

Commentary

ACIM® Text (CE)

T-3.V, Perception versus Knowledge

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

The section is aptly titled; the chapter has discussed perception in the last two sections and will now contrast perception with knowledge. The purpose here seems to be to placate our premature craving for knowledge—premature because perception must become true before we can gain any knowledge. Knowledge will continue to be the topic for discussion through the next two sections as well. The topic of knowledge is covered more thoroughly in this chapter than in the rest of the Text.

Paragraph 1

You are confused about the difference between perception and knowledge.²You will note that we have said very little about knowledge as yet.³(One of the exceptions is in the correction formula for fear, which begins with “*know first*.”)¹⁴The reason is because you must get your perceptions straightened out before you can know anything.

In the last few sections, the emphasis has been on correcting perception so that we may perceive the perfect innocence in everyone, including ourselves. Not much has been said yet about knowledge (1:2), although surely all of us want to gain spiritual knowledge. One exception where knowledge has been mentioned is “Know first that this is fear,” in the correction formula for fear offered in T-1.48.13. We want to know the truth, not just change our way of looking at things. The problem is that we tend to confuse knowledge with perception, and are confused about the difference between them (1:1).

Jesus says he has down-played knowledge because “perception must be straightened out before you can know anything” (1:4). That line is good enough to merit memorizing. It explains why the Course focuses on training our minds to have a different perception.

¹ T-1.48.15:5: “*Know first* that this is an expression of fear.” See also T-2.IX.12:3-6.

Having a true perception is not the ultimate goal, but it is the way to that goal. When speaking of itself, the Course over and over points out that it is concerned with means, not ends. It deals less with where we are going and more with how we get there. Its focus is on straightening out our perception. If it can do that, knowledge will become possible for us. If we persist in misperception, knowledge will remain beyond our reach.

Paragraph 2

²To know is to be certain. ²Uncertainty merely means that you don't know. ³Knowledge is power because it is certain, and certainty is strength.² ⁴Perception is temporary. ⁵It is an attribute of the space-time belief, and is therefore subject to fear or love. ⁶Misperception produces fear, and true perception induces love. ⁷Neither produces certainty because all perception varies. ⁸That is why it is not knowledge. ⁹True perception is the basis for knowledge, but knowing is the affirmation of truth.

To understand why knowledge is impossible if perception is skewed, we need to understand a few things about the nature of knowledge. First, it is certain (2:1–2). The idea is simple and obvious. If you are not certain, you do not really know. You believe, you think, you theorize, you suspect, but you don't *know* unless you are certain. Knowing is certainty.

Perception is anything but certain. We may say, “Seeing is believing,” but notice we don't say that seeing is *knowing*. We often see something that later turns out to be incorrect. The inconsistency of eyewitness testimony is a well-known phenomenon. One person saw a man, another saw a woman, and so on. Magicians, like Criss Angel and David Copperfield, make their living figuring out ways to make us see things that did not really happen.

Because of its certainty, knowledge is power (2:3). When you know something you are unassailable. No one can convince you otherwise because you know. Perceptions, on the other hand, are an aspect of space-time belief (2:5). They are vulnerable because they are temporary, or changeable over time (2:4). They can produce fear if they are misperceptions; they can foster love if they are true perceptions (2:5–6). We can be perceiving the same thing, but our perception can vary from false to true; it cannot produce certainty (2:7), which distinguishes all perception from knowledge because knowledge is certain. While all perception can change, knowledge does not change. True perception can bring knowledge to us, but to *know* is to *affirm* what true perception shows us (2:8–9).

In summary, then, perception falls short of knowledge. True perception leads to knowledge, but “knowing is the affirmation of truth” (2:9).

We still have not *completely* answered the question we posed, which was, “Why does perception need to be straightened out before we can know anything?” It will become

² “Knowledge is power” comes from the Latin maxim *scientia potentia est*, usually attributed to Francis Bacon. Its usual meaning is that having information grants one power to control one's world. Here, it means that direct awareness of true reality results in certainty, a state of psychological strength.

clearer in the next couple of paragraphs, but we already have a hint: Misperception produces fear. Fear blocks our minds so that we actually defend ourselves against knowledge.

