

Commentary

ACIM® Text (CE)

T-2.XI. The Basic Conflict

The underlining, italics, and footnote formats are explained at the end of the commentary. Also see 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

Like Section 2.I, which we skipped, this section is addressed primarily to people familiar with the teachings of the various psychological theorists like Freud, Jung, Rank, and their successors. It spends most of its time comparing and contrasting their ideas. However, the ideas being discussed are closely related to the ideas presented in the preceding sections about the origin of fear and the importance to us of watching our minds, because it is our thoughts that produce fear.

Furthermore, Jesus not only discusses the ideas of all these psychological theorists, he contrasts them with *his own ideas on the topics*. In the process he further clarifies his ideas about our minds. Therefore, reading this long section of twenty-two paragraphs is worth the effort, and can be quite beneficial for a serious course student.

Rather than my usual line-by-line commentary for every paragraph, however, in some paragraphs I will try to highlight the concepts that I think are most helpful to us as students, but I'm not going to focus on what is said about the various theorists.

Paragraph 1

You are willing to accept primarily what does *not* change your mind too much, and leaves you free to leave it quite unguarded most of the time.
²You persist in believing that when you do not consciously watch your mind, it is unmindful. ³It is time to consider the whole world of the unconscious, or unwatched mind. ⁴This will frighten you because it is the source of fright. ⁵You may look at it as a new theory of basic conflict if you wish, which will not be entirely an intellectual approach, because I doubt if the truth will escape you entirely.¹

Despite what Jesus has said about the power of our minds, most people are not watching their thoughts and the effects of those thoughts. They allow themselves to be aware of thoughts that seem fairly familiar, without the threat of calling for change, and let challenging thoughts just fly in and out without paying much attention to them (1:1). Their belief is that when they do not watch their thoughts, the mind isn't doing anything important (1:2). The problem is, these unwatched thoughts sink into our unconscious minds, out of sight (so to speak). We need now to consider the unconscious mind in more detail, particularly the unwatched part (1:3). Very likely, this examination of the unconscious will be troubling and even frightening, "because it is the source of fright" (1:4). The discussion may seem very heady (and not very practical), but Jesus doubts that we will miss the point entirely (1:5).

Paragraph 2

² The unwatched mind is responsible for the whole content of the unconscious which lies above the miracle level.² ²All psychoanalytic theorists have made some contribution to the truth in this connection, but none of them has seen it in its true entirety.

I quoted 2:1 earlier, emphasizing the importance of watching our thoughts. The thoughts we don't watch are the ones that drop into our unconscious, lurking there to trouble our dreams and feed our fears. If you recall, Jesus has identified two layers of the unconscious: the superficial level that is filled with our unwatched thoughts, and the miracle level that lies beneath the surface level. The miracle level is the source of our miracle impulses (see T-1.28.7). Psychological theory has never *completely* understood

¹ The "basic conflict" is a term emphasized by neo-Freudian Karen Horney, who saw it as the conflict between the opposed strategies of moving toward (compliance), moving against (aggression), and moving away from (detachment). The basic conflict in Freudian thought (at least as identified by comments later in this section) is between the hedonistic id and the moralistic superego (a conflict mediated by the Freudian ego). The final part of this sentence is using "intellectual approach" to describe something you regard as abstractly true without considering that it may be *personally* true of you.

² The unwatched mind, then, is not responsible for the content of the *miracle level* of the unconscious, but only that which is *above* the miracle level.

the way unwatched thoughts supply the content of the unconscious (2:1). In what follows, Jesus goes into detail about each of the theorists, showing how their understanding falls short, and to explain the complete picture as he sees it.

