

Study Guide and Commentary

ACIM® Text, Chapter 30

The New Beginning

Section V

The Toys of Fear

Explanation of underlining, italics and footnote formats can be found at the end of the commentary. See also the note there on the effects of switching from the FIP edition to the Complete and Annotated Edition. Please note that the FIP and CE versions may differ in where paragraph breaks occur.

Overview of Section V

This section turns from the discussion of our changeless reality and returns to several themes or symbols we have encountered over the last chapter or two, all related to the things that *hide* our changeless reality from us: idols, illusions, the little gap, and toys. It offers “a simple choice” we can make to bring an end to the way they have deceived us.

Workbook suggestion: W-109, “I rest in God”.

Paragraph 1

You will attack what does not satisfy, and thus you will not see you made it up. ²You always fight illusions. ³For the truth behind them is so lovely and so still in loving gentleness, were you aware of it you would forget defensiveness entirely and rush to its embrace. ⁴The truth could never be attacked. ⁵And this you knew when you made idols. ⁶They were made that this might be forgotten. ⁷You attack but false ideas and never truthful ones. ⁸All idols are the false ideas you made to fill the **gap** you think arose between yourself and what is true. ⁹And you attack them for the things you think they represent. ¹⁰What lies beyond them cannot *be* attacked.

Notice the reference to “what does not satisfy” In 1:1. It points back to the preceding discussion about idols, particularly about our bodies and the imagined functions we assign to other people.

“And each one [each idol] represents some function which you have assigned; some goal which an event or body or a thing should represent and should

achieve for you. If it succeeds, you think you like the dream. If it should fail, you think the dream is sad.” (T-29.V.4:1–7 (CE))

It “does not satisfy.” And so, you attack it:

“In simplest form, it can be said attack is a response to function unfulfilled as you perceive the function. It can be in you or someone else, but where it is perceived, it will be there it is attacked. Depression or assault must be the theme of every dream, for they are made of fear. The thin disguise of pleasure and of joy in which they may be wrapped but slightly veils the heavy lump of fear which is their core. And it is this the miracle perceives, and not the wrappings in which it is bound. When you are angry, is it not because someone has failed to fill the function you allotted him? And does not this become the “reason” your attack is justified?” (T-29.V.3:1–7 (CE))

Recall the line, “Sickness is anger taken out on the body” (T-28.VI.5:1). That is just one example of the principle expressed here. We attack our bodies because they do not satisfy us. Our conflicts are always with illusions and never with the truth (1:2). The truth is so lovely, so loving and gentle, that if we saw past the illusions that hide it, we would “rush to its embrace” (1:3). We would *never* attack it (1:4). So it isn’t God or the truth we are struggling with; it’s our illusions.

The sad fact is that we *knew* the truth was irresistible when we made up our illusions. We made them with the intent of *forgetting* how attractive truth is (1:5–6). We wanted to be separate, autonomous. We needed a gap to have it, so we imagined that gap and filled it with all the false ideas, the idols and illusions we believed could make us happy without God. (1:7–8).

Now, however, they do not satisfy, so we attack them. Attacking the truth idols hide is entirely impossible (1:9–10). It cannot be attacked. The truth, as we saw in the last section, is unchanged, unchanging, and unchangeable.

Paragraph 2

2 The wearying, dissatisfying gods you made are blown-up children’s toys. ²A child is frightened when a wooden head springs up as a closed box is opened suddenly, or when a soft and silent woolly bear begins to squeak as he takes hold of it. ³The rules he made for boxes and for bears have failed him, and have broken his control of what surrounds him. ⁴And he is afraid because he thought the rules *protected* him. ⁵Now must he learn the boxes and the bears did not deceive him, broke no rules, nor mean his world is made chaotic and unsafe. ⁶He was mistaken. ⁷He misunderstood what made him safe, and thought that it had left.