Paragraph 3

3 All of your difficulties ultimately stem from the fact that you do not recognize, or know, yourself, your brother, or God. ²“Recognize” means “know again.”³ ³This means you knew before. ⁴Note that it does not mean saw before. ⁵You can see in many ways, because perception involves different interpretations, and this means it is not whole. ⁶The miracle is a way of perceiving, not a way of knowing. ⁷It is the right answer to a question, but you do not ask questions at all when you know.

At its core, Jesus says, our problem is a lack of knowledge. We do not know ourselves, our brothers, or God (3:1). You may recall that in T-2.X.12:1 (CE), Jesus told us we were afraid of God, himself, and ourselves, which is a similar trio. If we do not know our brother and do not recognize him because we misperceive him, we will fear him. The same is true with God, with Jesus, and with ourselves. What we do not know, we fear.

Actually, he says “do not recognize” rather than “do not know,” but he explains that recognize means “know again” (3:2). Break the word into parts--Re-Cognize--and that meaning is clear. Cognition is knowledge. “Recognition” means that we are recovering lost knowledge, not learning something new (3:3). Not that we *saw* the truth before, but we did *know* it (3:4).

We do not know one another: We see or perceive one another, and we “see in many ways” (3:5). I’ve often been amazed when I and some friends meet a new person, and later share our impressions of the new person. One of us likes her. One of us doesn’t trust her. Perhaps one of us is convinced she is manipulative, or devious, or wants something from us. Each of us sees people very differently!

The differences in perception occur because “Perception involves interpretation” (3:5)). That is what instills it with inconsistency. That is why I may love someone while someone else hates that same person: interpretation. This is only one early instance of the Course’s emphasis on this important idea: *Perception is an interpretation, not a fact* (see T-21.V.1:7 (FIP), T-21.V.2:1 (CE); W-304.1:3, and M-17.8:6). Jesus tells us later: “You cannot be aware without interpretation, for what you perceive is your interpretation” (T-11.VI.2:6 (FIP), (T-11.VII.2:6 (CE))). What he is leading up to here, I think, is that we need to begin by *questioning our perceptions*, recognizing that they are interpretations and not necessarily the truth.

The miracle is “a way of perceiving” (3:6). Therefore it isn’t *knowledge*. It moves us toward knowledge but in itself it is still only perception. We ask a question: “What is this I see?” The miracle is the right answer (3:7), some form of, “This is the holy Son of God Himself, completely innocent in every way.” Through the miracle, we see the truth. We see one another as God created us. So the questioning is good; the miracle, of course, is

³. “Recognize” is a modification of Old French *reconoistre*, *reconoiss-*, to know again.

good. The true perception is good. But questioning, miracles, and true perception are not knowledge; they are all about perception getting straightened out. When we know, we do not ask questions (3:7). We are certain.

Paragraph 4

4 Questioning delusions is the first step in undoing them. ²The miracle, or the right answer, corrects them. ³Since perceptions change, their dependence on time is obvious. ⁴They are subject to transitory states, and this implies variability by definition. ⁵How you perceive at any given time determines what you do, and action must occur in time. ⁶Knowledge is timeless because certainty is not questionable. ⁷You know when you have ceased to ask questions.

There is a fascinating picture here of the place that uncertainty or questioning has in our journey back to knowledge and certainty. One might think from the remark about “When we know, we don’t ask questions” (5:7), that we should aspire not to *question*. And that is true; we *should* aspire to know, which is to be without questions. And yet, “questioning illusions is the first step in undoing them” (4:1). Illusions must be undone. How can we know anything if we are perceiving illusions? But to undo them, we need to question them. Only then can the miracle correct them (4:2).

We need to question our perceptions of one another. Perhaps we see someone and believe they are attacking us; they don’t like us; they have it in for us; they are disgusting, stupid, boring, crude, uncouth, ignorant, inconsiderate, or even evil. Or, they are wiser than us, they have what we need, we can’t get along without them. The first step is to question all such perceptions (4:1). Perceptions come from interpretations, and interpretations have a marked tendency to be wrong! They depend on time, are subject to variability (4:3–4).

How we treat another person and interact with them is determined by our perception of them at that particular time (4:5). All actions must occur in time, where perceptions reign. Knowledge, by contrast, is timeless, certain, and unchangeable (4:6). It cannot be questioned. A good way to distinguish what you know from what you perceive is to ask yourself, “Can I question this?” If you can, it’s a perception, not a fact (4:7).