Paragraph 3

³ Jung's best contribution was an awareness of individual versus collective unconscious levels. ²He also recognized the major place of the religious spirit in his schema. ³His archetypes were also meaningful concepts. ⁴But his major error lay in regarding the deepest level of the unconscious as shared in terms of *content*.³

Jung's most important positive contribution was the realization that the unconscious has both individual and collective levels, the latter being shared by everyone (3:1). In addition, he "recognized the major place of the religious spirit" (3:2). Another meaningful Jungian concept is the notion of "archetypes" (3:3), of which Jung identified twelve. An archetype is a kind of psychological template, such as father, mother, hero, orphan, caregiver, or rebel, derived from experience of the human race and present in the unconscious of all individuals. Apparently, Jesus views all of these favorably, but regarding the archetypes he seems to differ about the way in which the deepest level of the unconscious is shared

Where he differs from Jung is about the idea that the deepest level of the unconscious is shared by everyone "in terms of *content*" (3:4). This would seem to refer to the idea of archetypes at this level. The deepest level, remember, is the *miracle* level. As you will see in the next paragraph, Jesus isn't saying that we *don't* all share this level. He stresses that we do not share *content* but we do share the *ability* to work miracles (4:1).

³ This is a reference to Jung's archetypes, which he viewed as the contents of the collective unconscious (rejecting the *tabula rasa* or "blank slate" theory of the mind). Archetypes are psychic dispositions, patterns, ideas, or images that are present in everyone. From these templates the basic themes of human life emerge. Examples of archetypes would be birth, death, mother, father, God, hero, trickster.

Paragraph 4

4 The deepest level of the unconscious is shared as an *ability*.⁴ ²As miracle-mindedness, the content—or the particular miracles which an individual happens to perform—does not matter at all. ³They will, in fact, be entirely different, since *I* direct them, because I make a point of avoiding redundancy. ⁴Unless a miracle actually heals, it is not a miracle at all.⁵ ⁵The content of the miracle level is not recorded in the individual's unconscious because if it were, the miracle would not be automatic or involuntary, which we have said repeatedly that it should be.⁶ ⁶However, the content *is* a matter for the record, which is not within the individual himself.

What we share at the deepest level is *miracle-mindedness*, the ability to work miracles, the drive to do so. We don't share a set of specific ways miracles are to be expressed. The particular form of miracles you perform does not matter. They'll be different for everyone. Jesus controls them with the purpose "of avoiding redundancy" (4:2–3).

What I get from this is that none of us should expect to fall into a fixed pattern of miracle-making. You won't always be the father or mother or hero. Sometimes your healing power may be love, another time physical healing, another time generosity. The particular content of the miracle is not recorded in your individual unconscious (4:5). By avoiding redundancy, we never know what to expect and are dependent on Jesus to direct us. Miracles will always be "automatic or involuntary" (4:5), as they should be. Though they are not recorded in our unconscious, they *are* recorded in our "record" (4:6). We still get credit for them.

Paragraph 5

5 All psychoanalysts made one common error, in that they attempted to uncover unconscious *content*. ²You cannot understand unconscious activity in these terms, because "content" is applicable only to the more superficial unconscious levels to which the individual himself contributes. ³This is the level at which he can readily introduce fear, and usually does.

⁴. In other words, the collective unconscious is not filled with particular ideas and images (archetypes), but with raw, unformed miracle-working ability, or miracle-mindedness.

⁵. The implication is that, if miracles were redundant, if they kept occurring in the same forms, they would lose their psychological impact and thus their ability to heal.

⁶. See footnote 105 for references to the miracle being involuntary. The notion that specific miracles (particular expressions of love to brothers in need) being stored in the individual's unconscious would compromise the "automatic or involuntary" nature of miracles seems to mean that those old miracles would tend to pattern new miracles after themselves, rather than allowing the new ones to be inspired involuntarily.

The only level of unconscious where content can and should concern us is the superficial level, the level we populate with out unwatched thoughts and the source of most of our fears. “All psychoanalysts” seem to have missed this important distinction.

Paragraph 6

6 Freud was right in calling this level “preconscious,” and emphasizing that there is a fairly easy interchange between preconscious and conscious material.⁷ ²He was also right in regarding the censor as an agent for the protection of consciousness from fear.⁸ ³His major error lay in his insistence that the preconscious is necessary at all in the psychic structure. ⁴If the psyche contains fearful levels from which it cannot escape without splitting, its integration is permanently threatened. ⁵It is essential not to control the fearful but to *eliminate* it.