Once again, Jesus compares our illusions to children’s toys (2:1). Back in T-29.X.4–6, there was an earlier discussion of our idols or illusions as “toys” we have chosen to “play with.” You might want to re-read those paragraphs now. Here, he says they are “blown-up children’s toys,” not even solid, substantial toys but flimsy blow-ups. He speaks of how young children can easily be frightened by unexpected behavior from their toys, such as a

jack-in-the-box popping up or a squeaky teddy bear (2:2). Mentally, the child has made up rules for the toys. He does not expect the head to pop up or the noise from the cuddly bear, things over which he has no control (2:3).

It reminds me of the behavior of one of my dogs, Taylor, when he was relatively young. I've heard that a dog's intelligence is, at best, that of a 3-year-old child. I took him out for an evening walk shortly before Halloween, and one of our neighbors had set up a skeleton head and partial arms seemingly sticking up out of the ground. As we walked by, Taylor did a double-take and began barking furiously at the sight! To his doggie mind, this was something out of place. People should not be popping up out of the ground!

Little children are like Taylor. And so are we all! We try to convince ourselves that our idols will satisfy us and make us happy and safe. When they don't, we get freaked out. The toys are not obeying the rules (2:4)! We expected these things to *protect* us, not cause us problems.

The little child has to grow up. He has to "learn the boxes and the bears did not deceive him, broke no rules, nor mean his world is made chaotic and unsafe" (2:5). Like the child, we must learn the same things about our "toys." The child was mistaken about what made him safe and thought the source of safety had departed (2:6–7). We make the same kind of mistake. Our toys, our idols, are not what make us safe. The real source of our safety has never left us.

Paragraph 3

3 The **gap** that is not there is filled with toys in countless forms, and each one seems to break the rules you set for it. ²It never was the thing you thought. ³It must appear to break your rules for safety, since the rules are wrong. ⁴But *you* are not endangered. ⁵You can laugh at popping heads and squeaking toys, as does the child who learns they are no threat to him. ⁶But while he likes to play with them, he still perceives them as obeying rules he made for his enjoyment. ⁷So there still are laws which they can seem to break, and frighten him. ⁸Yet *is* he at the mercy of his toys? ⁹And *can* they represent a threat to him?

The imagined gap of separation between God and us and between us and one another "is filled with toys in countless forms." There seems no end to all the illusions we can construct in our minds and project. I remember a cartoon of Denis the Menace sitting atop a huge pile of toys in front of a Christmas tree, saying, "Is that all?" We keep looking for another toy because all the ones we've given ourselves have broken the rules in some way. They haven't lived up to our expectations (3:1).

Why is that? It's because the toys have never been what we thought they were in the first place (3:2). They *have to* break the rules for our safety because "the rules are wrong" (3:3)!

"Vanity of vanities, says the Preacher, vanity of vanities! All is vanity. . . . I have seen everything that is done under the sun, and behold, all is vanity and a striving after wind." (Ecclesiastes 1:2, 14 ESV)

Despite the popping heads and squeaking toys, we are in no danger. Just as the child learns to laugh when these things occur, we can too (3:4–5). But as long as we like to play with our “toys,” we can still be frightened by them because there are still more rules they can seem to break (4:6–7).

And yet.... *Can* these toys really threaten us? (3:8–9). These last two lines imply that they cannot. How could they threaten our changeless reality? If the preceding section taught us anything, it is this:

“Completely unaffected by the turmoil and the terror of the world, the dreams of birth and death that here are dreamed, the myriad of forms that fear can take; quite undisturbed, the thought God holds of you remains exactly as it always was. Surrounded by a stillness so complete no sound of battle comes remotely near, it rests in certainty and perfect peace. Here is your one reality kept safe, completely unaware of all the world that worships idols and that knows not God.” (T-30.IV.4:2–4 (CE))

Paragraph 4

4 Reality observes the laws of God and *not* the rules you set. ²It is His laws that guarantee your safety. ³All illusions that you believe about yourself obey *no* laws. ⁴They seem to dance a little while according to the rules you set for them, but then they fall and cannot rise again. ⁵They were but toys, my child, so do not grieve for them. ⁶Their dancing never brought you joy. ⁷But neither were they things to frighten you, or make you safe if they obeyed your rules. ⁸They must be neither cherished nor attacked, but merely looked upon as children’s toys, without a single meaning of their own. ⁹See one in them, and you will see them all. ¹⁰See none in them, and they will touch you not.

