

Study Guide and Commentary ACIM® Text, Chapter 4, Introduction & Section I.1–6

The Illusions of the Ego Introduction Right Teaching and Right Learning

Overview of the next four chapters

Note: Because the Introduction and Section I are long when taken together, I have chosen to split Section I into two parts. This commentary will cover only the first six paragraphs; the remaining seven paragraphs will be covered in the next commentary.

The Next

In my opinion, there is an underlying continuity through the next four chapters. Here is the broad overview, as I see it:

Chapter 4 - Focuses on the illusions fostered by the ego thought system; presents “the problem.”

Chapter 5 - Focuses on the role of the Holy Spirit and how He heals, with a key section on the ego’s use of guilt; begins presenting “the Answer.”

Chapter 6 - Continues presenting “the Answer,” showing the progression of the lessons the Holy Spirit teaches us, or the three major steps on our journey back to God and in correcting our thought system.

Chapter 7 - Completes the progression of our journey, starting with “the last step” which ended Chapter 6, and centering on the Kingdom of God (roughly synonymous with “the real world”).

This is the first section of the Text that has had an Introduction. We need to recall that, in the original dictation, there were no chapter and section divisions. Helen Schucman and Kenneth Wapnick added these divisions later. While I do not mean to question the placement of the chapter and section divisions, I think it is helpful to remember that the material originally was run together without breaks. Often, themes continue from section to section and chapter to chapter, heedless of the “dividing line” between them. That is certainly the case here. Quite clearly, the theme of our need to relinquish the ego thought

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system carries over from the preceding chapter (T-3.VII.1:6–8). Other continuing themes include: 1) our fear of changing thought systems and how to overcome that fear (T-3.VII.5:6–10); and 2) the necessity to recognize and identify all traces of the ego in our mind and to bring them into the light for healing.

The Introduction properly sets the stage for the rest of Chapter 4. It presents the essential choice to listen to the ego or to the spirit, and urges us to make that choice. It equates listening to the spirit with devotion to our brothers. It emphasizes that being tired or discouraged does not come from devoted service to others; it is always a result of following the wrong voice (cf. T-3.VI.5:1–6).

Paragraph 1

1. [Ur: (Aside to HS {Helen Schucman}. You were both wise and devoted (two words which are literally interchangeable in the sense that they truly bring on the exchange of one another.) in claiming your scribal functions and working so late. You *had* committed a serious error against your brother, and one who had asked for your help. A devoted priestess does not do this.] ¹The Bible says that you should go with [*with*] a brother twice as far as he asks. ²It certainly does not [*does not*] suggest that you set him back on his journey. ³Devotion to a brother cannot [*cannot*] set you [*you*] back either. ⁴It can lead only to mutual progress. ⁵The result of genuine devotion is inspiration, a word which properly understood is the opposite of fatigue. ⁶To be fatigued is to be dis-spirited [*dis-spirited*], but to be inspired, is to be in [*in*] the spirit. ⁷To be egocentric is to be dis-spirited, but to be Self-centered in the right [*right*] sense is to be inspired or in spirit. ⁸The truly inspired are enlightened and cannot abide in darkness.

• Study Question •

1. *Can you think of examples from your own life where devotion to a brother or sister has enlivened you?*



The first four sentences touch on the Course's teaching that we journey together; that salvation is a collaborative venture. The lines from the Urtext set the context in Helen's life to which this teaching applied. She had committed what Jesus calls "a serious error" against a brother who had asked her for help. I assume the error was *not* helping him or perhaps in some way judging, and thus attacking, him. Now, taking up her "scribal functions," she has chosen to work very late—perhaps taking more notes, but something somehow very much related to the person who asked for help; something that equated to going the extra mile for the person and giving more than was originally asked for.

The reference to the Bible in 1:1 is to a saying in Jesus' Sermon on the Mount: "If someone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles" (Matthew 5:41, NIV). The original saying dealt with the situation of Israel as a country occupied by the Romans; a

Roman soldier had the right to conscript anyone to carry his equipment for a mile. Jesus was telling people not to resist, but instead, to give more than was asked for. Here, he generalizes the idea and gives a spin on its meaning so that it becomes an instruction to *aid each other on our journey home*, rather than setting each other back, and to give such aid even beyond what our brother requests.