Although questioning is essential to dispel illusions at the start and within time, the ultimate goal, beyond time, is question-less certainty. Considering what these lines say, it seems likely that complete certainty, or knowledge, is rarely possible within time. While we are in time, we should usually be content to question and correct our perceptions, preparing ourselves for knowledge.

Paragraph 5

5 The “questioning mind” perceives itself in time, and therefore looks for future answers.⁴ ²The “unquestioning mind” is closed merely because it believes that the future and the present will be the same. ³This establishes an unchanged state, or stasis. ⁴This is usually an attempt to counteract an underlying fear that the future will be *worse* than the present, and this fear inhibits the tendency to question at all.

This paragraph continues the same themes. We read of “the questioning mind” (5:1) contrasted with “the closed mind” (5:2). The previous paragraph was speaking of a mind that knows, which we can call “the knowing mind” (although the Text does not use those exact words). To make the transition from a closed mind to a knowing mind, we must pass through the stage of the questioning mind. A knowing mind does not question. Neither does a closed mind, but it shuns questions out of fear (5:3-4) rather than rendering questions unnecessary through certainty. A closed mind does not allow for any change (5:2). The questioning mind is open to change and correction, which is why it is an essential stage in the undoing of error.

If we are afraid of change it indicates that we are afraid that the future will be worse than the present (5:3). Such fear “inhibits the tendency to question” (5:4). This kind of closed-mindedness is often characteristic of fundamentalist religions (whether Christian, Islamic, or even secular religions such as communism). A rigid thought-system that refuses to allow questioning offers “a seemingly stable state” which is actually quite precarious. If one brick in the thought structure crumbles, the whole edifice falls. The apparent certitude of the fundamentalist actually hides a deep-seated fear that any change will only make things worse.

While we can see this tendency readily in others, where we need most to watch for it is in ourselves.

Paragraph 6

6 Visions are the natural perception of the spiritual eye, but they are still corrections. ²The spiritual eye is symbolic, and therefore not a device for knowing. ³It is, however, a means of right perception, which brings it into the proper domain of the miracle but not of revelation. ⁴Properly speaking, a “vision of God” is a miracle rather than a revelation. ⁵The fact that perception is involved at all removes the experience from the realm of knowledge. ⁶That is why these visions do not last.

Even what the Course calls “true vision” is “still a correction rather than a fact” (6:1). I continue to find it remarkable that the Course, over and over, seems to point out the limitations of the very things it advocates. In a way, it is a kind of apology for the focus on what seem to be “lesser things” like perception and true vision, and the lack of

⁴ The quotation marks around “questioning mind” suggest that Jesus is referring to the usual concept of an intellectually curious and inquisitive mind.

attention that is paid to “higher things” like the direct and unmediated knowledge of God. Two things are being emphasized here: First, that these “lesser things” are not really lesser at all, they are foundational and essential predecessors; and second, that as wonderful as these lesser things are, they are only means, and not the end.

The purpose of all this discussion, it seems to me, is to be sure that we neither neglect the development of true vision, nor fixate upon it as all we need. We can err in either way. On the one hand, we may vainly try to attain knowledge without first correcting our perception. In my experience, this usually leads to frustration. We lose heart and give up our spiritual quest for knowledge, believing we are unable to attain the knowledge we seek.

On the other hand, we may limit our search to spiritual sight and perception. We may endlessly seek more and more experiences or visions of God, thinking that these are all that we need. We falsely believe we have attained knowledge, when all we have had are experiences of spiritual sight. With egoistic presumption, we try to attribute spiritual certainty to our visions. The result is the same: We do not aspire to true knowledge because we falsely believe we already have it. Experience and explanation are two different things. As Ken Wilber points out in his book, *Finding Radical Wholeness*, our explanations are not experience, and our experience is not explanation.

True vision and spiritual sight are types of perception, and perception is symbolic (6:1-2) and dualistic. Therefore, vision and sight are not means of knowing. Even a “vision of God” is not knowledge, not revelation (6:4-5). Therefore, although the Course does center on the development of spiritual vision, it does not mistake that vision for knowledge. It does not encourage us to believe that just because we have had a vision of God, we are enlightened. We’ve experienced a higher form of perception, that’s all; it isn’t yet knowledge. And “that is why visions, however holy, do not last” (6:6). We should never get swelled heads because we’ve had a vision. All visions pass. Knowledge, however, never fades.