Subconscious thoughts can easily interact with our conscious minds; they can move both ways. There is an aspect of consciousness Freud referred to as “the censor,” whose function is to suppress fearful thoughts from rising to consciousness, at least during the day. Nightmares provide a kind of pressure-release valve for such thoughts. This kind of split-mindedness is not at all necessary, however (6:1–3). To have fearful thoughts we cannot escape without walling off parts of our minds makes integration impossible (6:4). The goal isn’t to *control* fearful thoughts but to *eliminate* them (6:5). This is the goal the Course aims at, as was discussed at length in Section 2.IX.

Paragraph 7

7 Here, Rank’s concept of the will was particularly good, except that he preferred to ally it only with humanity’s own truly creative ability, but did not extend it to its proper union with God’s.ⁱ ²His “birth trauma,” another valid idea, was also too limited, in that it did not refer to the separation, which was really a *false* idea of birth.⁹ ³Physical birth is not a trauma in itself. ⁴It can, however, remind the individual of the separation, which was a very real cause of fear.

Another analyst, Rank, brought in the concept of human will, able to choose against fearful thoughts. He fell short in that he linked it only to human creative ability, and not to God’s (7:1–2).

⁷ Freud’s preconscious includes thoughts that aren’t conscious at a given time, but aren’t repressed and so can be called into consciousness. Jesus here seems to be possibly extending the preconscious to include the entirety of the Freudian unconscious.

⁸ In Freudian thought, the censor, in order to protect the ego, blocks unconscious wishes from consciousness during the day, and during the night transforms these wishes into disguised forms that appear in dreams.

⁹ In *The Trauma of Birth* (1924), Rank put forward the idea that the shock of separation from the mother at birth is the basis of all anxiety and neurosis.

Another topic that Rank introduced was the importance of birth trauma. As footnote 9 points out, Rank felt that “the shock of separation from the mother at birth is the basis for all anxiety and neurosis.” Jesus says that the real trauma was our belief in our separation from God, the “birth” of the ego. I spent some time years ago practicing “rebirthing,” which is an attempt through guided meditation and focused breathing to deliberately experience the trauma of birth, willing it back into conscious memory, to which the adult mind responds with love and understanding instead of shock and fear. My spiritual partner, Lynne, was a twin whose brother died in the womb. In rebirthing, she had a clear memory of it, and found that it freed her from a life-long sense of abandonment.

As far as it went, Rank’s understanding of birth trauma was useful and produced much in the way of healing. When we go back even further to “the single instant when the time of terror was replaced by love” (T-26.V.11:4 (CE)), when our separation-trauma was instantly met by God’s love, we can be freed from *all* fear.

Paragraph 8

8 The idea of “will therapy” was potentially a very powerful one,¹⁰ but Rank did not see its real potential because he himself used his mind partly to create a theory of the mind, but also partly to attack Freud. ²His reactions to Freud stemmed from his own unfortunate acceptance of the deprivation fallacy, which itself arose from the separation. ³This led him to believe that his own mind’s creation could stand only if the creation of another’s fell. ⁴In consequence, his theory emphasized rather than minimized the two-edged nature of defenses. ⁵This is an outstanding characteristic of his concepts, because it was outstandingly true of him. ⁶He also misinterpreted the birth trauma in a way that made it inevitable for him to attempt a therapy whose goal was to abolish fear.¹¹ ⁷This is characteristic of all later theorists, who do not attempt, as Freud did in his own form of therapy, to split off the fear.

In discussing Rank’s battle with Freud’s thought system, Jesus presents an example of a mistake all of us can make: accepting that our wholeness or happiness depends, somehow, on our defeating another person in some way. With Rank, the result was that

¹⁰ Rank’s *Will Therapy* (originally published as two works in 1929 and 1931; published in English as *Will Therapy* in 1936) emphasized choice, responsibility, and action. He said, “Thus, my concept allows for operation of the patient’s own will as the most constructive force in the therapeutic process.” He taught that neurosis is due to poor will-organization, and that patients can regain their authentic will through analysis, in a process of self-creation.

