somehow familiar, is an arc of golden light that stretches as you look into a great and shining circle. And all the circle fills with light before your eyes. The edges of the circle disappear, and what is in it no longer is contained at all. The light expands and covers everything, extending to infinity, forever shining and with no break or limit anywhere. Within it everything is joined in perfect continuity. Nor is it possible to imagine that anything could be outside, for there is nowhere that this light is not.

¹³. The "co-creator" is you and the "son" is your creation (usually discussed in the plural: creations). Paragraph 1 also calls your creations your "son," when it speaks of "your creations, who are son to you" (1:8)

This is the vision of the Son of God, whom you know well.
(T-21.I.10:1-11:11 (CE))

Do I understand what that circle that expands into infinite light really is? No, not really. I cannot conceive of something without a beginning or ending. I do believe that when we have left our illusions completely behind, however, we will know and understand all this.