“Devotion to a brother...can lead only to mutual progress” (1:3–4). These opening lines are not really a drastic change of topic from the preceding chapter. They are an early instance of what becomes a major theme in the Course: mutuality. Mutuality is inherently contradictory to egocentricity, so speaking about devotion to others is another way of talking about the choice to abandon the ego’s thought system. This becomes clear in the rest of the paragraph.

We may object that we don’t have the energy to give to others; we have to take care of ourselves. Jesus tells us that genuine devotion to a brother can actually reverse fatigue because it results in “inspiration,” which “is the opposite of fatigue” (1:5). The derivation of the word “inspiration” is related to the breath; it means, “to breathe in,” and, with time, came to mean breathing in, or being filled with, the Holy Spirit of God. Jesus points out that “to be fatigued is to be dis-spirited” (1:6), highlighting the way in which that sense of the word is the opposite of “in-spired”: rather than injecting us with spirit as extending to others will do, withholding help (or engaging in judgment) actually *deprives* us of spirit. Genuine devotion to a brother or sister will therefore not tire us; on the contrary, it will have the reverse effect: It will uplift us!

He is calling upon us to give up egocentricity, i.e., the ego thought system, and to center ourselves in the true Self, the Christ, which is being “Self-centered in the right sense” (1:7). The practical result of such Self-centeredness is actually mutual devotion to each another. This is what it means to be “enlightened” (1:8).

Paragraph 2

There is an extensive amount of material added from the Urtext here, which draws on the example of Bill’s embarrassment over public speaking to illustrate the difference between speaking from the ego and speaking from the spirit. Speaking from the ego is simply another example of the Authority Problem. Jesus also draws on the story of Don Quixote and his “tilting at windmills” to illustrate the futility of trying to fix the ego by acting egotistically. Bill tried to deal with his sense of unworthiness by hiding; Quixote tried by puffing himself up. But neither approach works; both are “useless journeys”.

[Ur: Embarrassment is *always* an expression of egocentricity, an association which has been made before {this was an additional comment under miracle principle #3}....Both of you have completed the SCT {Sentence Completion Test} stem: When I was called on to speak—with—“I became embarrassed and *could not speak*.” This should be corrected to “Recognized my Authorship.” Tell Bill that he cannot be embarrassed by his own words unless he believes that *he* is responsible for them. We have already corrected “word” to “thought,” and he

is free to allocate the authorship for his thoughts as he elects.] ¹You can speak from the spirit or from the ego, as you choose. ²If you speak from spirit you have chosen to “Be still and know that I am God.” ³These words are inspired because they reflect knowledge. ⁴If you speak from the ego you are disclaiming knowledge instead of affirming it, and are thus dis-spiriting yourself. [Ur: The dis-spirited have no choice *but* to be narcissistic, and to be narcissistic *is* to place your faith in the unworthy. Your real worth *is* your divine authorship, and your Soul is its acknowledgement. I cannot guide your egos *except* as you associate them with your Souls.] [Ur: Attacking misidentification errors is neither *my* function nor *yours*. Destroying the devil is a meaningless undertaking. Cervantes wrote an excellent symbolic account of this procedure, though he did not understand his own symbolism. The *real* point of his writing was that his “hero” was a man who perceived himself as unworthy because he identified with his ego and perceived its weakness. He then set about to alter his perception, *not* by correcting his misidentification, but by behaving egotistically. Chesterton wrote an excellent description of Cervantes and his perception of his “unheroic hero,” a view of man which the ego tolerates all too frequently, but the Soul *never* countenances:

“And he sees across a weary land a straggling road in Spain

Up which a lean and foolish knight forever rides in vain.”]

⁵Do not embark on useless [Ur: foolish] journeys, because they are indeed in vain. ⁶The ego may desire them [Ur: because the ego *is* both lean and foolish], but spirit cannot embark on them because it is forever unwilling to depart from its Foundation.

• **Study Question** •

2. *Sentence 2:1 gives a thought that is really a theme for the whole chapter; restate it in your own words.*



The fundamental choice is between the ego and the spirit (2:1). Which will we listen to? Which will we allow to inspire our words and our actions? That is really the theme of this chapter and, indeed, of the entire Course. We must recognize that *we have a choice* in this regard. It is “as you choose” (2:1). Which voice we listen to is entirely up to us. The purpose of the entire Course is to teach us, first, that we have a choice between ego and spirit, and second, that we *want* to choose the spirit and not the ego.