¹¹ Rank’s therapeutic goal of abolishing fear is criticized here perhaps because, as the next paragraph implies, fear can only be abolished by undoing the underlying miscreation that is its source. Until then, the presence of fear has therapeutic value, as an indicator of the miscreation that caused it. In contrast, Rank saw fear (anxiety) as caused by a physical event: birth. And so his therapy aimed at reexperiencing and understanding the birth trauma as the way to dispel fear.

his thought system “emphasized rather than minimized the two-edged nature of defenses” (8:4). For us, the lesson in the Workbook that can lead us out of this error is, “In my defenselessness my safety lies.”

Another of Rank's errors can also serve as an example to us. He attempted to develop a therapy that would do away with fear entirely (8:6). Of course, as we've seen, eliminating fear is exactly what Jesus is helping us to do. The problem is that Rank did not perceive the true cause of fear: the unwatched mind. He felt it was caused by birth trauma, and that re-experiencing that trauma would dispel it. We make the same kind of mistake by putting our faith in physical protections and psychological techniques or by trying to mask our fears with drink, drugs, and distractions. We, like Rank, are misunderstanding and dealing with the true causes of fear: our unwatched thoughts, and ultimately, our belief in separation. Fear has its value until the root has been thoroughly uprooted. It can alert us to the presence of miscreative thoughts.

Paragraph 9

9 No one as yet has fully recognized either the therapeutic value of fear or the only way in which it can truly be ended. ²When you miscreate, you *are* in pain. ³The cause and effect principle here is temporarily a real expeditor. ⁴Actually, Cause is a term properly belonging to God, and Effect, which should also be capitalized, is His Sonship. ⁵This entails a set of cause and effect relationships which are totally different from those which humanity introduced into the miscreation.

What we need, then, is to recognize “the therapeutic value of fear [and] the only way in which it can truly be ended” (9:1). Miscreative thinking causes pain (9:2), and as such it is “temporarily a real expeditor” (9:3). Referring this way to fear as a *cause* and the result of speeding our awakening as an *effect* is just a temporary use of the terms. God is the only Cause, and His Effect is the Sonship. The terms need to be capitalized in this context. Both are divine. (9:4). The divine and truly creative use of cause and effect is totally different than the temporary version we introduced as part of our miscreation.

Paragraph 10

10 The fundamental opponents in the *real* basic conflict are creation and miscreation. ²All fear is implicit in the second, just as all love is inherent in the first. ³Because of this difference, the basic conflict is one between love and fear.

When he mentions “the *real* basic conflict” here, Jesus is referring to his earlier statement about “a new theory of basic conflict” (1:5). All the therapists had different views about what the basic conflict is in our psyche. Jesus says the real conflict in us is between creation and miscreation (10:1). Remember, creation is using the power of our minds to extend love, to create with God, with God in us. Miscreation is the misuse of our minds to *project*, to make illusions of unlove that simply do not exist. Miscreation

implies all fear; creation implies only love. So another way of expressing the basic conflict is that it is between love and fear (10:3).

Paragraph 11

11 So much, then, for the true nature of the major opponents in the basic conflict. ²Since all such theories lead to a form of therapy in which redistribution of psychic energy results, it is necessary to consider *our* concept of psychic energy next.¹² ³In this respect, Freud was more accurate than his followers, who were essentially more wishful. ⁴Energy *can* emanate from both creation and miscreation, and the particular ratio between them which prevails at a given point in time *does* determine the behavior at that time. ⁵If miscreation did *not* engender energy in its own right, it would be unable to produce destructive behavior, which it very patently does.

Having established that the basic conflict is between miscreation (fear) and creation (love), Jesus says, “So much” for that; it has been settled (11:1). However the basic conflict is seen, it always results in “redistribution of psychic energy. Therefore, let’s discuss just was psychic energy *is* (11:2). As Robert intimates in his footnote, it is the primal energy that powers the human soul (or mind). The dictionary defines *psyche* as ” the human soul, or mind, or spirit.” Freud saw this energy as forever split into positive and negative forces; “his followers” (a.k.a. neo-Freudians) tended to think the negative side could be ignored or suppressed. Jesus implies that this is “wishful” thinking (11:3).

He says that both creation and miscreation produce psychic energy; whichever is greater at the time determines our behavior (11:4). It’s obvious that miscreative thought produces energy because the energy results in destructive behavior, which would not happen if no psychic energy was produced (11:5).