Our changeless reality “observes the laws of God and *not* the rules you set” (4:1). Therefore, “Nothing real can be threatened.” God’s laws guarantee our safety (4:2). Remember: “... idols must keep hidden what you are, not from the Mind of God, but from your own.” (T-30.IV.5:1–8 (CE)) You are still there in God’s Mind, as perfect and as safe as the instant God created you. The illusions we’ve invented do not obey *any* laws—not God’s, not ours. We draw them into our lives and set up our expectations, believing they will bring happiness and safety. They may seem to fulfill our hopes for a while, but eventually, “they fall and cannot rise again” (4:3–4). It’s all “chasing after wind,” as the Preacher said. Our toys are all ephemeral; they do not last. Eventually, they all fail. God creates only the eternal.

We can expect nothing more than failure from our toys. They are just toys; “so do not grieve for them” (4:5). None of them ever brought us real, lasting joy (4:6). We must begin to learn to drop our expectations of finding lasting fulfillment or happiness in things of this world. They may give us temporary happiness, but they do not and cannot last.

The flip side is that just as our toys cannot bring lasting joy or keep us safe, neither can they frighten us (4:7). They are no more than illusions or dreams, with no effect at all on reality. Remember that the toys we are talking about here are our idols, the things of this world we either cling to or fear, including our bodies and the mental images we have of our friends and enemies. We don't need to attack them, and we certainly should not cherish them. They are "toys, without a single meaning of their own" (4:8). To say we should not cherish our toys doesn't mean that we do not cherish our brothers and sisters. Just the opposite! But we cherish their reality, their divine Self. We don't cling to our idea of the roles they must play in our lives.

If we see even one meaning in these idols, we will see all of their meanings (4:9), and pain and suffering will be the inevitable outcome. But when we learn to see *no* meaning in them, we will be free from being "at effect" of them (4:10). If we continue to think that somehow we'll finally find perfect happiness in a new relationship, a new job, a new home, a new car, or whatever, all these things will continue to bring us pain.

The mention of "clinging" reminds me of the Buddhist principle of detachment. I found this explanation of detachment on the web:

"Being detached does not mean that we cannot enjoy anything or enjoy being with anyone. Rather, it refers to the fact that clinging very strongly to anything or anyone causes us problems. We become dependent on that object or person and think, 'If I lose it or cannot always have it, I am going to be miserable.'

Detachment means, 'If I get the food I like, very nice. If I do not get it, okay. It is not the end of the world.' There is no attachment or clinging to it."

It's more an attitude of finding joy and contentment within, and not on anything outside of ourselves. To a Course student, that is learning to rest in God.

Paragraph 5

5 Appearances deceive *because* they are appearances and not reality. ²Dwell not on them in any form. ³They but obscure reality, and they bring fear because they hide the truth. ⁴Do not attack what you have made to let you be deceived, for thus you prove that you *have been* deceived. ⁵Attack has power to make illusions real. ⁶Yet what it makes is nothing. ⁷Who could be made fearful by a power that can have no real effects at all? ⁸What could it be but an illusion, making things appear like to itself? ⁹Look calmly at its toys, and understand that they are idols which but dance to vain desires. ¹⁰Give them not your worship, for they are not there. ¹¹But this is equally forgotten in attack.¹

The Course asks us to recognize that what our senses perceive is not reality, but only appearances (5:1). We've all been fooled at times by something or someone that *appeared* to be one thing but proved eventually to be another. Appearances are *designed* to deceive. The Course tells us that everything we see, hear, taste, and feel are deceptions designed to keep us locked into our belief in separation. Therefore, it tells us to stop

¹ This refers not to attack on other people, but to attack on appearances—idols.

wasting our time on expecting them to deliver happiness or trying to make them into what we think they should be (5:2). All they do is “obscure reality” and “hide the truth” (5:3), in the end, causing you to fear.