The phrase “speak from the spirit” (2:1) is meant, in my opinion, to represent the whole choice to identify with our spirit, our Self as created by God, instead of identifying

with our body and our ego. I find support for my opinion in 2:2, where it equates speaking from the spirit with choosing to “Be still and know that I am God.” The latter is a well-known biblical quote from Psalm 46:10. How is speaking from the spirit identical to being still and acknowledging God? It is the same thing because it means that I have chosen to still my ego’s voice, and to acknowledge God as my Creator. As I let the spirit speak through me, or as me, I am identifying with my Self as God created it; therefore, I am acknowledging God as God. These words (the quote from the Psalm) “reflect knowledge” (2:3), which means knowledge in the specific sense the Course gives that word. They reflect knowledge because the truth is that God created me as spirit; therefore, to speak from spirit acknowledges that fact and reflects it in the world.

On the other hand, speaking from the ego *disclaims* or denies knowledge (2:4)—the exact opposite. This *dis-spirits* you (2:4) for the simple reason that you are rejecting the spirit and choosing the ego. However, as the previous paragraph already pointed out, choosing the ego also brings fatigue. The Course certainly seems to imply that if we were to “speak from the spirit” one hundred percent of the time, we would never be tired! I base that not just on the implications of this passage, but numerous other references. Perhaps the clearest is this:

Perhaps you do not realize that this removes the limits you had placed upon the body by the purposes you gave to it. As these are laid aside, the strength the body has will always be enough to serve all truly useful purposes. The body's health is fully guaranteed, because it is not limited by time, by weather or fatigue, by food and drink, or any laws you made it serve before. You need do nothing now to make it well, for sickness has become impossible. (W-pI.136.18)

The admonition to avoid “useless journeys” (2:5) seems at first to be a non sequitur. It doesn’t appear to follow from the discussion of speaking from the ego or from the spirit. I believe that there is a logical link, shown more clearly when the Urtext material about Don Quixote is added to the context. Quixote was “a lean and foolish knight [who] forever rides in vain.” He was the epitome of useless journeys. In paragraph 2, a “useless journey” is said to be something the ego desires. Jesus says that useless journeys “are indeed in vain” (2:5), which means purposeless, unproductive or futile. He implies that useless journeys are based on the ego’s foundation (2:6); i.e., “I am what I made of myself.” When we attempt to “save” our ego through self-inflation, as Don Quixote did, we are embarked on a useless journey.

If we look ahead to the next paragraph, we will see that it continues to talk about useless journeys. In doing so it refers to our wasting our lives (3:4), engaging in “the futile [same meaning as *in vain*] attempts of the ego at reparation” (3:5), and crucifying ourselves, which is an extreme attempt at reparation (3:9). I believe the phrase *useless journey* is shorthand for all of these things. Spirit cannot go on a useless journey because “it is forever unwilling to depart from its Foundation” (2:6). “Foundation” is capitalized, so it must refer to God’s creation. Therefore, a useless journey must be *an attempt by the ego to preserve itself and solve its problems independently of God*, an attempt that can

never work. Jesus is advising us not to waste our time trying to make the ego “work” in some way, or trying to maintain the ego and, in some way or another, make up for it through self-sacrifice. In other words, don’t waste your time on halfway measures; cut the ego off at its roots, and identify with spirit instead!

Paragraph 3

3. ¹The journey to the cross should be the last “useless journey” [Ur: *last foolish journey for every mind*] ²Do not dwell upon it, but dismiss it as accomplished. ³If you can accept it as your own last useless [Ur: *foolish*] journey, you are also free to join my resurrection. ⁴Until you do so your life is indeed wasted [Ur: *Human living has indeed been needlessly wasted in repetition compulsion.*]. ⁵It merely re-enacts the separation, the loss of power, the futile attempts of the ego [Ur: *the foolish journeys of the ego in its attempt*] at reparation, and finally the crucifixion of the body, or death. ⁶Such repetitions are [Ur: *Repetition compulsions can be*] endless until they are voluntarily given up. ⁷Do not make the pathetic error of “clinging to the old rugged cross.” ⁸The only message of the crucifixion is that you can overcome the cross. ⁹Until then you are free to crucify yourself as often as you choose. ¹⁰[Ur: *But*] This is not the Gospel I intended to offer you. ¹¹We have another journey to undertake, and [Ur: *I hope that*] if you will read these lessons carefully they will help prepare you to undertake it.