Paragraph 12

12 Everything that you make has energy because, like the creations of God, it comes from energy and is endowed by its maker with the power to make. ²Miscreation is still a genuine creative act in terms of the underlying impulse, but not in terms of the *content* of what is made. ³This does not deprive what is made of its own creative power. ⁴It does, however, guarantee that the power will be misused, or used fearfully.

Everything we make (our miscreations) is like our creations in that it has energy because it is the expression of God’s energy; that is what empowers it (12:1). God has endowed us with that power. We can misuse it, but what we make still has the same energy. In terms of this underlying energy, “miscreation is still a genuine creative act,”

¹² In Freudian thought, “psychic energy” (also called libido) is the primal energy that powers the psyche. This energy takes the form of various drives that naturally move toward satisfaction and release.

but the content of what we make is very different (12:2). Our miscreations still have creative power. However, because they are not true creations, their power will be misused or used fearfully (12:3–4). They will be expressions of fear with fearful results. Though fearful they and their results are unreal illusions.

Paragraph 13

13 To deny this is merely the previously mentioned fallacy of depreciation.¹³ ²Although Freud made a number of fallacies of his own, he did avoid this one in connection with psychic energy. ³The later theorists denied the split-energy concept, not by attempting to heal it, but by reinterpreting it instead of redistributing it.¹⁴ ⁴This placed them in the illogical position of assuming that the split which their therapies were intended to heal had not occurred. ⁵The result of this approach is essentially a form of hypnosis.¹⁵ ⁶This is quite different from Freud's approach, which merely ended in a deadlock.¹⁶

We should not minimize the power of our mind's miscreations. It leads to deprecating the power of our minds (13:1). Psychic energy, even that of negative thoughts, *is* powerful, as Freud rightly asserted (13:2). The theorists who followed Freud made the mistake of assuming that there was *no* negative energy; all energies, even those Freud rightly saw as negative, could all be reinterpreted in a positive way (12:3–4). They were forced into the illogical assumption “that the split which their therapies were intended to heal had not occurred” (13:4). Patients are somehow convinced that the “basic conflict” in them does not exist—a kind of hypnosis (13:5). That would mean that unloving thoughts are somehow normal and should just be accepted.

In these post-Freudian theories, there were no conflicting energies, no conflict needing healing. Quoting from Robert Perry's commentary on this section, he says the later theorists

“have a fundamentally different picture. In their picture, there is no such internal conflict. They “denied the split-energy concept” (13:3). In other words, they looked at the same human mind and did not see energies contending against each other. Rather than conflicting energies, they saw merely different energies, with each perhaps having its own useful place in a larger whole.”

¹³ See T-2.X.5-6. The “fallacy of depreciation” is the idea that destructive thoughts do not matter as long as you don't act them out.

¹⁴ Pronoun clarification: “not by attempting to heal it [the split], but by reinterpreting it [the split] instead of redistributing it [the energy].”

¹⁵ The implication seems to be that patients are essentially hypnotized into believing that the basic conflict in them does not exist, though it clearly does.

¹⁶ I.e., a deadlock between the two opponents, later identified as the id and the superego. Freud believed that the best that can be achieved in a human being is a well-adjusted neurotic.

Freud, by contrast, *did* see conflicting energies, but he apparently saw no way to resolve the conflict, so his approach “merely ended in a deadlock” (13:6).

Paragraph 14

14 A similar deadlock occurs when both the power of creation and of miscreation coexist. ²This is experienced as conflict only because the individual feels as if both were occurring at the same level. ³He believes in what he has miscreated in his own unconscious, and he naturally believes it is real because he has made it. ⁴He thus places himself in a position where the fearful becomes *real*. ⁵Nothing but level confusion can result as long as this belief is held in any form.

When a person is aware of conflicting powers or energies of creation and miscreation (love and fear) in themselves but feels they are of equal power, a deadlock condition similar to that in Freud's approach can occur (14:1–2). Because they naturally believe in the miscreations of their unconscious, these fearful projections seem *real* to them, inevitably resulting in level confusion (14:3–5). As we have seen previously, the symptoms include believing they are bodies, belief in the unreality of spirit, confusing bodily impulses as spiritual or miracle impulses as sexual.