And yet, spiritual sight is extremely useful. It is “a means of right perception, which brings it into the proper domain of the miracle” (6:3). Miracles, as we know, are the message of this course. Spiritual sight is something brought to us by miracles. It works to open our minds to the final advent of knowledge.

Knowledge comes from an *experience* of God, not from deeper intellectual understanding. It requires dedication and practice, which is what the Workbook is all about. The Workbook states this quite clearly:

Thus what you need are intervals each day in which the learning of the world becomes a transitory phase, a prison house from which you go into the sunlight and forget the darkness. ¹Here you understand the Word, the Name which God has given you, the one identity which all things share, the one acknowledgment of what is true. ²And then step back to darkness, not because you think it real, but only to proclaim its unreality in terms which still have meaning in the world which darkness rules. (W-184.10:1–3 (CE))

If you are not a body, what are you? ²You need to be aware of what the Holy Spirit uses to replace the image of a body in your mind. ³You need to feel some-

thing to put your faith in as you lift it from the body. ⁴You need a real experience of something else, something more solid and more sure; more worthy of your faith, and really there. (W-91.8:1-4 (CE))

The reason for a minimum of one year of practice, the reason the Workbook trains us in several kinds of meditation, and the emphasis on the need to *experience* something, is to assist us in attaining some knowledge. To quote Ken Wilber again, he points out repeatedly that a serious meditation practice is necessary to acquire knowledge, a process he terms “Waking Up:”

Generally speaking, the path of Waking Up had a single major goal. It started with the average state of consciousness of a typical human being, which was said to be narrow, limited, fragmented, and marked by inherent suffering, anxiety, and torment—a state that generally was said to involve what is called the “separate-self sense,” “self-contraction,” the “illusory self,” the “fallen self,” the “dreaming self,” or simply the “ego” (none of them complimentary terms). The goal of Waking Up was, through the direct experimental practices of meditation, contemplation, or yoga, to transform consciousness from that limited and contracted state through several much more inclusive, open, and free states, to a genuine Wholeness, a pure Nonduality, an ultimate Unity consciousness or Kosmic consciousness,[1] an absolute Oneness with the entire universe.

Wilber, Ken. *Finding Radical Wholeness: The Integral Path to Unity, Growth, and Delight* (pp. 18-19). Shambhala. Kindle Edition.

Paragraph 7

7 Note that the term “insight,” though referring to lofty perception, is not an attribute of knowledge.⁵ ²This is why terms like “lofty” are meaningless in this context. ³Insight is not the way to knowledge, but it is a prerequisite for knowledge. ⁴Being of God, knowledge has nothing to do with your perceptions at all. ⁵That is why it can only be a gift of God to you.

Sometimes you may hear someone refer to the “lofty insights” of some spiritual teacher. The Course here is asserting that, when speaking of *knowledge*, the phrase is basically meaningless (7:2). An insight is merely a perception; it does not refer to knowledge at all (7:1). There is an important clarification here about the relationship between insight (perception) and knowledge. Insights, no matter how lofty they may seem, *do not lead to knowledge*. Insights (spiritual perceptions) *are* a prerequisite to knowledge, but they are not what *bring* knowledge (7:3). In Wilber’s terms, better explanations do not produce experience. An explanation of a spiritual experience that is based on a magical stage of mental evolution such as “medicine man” cultures will not be as accurate as an explanation based on a rational mindset, but the spiritual experience may occur at either stage, and *knowledge* does require the highest explanation for the experience to be full.

⁵. “Insight” refers to seeing deeply into something. It thus belongs to the realm of perception, not knowledge.

I find myself stumbling over the words trying to describe this and to relate ACIM to Wilber. That may indicate I don't fully understand either one! Suffice it to say that deep insight cannot *bring about* knowledge but is necessary before knowledge *can be* experienced. Therefore, the pursuit of lofty insights is worthwhile. They won't get you to the goal, but they will clear the way toward reaching it. Ultimately, knowledge is a gift from God (7:5).