• Study Question •

3. (a) *Discuss what you think the Course means by not dwelling on the cross (3:2) and not making “the pathetic error of ‘clinging to the old rugged cross’¹” (3:7).*
- (b) *Are there ways in your life that you are “dwelling on the cross”? Are you ready to “voluntarily give them up,” or will you go on endlessly repeating them?*



In 3:1, the journey to the cross (which symbolizes the whole event of Jesus’ crucifixion) is referred to as “the last ‘useless journey.’” Since a “useless journey” is an ego attempt to preserve itself, either through self-abasement or self-aggrandizement, this must be referring to the ego-based interpretations of the cross, such as attempts at salvation through pain, suffering and sacrifice; attempts to find salvation through an attack on innocence; or attempts of the ego to gain through the loss of another. When we bear in mind this interpretation of the phrase “useless journey,” Jesus appears to be

¹ The phrase is a reference to an old Christian gospel song, whose chorus says, “I will cling to the old rugged cross, the emblem of suffering and shame.”

saying that what traditionally has been interpreted as a heroic effort on his part to vanquish and overcome evil actually—in and of themselves—accomplished nothing! No evil was vanquished. No sinners were saved from hell. Why? Because there is no evil, and there is no sin nor any hell to be saved from, except the hell of our own making.

Jesus urges us to accept his trip to the cross as our own last useless journey. He asks us to see, in the way he responded to the ego's attacks, the futility of the ego's attempts to save itself, and to recognize the impossibility that anything can destroy truth. The ego's thought system was exposed as empty and unproductive by Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection; therefore, we do not need to repeat the same lessons. We do not need to follow the ego's pathways to know its futility. We can bypass the suffering, if we so choose, and go straight to resurrection.

The thrust of the Course's appeal is for us to willingly let go of the ego and its thought system, and to allow Jesus and the Holy Spirit to give us their thought system in its place, along with our true Identity in God. Holding on to old ways of thinking, in which we believe some form of "reparation" is needed for the ego's mistake, only perpetuates the ego. Jesus asks us to accept his journey to the cross as our own "last useless journey" (3:3); that is, he asks us to recognize its true message: that the Son of God is guiltless, and no form of evil can prevail against the truth. "You can overcome the cross" (3:8). In a way, the message of the cross is just what he has been telling us in recent sections: You are as God created you, and nothing you have done can change that eternal fact. If we will accept that as true, he says, we can join his resurrection (3:3).

Until we do accept that—which is the same as accepting God as our Author—our life will be truly wasted (3:4). If you have had the feeling at times that your life was being wasted, *maybe you were right!* As long as we try to preserve the reality of the ego, we will be re-enacting the separation in every moment of our lives, re-enacting the loss of power, and finally we will end in death or self-crucifixion (3:5). It does no good to do the same thing repeatedly, expecting different results. We have to abandon the ego and choose the spirit, and that must be something we do *voluntarily* (3:6). It cannot be forced upon us.

Jesus calls "clinging to the old rugged cross"¹ a "pathetic error" (3:7). We may kid ourselves that if we endure enough suffering or punishment, somehow we can hold on to our egos and still have God. Suffering and sacrifice, i.e. self-crucifixion (3:9), are not the way to God: "This is not the gospel I intended to offer you" (3:10). That statement is a very clear rejection of the traditional "gospel message" preached by fundamentalist evangelists.

Instead, Jesus offers "another journey" (3:11), one that isn't a *useless* journey. He tells us that we can prepare ourselves for taking this other journey by *reading these lessons carefully* (3:11). This is a clear instruction to us to study the Text with care, and not just read through it casually. It indicates clearly that the path of *A Course in Miracles* is grounded in the study of its Text. The Introduction to the Workbook makes that very clear also: "A theoretical foundation such as the text provides is necessary as a framework to make the exercises in this workbook meaningful" (W-In.1:1).

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Section I

Right Teaching and Right Thinking

Overview of the Section

We are about to embark on “another journey,” with Jesus as our teacher. Section I as a whole deals with the criteria of “a good teacher” (1:1) and how Jesus meets them. It also addresses several essential characteristics of good learners, in particular, the willingness to go past their fear of change, and to actually change their minds.