Paragraph 15

15 Inappropriate denial and equally inappropriate identification of the real factors in the basic conflict will not solve the problem itself. ²The conflict cannot disappear until it is fully recognized that miscreation is not real, and therefore there *is* no conflict. ³This entails a full realization of the basic fact that, although you have miscreated in a very genuine sense, you need neither continue to do so nor to suffer from your past errors in this respect.

“Inappropriate denial” refers to the post-Freudian denial of conflict discussed in the previous two paragraphs. Inappropriate identification of the factors in the basic conflict refers to Freud's failure to recognize the factors as creation and miscreation (love and fear), as discussed even earlier. Neither error will solve the actual problem (15:1). The key to resolving the problem is the recognition that “miscreation is not real, and therefore there *is* no conflict” (15:2).

This does *not* mean denying that you have indeed miscreated “in a very genuine sense.” Your miscreating does manifest in unloving behavior in word and deed, both your own and that of others. On the level of this physical world it is very real. What shows up in this world is the projection of your miscreated self-image. But the picture of yourself driven by evil forces, the picture that you have miscreated, is no more than illusion. Because it is unreal, there *is* no conflict between it and your True Self. You do not need to continue miscreating it, “nor to suffer from your past errors in this respect” (15:3).

Paragraph 16

16 A redistribution of psychic energy, then, is not the solution. ²Both the idea that both kinds must exist and the belief that one kind is amenable for use or misuse are real distortions. ³The only way out is to *stop miscreating now*, and accept the Atonement for miscreations of the past. ⁴Only this can reestablish true single-mindedness.¹⁷

An illusion of self can only produce an illusion of psychic energy. Continue to generate that illusion and you will continue to generate “evil” psychic energy. No matter how you may attempt to ‘redistribute’ the energies, the conflict will remain. (16:1). Only one psychic energy need exist; there is no necessity for two. There is no such thing as a psychic energy that can be misused as well as used. Creative energy is an energy of love, nothing else (16:2).

Here follows a key sentence: “The *only* way out is to *stop miscreating now*, and accept the Atonement for miscreations of the past” (16:3). There are two parts to that. The first handles the conscious mind and the second handles the unconscious mind. When both parts are healed, the mind becomes *single* (“Only this can reestablish true single-mindedness” (16:4)). According to Cynthia Bourgeault in her book, *The Gospel of Mary Magdalene*, the earliest title given to Jesus was *ihidaya*, which means “the single one.” Here, in the Course, he gives us the way to achieve such singleness: stop miscreating now, and accept the Atonement for our past miscreations. It may sound easy, and it may seem difficult, but without question it is within our grasp. What’s more, it is *inevitable*.

“The acceptance of the Atonement by everyone is only a matter of time” (T-2.VI.7:1 (CE)).

“The truth is still that the attraction of God is irresistible at *all* levels, and the acceptance of this totally unavoidable truth is only a matter of time” (T-2.I.1:3 (CE))

Paragraph 17

17 The structure of the psyche follows along the lines of the particular libido concept the theorist employs.¹⁸ ²Freud’s psyche was essentially a good and evil picture, with very heavy weight given to the evil. ³This is because every time I mentioned the Atonement to him, which was quite often, he responded by defending his theory more and more against it. ⁴This resulted in his increasingly strong attempts to make the illogical sound more and more logical. ⁵I was very sorry about this, because his was a singularly good mind, and it was a shame to waste it.

¹⁷ I.e., psychic unity.

¹⁸ “Libido” is the psychic energy (seen by Freud as primarily sexual but by other theorists as instinctual energy in general) that when misdirected or suppressed results in mental illness.

Paragraphs 17, 18, 19, 20, and 21 are a prolonged and more detailed discussion of Freud's theories, focusing on some of the later changes in his ideas. Jesus points out how Freud's concept of libido (or psychic energy) affected his idea of the structure of the psyche (or mind). He saw the mind as divided between good and evil, with emphasis on the evil (17:1–2).