Paragraph 8

8 An ancient proverb instructs you to “know thyself,” or be certain.¹
²Certainty is always of God. ³When you love someone, you have perceived him as he is, and this makes it possible for you to know him. ⁴But it is not until you recognize him that you know him. ⁵Only then are you able to stop asking questions about him. ⁶While you ask questions about God, you are clearly implying that you do *not* know him. ⁷Certainty does not require action. ⁸When you say you are acting on the basis of sure knowledge, you are really confusing perception and knowledge. ⁹Knowledge brings mental strength for creative thinking but not for right doing.

Again, I find the connection of “know thyself” to “be certain” somewhat surprising (8:1). I wonder in what way knowing myself is the same as certainty? Especially since the following sentences all refer to knowing or being certain about *someone else*? The explanation seems to lie in the fact that the only thing we can truly know *is* ourself (singular form used on purpose, as I'll explain in a moment). Perception is always based on separation, me perceiving you and trying to understand you, and never being able to do so completely with any certainty. The connection between “know thyself” and “be certain” is that my self is the only thing I can be certain of because I *experience* being myself.

How, then, does the discussion leap to knowing *others*? Although it isn't specifically mentioned in this section, I think that behind this switch is the fundamental message of the Course: To know my true identity as Christ, I must first recognize Christ in my brothers and sisters. The way I come to know my Self is by knowing my spiritual siblings--who are, in fact, part of that shared Self.

My understanding is that this kind of true certainty is only possible when I cease to see others *as others* and realize we are all One Self, created by God. (That's the reason for the singular “oneself” above). Certainty comes only from God (7:2). When I see “another person” as part of the same Self with me, part of the Christ, I automatically love them. They are God's perfect creation, just as I am, so of course, I love them. I have perceived them as they are, and “this makes it possible for you to know” them (7:3). I must *recognize* them before I can *know* them (7:4).

Take anyone, strip away all the illusions we have woven about them and all the illusions they have woven of themselves, and what is underneath is thoroughly, absolutely, perfectly lovable. How could we do anything except love them? I think it is important to remember, in all the Course's discussion of true perception and spiritual vision, that when you perceive someone as they are, you love them. And conversely, if you do not

love them, you are not perceiving them truly! The Workbook tells us that every brother or sister is so incredibly, awesomely magnificent that “in Christ’s vision is his loveliness reflected in a form so holy and so beautiful that you could scarce refrain from kneeling at his feet” (W-pI.161.9:3).

That lets me know I still have a way to go since I don’t often find myself swept up in a nearly irresistible urge to kneel at the feet of the people around me! But I do believe that if I saw them as they really are, I would feel that way. I’ve had tastes of it. I’ve had glimpses of the spiritual beauty in people that have taken my breath away, and made me feel as if I would follow them to the ends of the earth.

Recognizing another as a part of our shared Self enables me to stop asking questions about them (7:5). Trying to understand a person separate from myself always involves asking questions, of them and of myself. We all know that our perception of another person can shift dramatically, sometimes over time, sometimes in an instant. As long as questions and uncertainty remain, we simply do not *know* them. For that matter, “While you ask questions about *God* [my emphasis], you are clearly implying that you do *not* know him” (7:6). The word “him” isn’t capitalized, which implies that it is referring to our brother, not to God. If we truly knew God, we could not doubt our brothers. They are His creations.

Sometimes, we take action toward another person, thinking our actions are based on “sure knowledge” of the person. We are wrong! We are confusing perception and knowledge (7:7–8). Certain knowledge of another does not tell us how to *behave*, but how to *think* (7:9). The mistake we can make isn’t trying to guide behavior by knowledge, it’s thinking that we *can*. On the one hand, we mistakenly believe our perceptions *are* knowledge! On the other hand, we “normally” guide our actions by our perceptions (which are unreliable), but the proper way (as we’ve been told already) is to ask Jesus to take charge of our actions.

In this spot in the Urtext there is a lovely example of Jesus pausing to apply his teaching personally to Bill and Helen. I’m including it here without comment.

To perceive the truth is not the same as to know it. This is why B. is having so much trouble in what he calls “integrating” the notes. His tentative perception is too uncertain for knowledge, because knowledge is SURE. Your perception is so variable that you swing from sudden but real knowledge to complete cognitive disorganization. This is why B. is more prone to irritation, while you are more vulnerable to rage. He is consistently BELOW his potential, while you achieve it at times and then swing very wide of the mark.