Paragraph 1

1. [Ur: The term “profess” {Jesus is talking about Bill being a professor} is used quite frequently in the Bible, but in a somewhat different context. To profess is to identify with an idea and offer the idea to others to be *their* own. The idea does *not* lessen; it becomes *stronger*.] ¹A good teacher {both} clarifies his own ideas and strengthens them by teaching them. ²Teacher and pupil [Ur: {and} therapist and patient,] are alike in the learning process. ³They are in the same order of learning, and unless they share their lessons conviction will be lacking. ⁴A good teacher must [Ur: If a salesman must believe in the product he sells, how much more must a teacher] believe in the ideas he teaches, but he must meet another condition; he must believe in the students to whom he offers the ideas.

Jesus here holds himself up as a model teacher, particularly a model to Bill Thetford, whose fear of teaching lay behind much of the current material. In describing “a good teacher,” Jesus is describing himself. As our teacher, Jesus is strengthening his own ideas by teaching them to us (1:1). We are like him in the learning process (1:2). Unless our lessons are shared with others, we will lack conviction in them, so *part of the learning process is learning to share with others* (1:3). Jesus not only believes in the ideas he is teaching, he believes in *his students*; he believes we are competent students who are able to learn what he is teaching (1:4).

One of the key factors for me in deciding whether to listen to any spiritual teacher is the degree to which they manifest their faith in their students. If a teacher continually puts down his or her students, belittles them, berates them and makes them dependent on the teacher, I have little time to give to that teacher. But if, like Jesus, the teacher continually manifests an undying faith and optimism about his or her students (see T-9.II.4:3 and T-13.X.13:4), and constantly sees them as further along spiritually than they see themselves (see T-2.V.10:1–3), I will gladly give my time to listen.

Paragraph 2

2. [Ur: B. could not be afraid to teach unless he still believes that interaction means loss, and that learning means separation. He stands guard over his own ideas] ¹Many stand guard over their ideas because they want to protect their thought systems as they are, and learning means change. ²Change is always fearful to the separated, because they cannot conceive of it as a move towards healing the separation. ³They always perceive it as a move toward further separation, because the separation was their first experience of change. [Ur: Bill, your whole fear of teaching is nothing but an example of your own intense separation anxiety, which you have handled with the usual series of mixed defenses in the combined pattern of attack on truth and defense of error, which characterizes *all* ego-thinking.] ⁴You believe [Ur: insist] that if you allow no change to enter into your ego you [Ur: your *Soul*] will find peace. ⁵This profound confusion is possible only if you maintain that the same thought system can stand on two foundations. ⁶Nothing can reach spirit from the ego, and nothing can reach the ego from spirit [Ur: and nothing *from* the Soul can strengthen the ego, or reduce the conflict within it]. ⁷Spirit can neither strengthen the ego nor reduce the conflict within it. ⁸The ego *is* a contradiction. ⁹Your self {the self you made} and God's Self {the Self He created} are in opposition. ¹⁰They are opposed in source, in direction and in outcome. ¹¹They are fundamentally irreconcilable, because spirit cannot perceive and the ego cannot know. ¹²They are therefore not in communication and can never be in communication. ¹³Nevertheless, the ego can learn, even though its maker can be misguided. ¹⁴He cannot, however, make the totally lifeless out of the life-given.

• Study Question •

4. *How does the ego try to achieve peace (2:4), and how does that interfere with the learning process?*

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Nearly everyone resists change to his or her thought system (2:1). Every teacher faces that obstacle. Resistance to change is built in to the ego because the ego thought system originated in a profound change from unity to separation. Now, any further change seems to threaten even worse separation (2:2–3). Ironically, the ego is founded on change; that is one “foundation.” Now we try to maintain that thought system by *resisting* change—an opposite “foundation.” We have to believe the ego thought system can rest on both change and no change at the same time, which makes no sense at all (2:4–5).

The point is, the ego fights against change, and “learning means change” (2:1); therefore, the ego fights against learning. It will resist every attempt of the Holy Spirit to change our minds. The ego and the spirit are diametric opposites, existing in two different dimensions with zero overlap (2:6). We attempt to deal with our problematic egos, not by laying aside the ego entirely, but by attempting to reduce the conflict *within the ego*

framework. Spirit cannot help in such a futile attempt (2:7), because conflict is inherent in the ego, which *is* a contradiction (2:8).