I find it interesting to learn that Jesus mentioned the Atonement to Freud multiple times, which only made Freud more and more defensive of his theories. Jesus accords Freud “a singularly good mind” but was sorry because Freud wasted it (17:3–5). This indicates to me that Jesus is speaking to *everyone* all the time, trying to get through to them. This must include all of the world's political leaders and political wannabes. I find that very reassuring

Paragraph 18

¹8 However, the major purpose of his incarnation was not neglected. ²He *did* succeed in forcing recognition of the unconscious into humanity's calculations about itself, a step in the right direction which should not be minimized. ³Freud was one of the most religious men I have known recently. ⁴Unfortunately, he was so afraid of religion that the only way he could deal with it was to regard *it* (not himself) as sick.¹⁹ ⁵This naturally prevented healing.

Despite Freud's stubborn resistance he managed to fulfill “the major purpose of his incarnation: he established the recognition of the unconscious mind into the thinking of the human race (18:1–2). Clearly, Jesus thinks knowing about the unconscious mind is important to the redemption of the human race.

When Jesus said that Freud “was one of the most religious men I have known recently” (18:3), I was shocked. I never thought of Freud as religious, but more as anti-religious. When I was in college, leading a Bible study group (yes, I've been leading study groups since I was 17), the students of psychology tried to get me to read Freud's book about religion, titled, *The Future of an Illusion* (see footnote). I declined. Of course, they declined to read the Bible. Turnabout is fair play. But regarding Jesus's comment: Apparently, being “religious” can include being afraid of religion as well as embracing it.

¹⁹ In *The Future of an Illusion* (1927), Freud put forth the view that religion is an illusion, a product of wish fulfillment, which arose to give divine authority to societal controls on the destructive passions of the individual, and to give us a comforting illusion of control over the uncontrollable forces of nature.

Paragraph 19

19 Freud's superego is a particularly interesting example of the real power of miscreation. ²It is noteworthy throughout the whole development of his theories that the superego never allied itself with freedom. ³The most it could do in this direction was to work out a painful truce in which both opponents lost.²⁰ ⁴This perception could not fail to force him to emphasize discontent in his view of civilization.²¹

In Freud, the superego is the good part of us, the conscience. From what Jesus says here (I'm really only partly familiar with Freud's teachings, and never read anything he wrote), it sounds as if the superego was not very effective. Instead, it compromised or made a truce with the id (the evil part of us); neither id nor superego got what it wanted. This view led to a dark or rather hopeless view of human civilization.

Paragraph 20

20 The Freudian id is really only the more superficial level of the unconscious and not the deepest level at all.²² ²This, too, was inevitable, because Freud could not divorce miracles from magic. ³It was therefore his constant endeavor (even preoccupation) to keep on thrusting more and more material between consciousness and the real deeper level of the unconscious, so that the latter became increasingly obscured. ⁴The result was a kind of bedlam, in which there was no order, no control, and no sense. ⁵This was exactly how he felt about it.

As we've seen, the deepest part of the unconscious mind is the miracle-mindedness level. What Freud called the id, or the dark, primitive part of us, is really just the superficial level of the unconscious. The deepest level is the miracle level. Freud could not see deeper than the id because, to him, miracles were just "magic" (20:1-2). Like many people, to Freud, miracles were just superstitious nonsense. He became preoccupied with pushing more stuff into the upper level of the unconscious, building a kind of buffer between consciousness and miracles (12:3). As described here, it seems to have gotten out of his control, to the point it made no more sense, even to Freud.

²⁰ I.e., the superego and the id. The superego reaches a truce with the id through the mediation of the ego.

²¹ In *Civilization and Its Discontents* (1930), Freud focused on the inherent friction between the individual's desire to freely express the instincts for sex and aggression (the id) and civilization's need for the individual to repress those same instincts and conform to the group (represented by the superego). This friction, which gives rise to perpetual discontent, is the same deadlock Jesus is referring to above, "in which both opponents lost."

²² In Freudian theory, the "id" is the unconscious source of primitive, instinctive impulses. In the Course, the "deepest level" of the unconscious is the miracle level.

Paragraph 21

21 The later theoretical switch to the primacy of anxiety was an interesting device intended to deny both the instinctive nature of destructiveness and the force of the power of miscreation.²³ ²By placing the emphasis on the result, the generative nature of the power was minimized.²⁴ ³Destructive behavior is instinctual. ⁴The instinct for creation is not obliterated in miscreation. ⁵That is why it is always invested with reality.