Actually, these differences do not matter. But I thought you might be glad to learn that you are much better off with DIFFERENT perceptual problems than you would be if you suffered from similar ones. This enables each of you to RECOGNIZE (and this is the right word here) that the misperceptions of the other are unnecessary. It is because you do not KNOW what to do about it that B. reacts to yours with irritation, and you respond to his with fury.

Paragraph 9

⁹ Perception, miracles, and doing are closely related. ²Knowledge is a result of revelation and induces only thought. ³Perception involves the body even in its most spiritualized form. ⁴Knowledge comes from the altar within and is timeless because it is certain. ⁵To perceive the truth is not the same as *knowing* it. ⁶This is why students may have so much trouble with integrating this course. ⁷The tentative perception of some is too uncertain for knowledge, because knowledge is *sure*. ⁸The perception of others is so variable that they swing from sudden but real knowledge to complete cognitive disorganization.⁶

Perception is closely related to miracles and doing (9:1) “Knowledge...induces only thought” (9:2). Knowledge comes from revelation; it comes from the altar within (9:2,4). It does not come from terrestrial learning or anything external.

Knowledge is “timeless” (9:4) and therefore seems to be unrelated to anything within time. It does not lead to doing of any kind. If I know you, that knowledge does not necessitate any action on my part; it does not guide my actions in regard to you. Knowledge operates on a deeper level than that, more of a mental level than physical. Knowledge guides my thinking about you (8:9). It induces my mind to mentally extend and join with yours, recognizing you as part of my Self.

If we are talking about actions or doing, we are talking about perception (8:7; 9:1). We are talking about what bodies do, even when it involves the “most spiritualized” form of perception (9:3). Perceiving the truth isn’t the same as knowing it (9:5). We do not act “on the basis of knowledge” (8:8), not knowledge in the sense the Course understands it. We act on the basis of our perceptions. Everything here, in this world, is about coming to a correct perception. When we know, there is no need to act at all!

I don’t think this means that when we come to full knowledge, all action ceases. The two just aren’t related. Action is something related to the physical realm of bodies; it is guided by perception, whether true or false. Knowledge simply does not have anything to do with doing. Knowledge exists even when all perception and all action ceases.

⁶ “Cognitive disorganization” refers to distractibility, difficulty in concentrating, and a tendency for thoughts to become derailed and tangential. This disorganized thought shows up in disorganized speech. The reference to two types of people here—those who are too uncertain for knowledge and those who swing from genuine knowledge to cognitive disorganization—originally referred to Bill and Helen, respectively.

Paragraph 10

10 If you attack another's error, you will hurt yourself. ²You do not *recognize* him when you attack. ³Attack is always made on a stranger. ⁴You are making him a stranger by misperceiving him, so that you cannot know him. ⁵It is because you have made him into a stranger that you are afraid of him. ⁶What is he to you? ⁷He is *your brother*. ⁸What else do you need to know? ⁹But *do* know that. ¹⁰This is not a matter of perception but a fact. ¹¹Perceive him correctly, so that you can know him. ¹²The prayer for the miracle is:

¹³*Jesus, help me see my brother [name] as he really is, and thus release both him and me.*

¹⁴Anytime there is anything unloving that crosses your mind,⁷ you should immediately recognize that you do not want to hurt your brother.

The first part of this paragraph immediately followed the material I quoted above from the Urtext. You can see how it relates to Bill's irritation and Helen's fury.

So many of our relationships are peppered with attacks and counterattacks. Attacking someone for their errors hurts *us* (10:1). We are misperceiving them and do not know the truth about them when we do (10:2). When we misperceive someone, we do not know who they really are, so they become a stranger to us. We can't attack anyone unless we see them as a stranger (10:2–4). When we make someone into a stranger, we fear them (10:5).

As we'll read in a moment, "There are no strangers in God's creation" (T-3.V.12:1 (CE)). Properly perceived, *no one* is a stranger to us. As Valerie Kaur has written, "You are a part of me I do not yet know."⁸ We must realize that everyone is our brother or sister (10:6–7). There is *nothing else* we need to know about them (10:8), but this one thing we *must* know (10:9). It's a *fact*, not a *perception* (10:10).

If we perceive another correctly, we will see no stranger. We will *know* them. We'll see a brother or sister who is part of us, someone without whom we cannot go to God (see Song of Prayer, "I cannot go without you, for you are a part of me" (S-1.V.3:9).