Don't *attack* the things of the world. After all, you made them to deceive yourself! Attacking them for failure to deliver happiness only proves “that you *have been* deceived” (5:4). Attacking anything or anyone just makes their illusion seem real to you (5:5). But it is still just an illusion, just nothing (5:6). Why, then, would you be afraid of it? It's nothing; it cannot have any real effects (5:7). Whatever the form they take, we can “look calmly” at these toys, knowing they are no more than light and mirrors, a magician's trick designed to fool your eyes (5:9). Maybe we've learned not to worship these idols, but we must guard ourselves equally against giving them an apparent reality through our attacks (5:10–11).

Paragraph 6

6 God's Son needs no defense against his dreams. ²His idols do not threaten him at all. ³His one mistake is that he thinks them real. ⁴What can the power of illusions do? ⁵Appearances can but deceive the mind that *wants* to be deceived. ⁶And you can make a simple choice that will forever place you far beyond deception. ⁷You need not concern yourself with how this will be done, for this you cannot understand. ⁸But you *will* understand that mighty changes have been quickly brought about when you decide one very simple thing: You do not want whatever you believe an idol gives. ⁹For thus the Son of God declares that he is free of idols. ¹⁰And thus *is* he free.

Dreams are not dangerous unless we think they are real. We do not need to defend ourselves against them (6:1). The things of this world that have distracted us are not a real threat (6:2); they have no power in themselves (6:4). We make only one mistake: We think the dreams are real (6:3). Face it; we do just that. We find it difficult to believe that our idols are *not* real! They continue to fool us into accepting their reality because we *want* to be fooled (6:5). That's why we made them in the first place. But there is “a simple choice” that can “forever place you far beyond deception” (6:6).

Wait! A “simple choice” that can put a stop to our stubborn belief in the reality of our perceptions and what they show us? Is he going to tell us what that is? I'd better pay attention here.

However, before he tells us what the simple choice is, he alerts us not to be concerned about how this choice can have such far-reaching results. He says we “cannot understand” the how of it (6:7), but we *will* understand the results (6:8). There will be “mighty changes” that are “quickly brought about.” In other words, once we make this choice, things happen fast and in a very noticeable way (6:8).

So, what is this simple choice we must make? Decide, “You do not want whatever you believe an idol gives” (6:8). That's a clear statement of the choice. It seems simple enough. But what is it we are giving up? What is it that we believe our idols give us? As

we've seen, there are two basic categories: satisfaction when the idol does what we want, and anger when it doesn't. We are asked to say of both of these:

"I do not want that. I do not want this idol to make me happy, nor do I want it to make me angry. I don't want *anything* it has to offer because whatever it offers is an illusion."

Think of a few of the idols in your life, and consciously say to each of them, "I do not want whatever I believe this idol is offering me."

If you are willing to do that, mighty changes very quickly will show up! You have just declared yourself to be free of idols (6:9). And when you declare that freedom, you *are* free (6:10).

Paragraph 7

7 Salvation is a paradox indeed! ²What could it be except a happy dream? ³For you are asked but to forgive all things that no one ever did, to overlook what is not there, and not to look upon the unreal as reality. ⁴You are but asked to let your will be done,² and seek no longer for the things you do not want. ⁵And you are asked to let yourself be free of all your dreams of what you never were, and seek no more to substitute the strength of idle wishes for the will of God. ⁶Here does the dream of separation start to fade and disappear. ⁷For here the **gap** that is not there begins to be perceived without the toys of terror that you made.

This causes Jesus to exclaim, "Salvation is a paradox indeed" (7:1)! A paradox is a contradiction, something that at least seems to be inconsistent. Salvation, in a sense, cannot be *real*; it can only be a dream, but a happy one (7:2). Why? Because there isn't anything to be saved *from*. And the path to salvation is equally paradoxical (7:3–5):

- Forgive everything that no one ever did
- Overlook what isn't there
- Don't look at the unreal as if it were reality
- Allow your will to be done (Why wouldn't you?)
- Stop seeking for things you do not want
- Allow yourself to be free of dreams of what you never were
- Stop trying to substitute idle wishes for the will of God

Do those things, which are all implied in the one simple choice, and the dream of separation begins to fade and disappear (7:6). We've striven to create a gap between God and us by filling it with all these "toys of terror," but as we let go of those toys and affirm we don't want what they seem to offer, the gap itself begins to display its emptiness and non-existence (7:7).