No compromise between ego and spirit is possible; for “They are fundamentally irreconcilable” (2:12). We don’t need self-repair; we need Self-replacement. We don’t need a heart bypass; we need a heart transplant. As Jesus said in the Gospels, you don’t put new wine in old wineskins (Mark 2:22), or, to use another biblical phrase, “You must be born again” (John 3:7, NIV).

Despite his firm insistence that the spirit cannot reduce the conflict in the ego, Jesus declares that “the ego can learn” (2:13). This is very uncharacteristic language for the Course. This line has caused confusion among some Course students, particularly when it is contrasted with a later statement, which says the exact opposite:

Therefore it [the ego] does not really learn at all. The Holy Spirit teaches you to use what the ego has made, to teach the opposite of what the ego has “learned.”
(T7.IV.3:2–3)

Overall, I think the Course’s concept of the ego is that it cannot really learn at all. What, then, does Jesus mean here when he says it *can* learn? The context of this paragraph, plus paragraphs 3 and 4, make it quite clear. Robert Perry, in an article about study published on the Internet, explains it like this:

First... You guard your thought system, trying to keep out learning, because learning means change and change is something you fear. Second—and this is the crucial point—the same things that are said or implied about your thought system are also said about your ego. Just as you try to keep change from entering your thought system, so you try to “allow no change to enter into your ego” (2:4). Just as you can allow learning into your thought system (this is clearly implied), so “the ego can learn.” Thus, “the ego can learn” means simply “learning and change can be allowed into your thought system.” (Perry, electronically published article)

In this instance, Jesus is using the word “ego” loosely as a synonym for the ego’s thought system. Despite what has been said about the ego being beyond reach of the spirit, our thought system *can* change. On the one hand, he has just clearly taught us that there is no compromise between ego and spirit; therefore, eventually, we must relinquish the ego. Trying to reform it will not work. On the other hand, that does not mean that the ego cannot be undone! Change is still possible, because we have not been able to “make the totally lifeless out of the life-given” (2:14).

Paragraph 3

3. ¹Spirit need not be taught, but the ego must be. ²Learning is ultimately [Ur: The ultimate reason why learning or teaching is] perceived as frightening [Ur: is] because it leads to the relinquishment, not the destruction, of the ego to the light of spirit. ³This is the change the ego must fear, because it does not share my charity. ⁴My lesson was like yours, and because I learned it I can teach it. ⁵I

will never attack your ego [Ur: (in spite of Helen's strange beliefs to the contrary)], but I am trying to teach you how its thought system arose. ⁶When I remind you of your true creation, your ego cannot but respond with fear.

• Study Question •

5. *In sentence 5, Jesus states one primary purpose of his teaching in the Text. What is it?*

Spirit does not need to learn (3:1); it knows. In T-2.II.5:3, we were told that learning is temporary, no longer needed once its purpose is achieved. Until then, however, the ego is going through a learning process that eventually leads to the end of the ego. It isn't so much that we are learning things as *unlearning* what the ego has tried to teach us, until we let go of the ego completely. "Unlearning...is 'true learning' in the world" (M-4.X. 3:7). Naturally, then, *to the ego* learning is frightening (3:2). It can't react otherwise (3:5). Our ego does not share Jesus' charity; that is, the ego cannot perceive the perfection in another person nor in us (see T-2.V.9:4); the "light of spirit" is invisible to it, and it perceives the relinquishment of the ego as a total loss with nothing to gain. If we listen to our egos, we will resist Jesus' teaching.

Jesus assures us that because he went through the same learning process, he knows how to teach it to us (3:4). That is very reassuring to me. We are not listening to someone's *theory* of spiritual life. We are following a teacher who has gone every step of the way and knows how to guide us through. For me, this is part of the immense value of developing a personal pupil-to-teacher relationship with Jesus.

He tells us that he will never attack our egos (3:5), in part, I think, to allay our fears. We might think he *would* attack the ego! After all, isn't the ego the problem? Yes, of course it is, but attack isn't the answer. As Werner Erhard, founder of *est*, used to teach, "What you resist, persists." Jesus' method is not to directly attack the ego, but simply to teach us how its thought system arose (3:5), as he has been doing in the previous two chapters and will continue to do. He has shown us our wish to be self-creating. He has pointed to the *authority problem* as the root of all evil and as the foundation stone in our thought system. He has told us how we falsely perceived lack, and from that arose our need to project. His hope is that, seeing the insane origins of the ego thought system, and seeing that it is founded on an inconceivable thought, we will abandon it. He does not need to attack the ego; instead, he gently persuades us to recognize how we made it, and therefore how we can let it go.