Then, he suggests a prayer that will enable a miracle to happen:

Jesus, help me see my brother [name] as he really is, and thus release both him and me.

We need to remember clearly that Jesus is not asking us to see our brother as better than he is. He is asking us to see him "as he really is." When we judge another's errors or hold attack thoughts about them, *what we are seeing is the falsehood*. The truth is their perfect innocence. He then adds: "Anytime there is anything unloving that crosses your mind, you should immediately recognize that you do not want to hurt your brother"

⁷ Helen originally inserted this parenthetical remark at this point: "(re sex, possession, etc.)." This referred to inappropriate sexual attraction and (most likely) desire to possess another sexually, in addition to anything else unloving that crosses your mind.

⁸ See *No Stranger*, Valerie Kaur, One World Publisher, 2020, Page 7

(10:14). Our thoughts about them should be loving no matter what their behavior. In these times of political unrest and division, this may seem difficult. Praying this prayer, asking Jesus's help to see that difficult person *as they really are*, is a good one to memorize.

Paragraph 11

11 Right perception is necessary before God can communicate directly to His Own altars, which He has established in His Sons. ²There He can communicate His certainty, and His knowledge will bring the peace *without* question. ³God is not a stranger to His Own Sons, and His Sons are not strangers to each other. ⁴Knowledge preceded both perception and time, and will also ultimately replace (or correct for) them. ⁵This is the real meaning of the biblical account of God as “Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end.”⁹ ⁶It also explains the quotation “Before Abraham was, I am.”¹⁰ ⁷Perception can and must be stabilized, but knowledge *is* stable. ⁸“Fear God and keep His commandments” is a real scribal error.¹¹ ⁹It should read, “*Know* God and accept His certainty.” ¹⁰This error is why the commandments are almost all negative, in contrast to my statement: “Thou shalt love.”¹²

To get the most from a paragraph like this one, which is filled with seemingly arcane, abstruse and esoteric statements, we need to sit with it and chew on it for a while. What possible significance to me is the fact that right perception is necessary in order for God to communicate directly to His altars, which He established in us all? (11:1) Why should I care about this at all?

Let me ask myself: Does having God communicate to *me* matter to me? Of course it does--it matters a lot. In that holy place within, God “can communicate His certainty, and His knowledge will bring peace without question” (11:2). Naturally, that is something I greatly desire. Then, if right perception has to come before such communication can take place, the gaining of right perception becomes equally important to me. The last para-

⁹ Revelation 21:6 (KJV): “And he said unto me, It is done. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end.” The Course’s usage of this means that God’s knowledge of His Sons was there in the beginning, before time, and will be there after time is done.

¹⁰ John 8:58 (RSV): “Jesus said to them, ‘Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I am.’” Here this seems to mean, “Before time was, knowledge is.”

¹¹ Ecclesiastes 12:13 (KJV): “Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man.”

¹² Mark 12:29-31 (KJV): “And Jesus answered him, The first of all the commandments is, Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God is one Lord: And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment. And the second is like, namely this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these.” Jesus’ point about the Ten Commandments seems to be that their largely “negative” quality (in that they are mostly prohibitions *against* certain behaviors) comes from the error of viewing God as fearful.

graph showed me that to perceive truly is to love. Therefore, loving those around me is the way I can prepare myself for communion with God.

If God and our brothers are not strangers to us (11:3), we must already know them; we have just forgotten. We had knowledge in the beginning; we will regain knowledge after perception and time are past (11:4). When Jesus said, “Before Abraham was I am” (11:6), quoting John 8:58), and “I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending” (11:5) (quoting Revelation 1:8), he laid claim to an existence preceding and following time. “Before Abraham was” (past tense) “I am” (present tense). He had reconnected with knowledge, which is timeless, and his doing so was the forerunner of *our* doing the same. “Knowledge is stable” (11:7); that is, it has never faltered or failed; knowledge has persisted. “I am”; knowledge is. Therefore, knowledge is now. Time is, as Joel Goldsmith called it, a “parenthesis in eternity.” Time is a state in which knowledge has been temporarily forgotten, covered over with falsehood, but never lost. Misperception has obscured it, and must be cleared up in order for knowledge to return again to our awareness.