² Matthew 6:10 (RSV): "Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, On earth as it is in heaven." Here, the Course turns "Thy will be done" around, so that it is being said to us, rather than to God. In this case, we are asked to let our *true* will be done

Paragraph 8

8 No more than this is asked. ²Be glad indeed salvation asks so little, not so much. ³It asks for *nothing* in reality, and even in illusions it but asks forgiveness be the substitute for fear. ⁴Such is the only rule for happy dreams. ⁵The **gap** is emptied of the toys of fear, and then its unreality is plain. ⁶Dreams are for nothing, and the Son of God can have no need of them. ⁷They offer him no single thing that he could ever want. ⁸He is delivered from illusions by his will, and but restored to what he is. ⁹What could God's plan for his salvation be except the means to give him to himself?

That's all salvation asks for (8:1). Just forgive what never happened and stop seeking what was never there. Stop looking for happiness in separation. You do not have to *do* anything; you just have to *stop* doing what is causing your pain.

There is a story in the Bible (Acts 9 and Acts 26) about Saul of Tarsus's "conversion," after which he becomes the Apostle Paul. Saul had been going all over the place, hunting down and arresting Christians. While on the road to Damascus, he has a vision of Jesus, who asks him, "Why are you persecuting me?," and says, "It hurts to kick like this against the goad" (Revised English Bible, Acts 26:14). Jesus has been "goading" Saul, trying to get his attention, and Saul has been kicking against it, causing himself more and more pain. Jesus is telling him to stop resisting his salvation.

And that's what he is saying to us here. Be grateful salvation asks so little (8:2). Stop fighting against it. It asks *nothing* of us, and even in our dream, it just asks us to substitute forgiveness for fear, which is a great deal (8:3)! That's the only rule for happy dreams: Substitute forgiveness for your fears (8:4).

Stop trying to make something out of nothing. Stop choosing pain instead of joy. Do that, and you have removed the toys from the gap of separation, so the gap's unreality is made plain (8:5). This is how forgiveness ends the dream of separation (W-333).

"Dreams are for nothing" (8:6). That sure says it plain and simple, doesn't it? What are we doing wallowing around in dreams? We, as the Son of God, do not need them. There isn't a single thing in these dreams that we could ever want (8:7). Our actual will (what we truly want) is what delivers us from these deceptive illusions and restores us to what we are (8:8).

In the end, God's plan for your salvation could be nothing else than "the means to give [you] to [yourself]" (8:9).

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.

Effects of Switching Editions of the Course

The commentaries on Chapters 29, 30, and 31 were written prior to the publication of the Complete and Annotated Edition (CE) of the Course in 2017. Originally they were based on the edition published by the Foundation for Inner Peace (FIP). The references to other parts of the Course were based on the FIP edition, and the comments themselves were based on the same edition. There were significant changes made in the CE, although for the most part there was no alteration in the meaning of the text, and these final chapters had far fewer changes. There are some changes in section and paragraph breaks and sentence structure that result in different numbering in references to the same text in the two editions.

I have attempted for all references to add a separate CE reference if it differs from the FIP reference, but I may have missed some. If so, I apologize. Please let me know of any referencing problems you find.

I have also tried to edit my commentary so as to reflect any wording changes in the CE. For instance, the CE restored the plural use of "you" where the FIP had substituted the phrase "you and your brother." One such instance will illustrate the kind of change, significant in actual words but nearly identical in overall meaning:

FIP: Thus you and your brother but shared a qualified entente, in which a clause of separation was a point you both agreed to keep intact.

CE: You shared a qualified entente, in which a clause of separation was a point which you had both agreed to keep intact.