Paragraph 4

4. ¹[Ur: Bill,] Teaching and learning are your greatest strengths now, because they enable you to [Ur: because you *must*] change your mind and help others to change theirs. ²Refusing to change your mind will not prove that the separation has not occurred [Ur: It is pointless to refuse to tolerate change or

changing because you believe that you can demonstrate by doing so that the Separation never occurred].³The dreamer who doubts the reality of his dream while he is still dreaming is not really healing his split mind [Ur: healing the level-split].⁴You dream [Ur: have dreamed] of a separated ego and believe [Ur: have believed] in a world that rests upon it.⁵This is very real to you.⁶You cannot undo it by not changing your mind about it [Ur: You cannot undo this by doing nothing and not changing].⁷If you are willing to renounce the role of guardian of your thought system and open it to me, I will correct it very gently and lead you back to God.

• Study Question •

6. *Jesus is asking us to willingly open our minds to him and allow him to change our thought system. Are you willing to give him that permission? Spend a little time in prayer with this thought.*



How *can* we let the ego go? By changing our mind. Teaching and learning are important at this stage because they are what *enable* us to change our minds, and to help others change theirs (4:1). Refusing to change our minds is just foolish (4:2)! He compares us to a dreamer, dreaming “a separated ego and...a world that rests upon it” (4:4), all of which is “very real” to us (4:5). He says it does no good to raise doubts about the reality of the dream while we are still dreaming it! (4:3) In other words, we have to change our minds about the ego (4:6). We can’t be cured of the ego while we are still holding on to it, or while we are still holding on to the root beliefs that generate it, such as the belief that we can create ourselves.

Jesus is very conscious of our resistance to the message of the Course and the fear of our ego concerning it. He wants us to be equally aware of this often-unconscious resistance and fear, and therefore spends considerable time presenting the reasonableness of what he is asking of us. He repeatedly places great emphasis on his non-threatening posture toward his students (there will be more about this in the next couple of paragraphs). He stresses the fact that we must be willing to stop protecting our thought system and to open it to him, allowing him to do a thorough house cleaning. If we are willing to do that, he says, he will “correct it very gently and lead [us] back to God” (4:7).

Paragraphs 5 & 6

5. ¹Every good teacher hopes to give his students so much of his own learning [Ur: thinking] that they will one day no longer need him. ²This is the one true goal of the teacher. [Ur: of the parent, teacher, and therapist. This goal will not be achieved by those who believe that they will *loose* {sic} their child or pupil or patient if they succeed.] ³It is impossible to convince the ego of this, because it goes against all of its own laws. ⁴But remember that laws are set up to

protect the continuity of the system in which the lawmaker believes. ⁵It is natural for the ego to try to protect itself once you have made it, but it is not natural for you to want to obey its laws unless *you* believe them. ⁶The ego cannot make this choice because of the nature of its origin. ⁷You can, because of the nature of yours.

6. ¹Egos can clash in any situation, but spirit [Ur: Souls] cannot clash at all. ²If you perceive a teacher as merely “a larger ego” you will be afraid, because to enlarge an ego would be to increase anxiety about separation [Ur: separation anxiety. Do not engage in this foolishness, Bill.]. ³I will teach with you and live with you if you will think with me, but my goal will always be to absolve you finally from the need for a teacher. ⁴This is the opposite of the ego-oriented teacher’s goal. ⁵He is concerned with the effect of his ego on other egos, and therefore interprets their interaction as a means of ego preservation. [Ur: This is no less true if he is afraid to teach than if he is frankly out to dominate through teaching. The form of the symptom is only a reflection of his particular way of handling the separation anxiety. All separation anxiety is a symptom of a continuing will to remain separated. This cannot be repeated too often because you have *not* learned it. Bill, you are afraid to teach *only* because you are afraid of the impression your image of yourself will make *on other images*. You believe that their *approval* of your image will exalt it, but also that your separation anxiety will be increased. You also believe that their *disapproval* of it will lessen the separation anxiety, but at the cost of depression.] ⁶I would not be able to devote myself to teaching if I believed this [Ur: either of these ideas], and you will not be a devoted teacher as long as you believe it [Ur: maintain them]. ⁷I am constantly being perceived as a teacher either to be exalted or rejected, but I do not accept either perception for myself.