Later (presumably as a result of the “bedlam” his earlier theories led to), Freud developed a theory about the primacy of anxiety. It was an attempt on his part to deny the instinctive nature of the destructive id, and to minimize the power of miscreation (21:1). Anxiety is actually the result of our attempts to repress the negative energies within us. Freud argued the reverse, that our attempts at repression were the result of our anxiety. He emphasized the result, which minimized the way miscreative psychic energy can *generate* anxiety (21:2).

Contrary to what Freud thought, “destructive behavior *is* instinctual” (21:3). Our miscreative unconscious produces the behavior. Miscreation still possesses the same instinctual power as creation does (21:4), which is why our miscreations seem so real (21:5).

²³ Freud's 1926 work *Inhibitions, Symptoms and Anxiety* represented one of his most significant changes of mind on fundamental issues. It set forth his new theory of anxiety, in which he argued that anxiety causes repression, not vice versa.

²⁴ In other words, anxiety is actually the result of the power of miscreation. By emphasizing only this result, Freud inappropriately deemphasized the power that *generates* that result.

Paragraph 22

22 One of the chief ways in which you can correct your own magic-miracle confusion is to remember that you did not create yourself.²⁵ ²You are apt to forget this when you become egocentric, and this places you in a position where belief in magic is virtually inevitable. ³Your instincts for creation were given you by your own Creator, Who was expressing the same instinct in His creation. ⁴Since the creative ability rests solely in the mind, everything which you make or create is necessarily instinctive. ⁵It also follows that whatever you produce is real in your own eyes, but not necessarily in the sight of God.

Like Freud, we often confuse miracles with magic. Forgetting that miracles come from God, we try to generate them with magical incantations prayers, or rituals. One powerful way to correct our confusion is “to remember that you did not create yourself” (22:1). This helps us remember our dependence on God and quells our egocentricity, which is usually at the root of our belief in magic (22:2). Our instincts for creation come to us in direct line from our Creator, Who expressed His instincts in creating us (22:3).

Whether we make or create, it is necessarily instinctive. As was pointed out in 21:3, even our miscreations are instinctive. Whatever we produce, by creating or miscreating, it is real in our own eyes. Only what is truly created is real in the sight of God (22:5). When we bear in mind that we are God’s creations it is easier to remember that only our use of the same creative power produces real results.

Bearing in mind that we did not create ourselves, the two-fold process outlined above becomes easier. We can stop miscreating *now*, in the present, and we can accept Atonement for past miscreations because we know their results were never real. We are not what we have made of ourselves; we remain as God created us. Our only true identity is the one given us by God.

²⁵ The reference to “your own magic-miracle confusion” implies that we, like Freud, have confused miracles with magic. That “Freud could not divorce miracles from magic” (20:2) possibly means that he saw miracles as attempts to control the external world through “magical” means such as prayer and ritual. Our own confusion of miracles and magic probably refers to seeing miracles as psychic feats (see T-1.14.1:3: “Without conviction, they [miracles] deteriorate into magic”), performed by our own separate will rather than by God’s will through us. We solve this by remembering that we did not create ourselves. This restores God’s role as our Cause, so that His will once again works through us.

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 Foundation for Inner Peace (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. 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 Differing Editions of the Course

There were significant changes made in the CE, although for the most part there was no alteration in the meaning of the text, and the *Manual for Teachers* 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. When there is a major difference I will indicate it with a footnote.

I have attempted for all references to add a separate FIP reference if it differs from the CE 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 Text 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.

ⁱ Otto Rank was one of Freud's closest colleagues until their break in 1926. Rank was the only early psychoanalyst to emphasize the centrality of will in human psychology. In Rank's system, we are not merely determined by unconscious and biological forces, but determine ourselves through our will. He thus emphasized the importance of choice and moral responsibility, the role of the will in artistic creation, and the function of will in creating one's individual self as differentiated from parental influence. He also emphasized "will conflicts" (a term that Jesus has just used in T-2.X.5:7), such as the conflict between the will to separate and the will to unite.