Thus, in a correction to a verse from the Hebrew Scriptures, “Fear God and keep His commandments” (Ecclesiastes 12:3), which is how a separated being starts out relating to a distant God who seems like a stranger, becomes “Know God and accept His certainty” (11:8–9). While misperception rules, we fear God and cannot know Him. While misperception rules, we relate to God externally, governed by rules or commandments, and always unsure of where we stand. But when true perception comes, fear becomes knowledge, separation becomes union, and the ever-anxious attitude of the rule-keeper becomes the settled certainty of God’s own Being. Jesus’s “command” is, “Thou shalt love” (11:10).

The reference to “all the commandments” likely refers to what we call “the Ten Commandments,” most of which begin with the words “Thou shalt not.” A book I read recently, *The Gospel of Mary Magdalene*, by Jean-Yves Leloup, turns all these into positive statements. He simply changes “Thou shalt not” to variations of “You are free to.” For example:

You are free to have no other gods before me.

You can refrain from vain utterances of my name.

You may refrain from killing.

Paragraph 12

¹² There are no strangers in God’s creation. ²To create as He created, you can create only what you know and accept as yours. ³God knows His children with perfect certainty. ⁴He created them *by* knowing them. ⁵He recognizes them perfectly. ⁶When they do not recognize each other, they do not recognize Him. ⁷Brothers can misperceive one another, but they rarely maintain that they do not know each other. ⁸This is possible only if they maintain that they are not really brothers.

“Thou shalt love.” “There are no strangers in God’s creation” (12:1). This seemingly abstract discussion has suddenly gotten disturbingly practical and down-to-earth. The upshot of this whole dissertation about perception versus knowledge is, “Don’t attack error in your brother!” Yikes! How can it apply like this? Because, as we’ve seen, true perception equals loving. I can’t be attacking my brother for his errors and loving him at the same time, so if I want to perceive him correctly in order to know him (7:6), I have to stop “correcting” him and start loving him.

I don’t think this means I play “see no evil” and deny the reality or the severity of my brother’s mistakes. But I see them as mistakes, not as sins. I do not attack him. I do not condemn him. I do not make a stranger out of him because “there are no strangers in God’s creation” (12:1). I continue to see him as a holy child of God and worthy of my love. I believe in him, I see the reality of him, and I do not focus on the shabby covering of mistakes in which he has attempted to hide.

We must come to *know* one another and to accept each other as belonging to us. You belong to me; and I belong to you. We are one. God knows us as we are (12:3). God *created* us by knowing us (12:4). We acknowledge His creation when we know one another as God’s children (12:2). When we fail to recognize one another as God’s creations, we are failing to recognize God Himself (12:6). But, right now, the bottom line is that the only way to achieve *knowledge* of one another is to heal our *perceptions* of one another.

We can misperceive our brothers, but we mistake our perception for *knowing*. Rarely do we realize that our misperception isn’t knowing (12:7). We go around believing that we know people we judge and condemn. If we *do* claim we don’t know someone, we must be maintaining that we are not really brothers (12:8). Since we *are* all brothers (or sisters), all one with one another, the only way to avoid loving everyone is either to judge them and claim falsely that we know them, or to judge them, claiming not to know them, and *denying* that we are brothers. When we *know* one another, we recognize one another as part of us; there is no subject and object, no division, just oneness.

When we recognize our oneness, uncertainty is gone. With all uncertainty gone, all our difficulties are gone as well. “All of your difficulties ultimately stem from the fact that you do not recognize, or know, yourself, your brother, or God” (T-3.V.3:1 (CE)).

Let me attempt to summarize the main point I see in this section. It begins speaking about the difference between perception and knowledge. It then states what I think is the whole point of the section: “You must get your perceptions straightened out before you can *know* anything” (1:4). Later in the Text, Jesus will say flatly,

“Knowledge is not the motivation factor for learning this course. *Peace* is. As the prerequisite for knowledge, peace must be learned” (T-8.I.1:5–7 (CE)).

Once we *know* someone we will love them. That cannot happen in the ultimate sense until we *perceive* them as they are. This entails forgiving all their faults and recognizing that they are part of us, perfect creations of a loving Creator.

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 In the Notes, this quote is ascribed to the Bible, which is incorrect. It actually comes from ancient Greece and was inscribed in the forecourt of the Temple of Apollo at Delphi.