• Study Question •

7. (a) *Honestly examine your own mind to see if there are any lingering fears of Jesus as a teacher. Do you tend to see him as a judge? Do you resent his superior accomplishments? Do you feel that he had advantages you don't have? Do you resent his trying to take charge of your life and your mind?*
(b) *As a good teacher, what is his true attitude toward us?*

I love the description of a good teacher here: one who “hopes to give his students so much of his own learning that they will one day no longer need him” (5:1). Jesus says that is *his* goal: “My goal will always be to absolve you finally from the need for a teacher” (6:3). Our egos simply cannot believe that, because the whole concept is inconceivable to the ego and goes against its laws (5:3), which state that giving is always done to get something. We tend to see a teacher as “merely ‘a larger ego’” (6:2), and “egos can clash” (6:1). We run right up against the authority problem!

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If a teacher *is* operating from the ego, there *will* be a clash with the students' egos. The ego-based teacher is concerned about "the effect of his ego on other egos," and sees the interaction between teacher and students as a means of preserving his own ego (and for the students, preserving their egos) (6:5). I think we have all been in classes like that!

It doesn't really matter if the teacher tries to be a super-ego to be idolized by his students, or an autocratic ego who dominates his students, or a shrinking violet ego who merits the disapproval of students; every approach taken *as an ego* just increases the sense of separation. The only solution is to set ego aside entirely and to speak from spirit, to see an entirely different purpose in teaching—to impart to all students everything that can possibly be imparted, which ultimately includes awakening them to their own union with God.

The ego's laws are designed to preserve the ego by protecting it from learning, so of course they foster mistrust of the teacher (5:4). The ego's very origin *compels* it to mistrust change (5:6). But because of *your* origin (created by God), Jesus says, *you* can choose change, although the ego cannot (5:7). Very clearly, then, Jesus is making a distinction between you and the ego; the ego is not you! You can choose *not* to protect the ego. You can choose to trust Jesus as your teacher.

Notice that these paragraphs are aimed, not simply at persuading us to be good students, but also to turn us into good teachers in our own right. Jesus says he will teach *with* us (6:3), and manifests his expectation that we will become "devoted teachers" (6:6). His description of the good teacher, then, applies not only to what he is, but also to what he expects us to become.

He does not want us to exalt him nor to reject him (6:7); he wants to teach with us and *live* with us (6:3), and he wants us to "think with" him; that is, bring our thoughts under his guidance (T-2.VI.2:9; T-3.IV.7:7). Since we know that he aims to impart everything he has to us, holding nothing back, we need have no fear of committing ourselves into his hands. And we can open ourselves to become teachers like him, imparting everything we have to our students and holding nothing back.

[As mentioned earlier, we will cover the remainder of this section in the next commentary.]

Answer Key

1. No written answer is expected.
2. Our fundamental choice is to be directed by the ego or by the spirit, or to draw our life from the ego or the spirit.
3. (a) Not dwelling on the cross means not holding on to the concept of sacrifice or suffering as having some merit. It probably includes the idea of not holding on to the traditional Christian interpretation of sacrificial atonement, or the whole idea of the reality of sin, which merits real punishment. Some examples include: any attempt through religion to “pay for” our sins by ritual, good works, etc.; making ourselves sick; any suffering we think we deserve; and self-recrimination or anguished remorse.
(b) No written answer is expected.
4. The ego tries to find peace by avoiding all change, particularly change to itself. The whole focus of Jesus’ teaching is on changing our minds, and particularly changing our minds *about the ego*, so the ego’s attitude presents a major hurdle to be overcome. These thoughts are an extension of the discussion in recent sections about the need to recognize the full extent of the ego’s hold on our minds, and to realize that the ego is not going to be easily laid aside. It will resist tooth and nail.
5. He is trying to teach us how the thought system of the ego arose.
6. No written answer is expected.
7. (a) No written answer is expected.
(b) Jesus, as a devoted teacher, is not concerned with preserving his own ego, but rather with teaching us until we no longer need a teacher. He wants to give us everything he has, to share everything and hold nothing back. He wants to make us his equals.