

Commentary

ACIM[®] Text (CE)

T-3.VII, Beyond Perception

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 discussion of perception that runs through the entire chapter continues with a section about what lies beyond the world of perception: the perfectly worthy creation of God.

Paragraph 1

We said before that the abilities which you possess are only shadows of your true strengths.¹ ²The spirit's true functions are knowing, loving, and creating. ³The intrusion of the ability to perceive, which is inherently judgmental, was introduced only after the separation. ⁴No one has been sure of anything since then. ⁵You will also remember that I made it very clear that the resurrection was the return to knowledge, which was accomplished by the union of my will with the Father's.²

Jesus begins by briefly reviewing several points he has discussed previously (1:1 and 1:5). He reminds us that our present abilities are “only shadows” of our real strength (compare with T-3.VI.1:1). Sentence 2, not in the FIP, names our real strengths, of which our present abilities are only shadows: knowing, loving, and creating. He reiterates that one of those present abilities, perception, which we have seen is a shadow of our *creative* power, only came into being after the separation (see T-3.VI.2:1), and adds that perception is inherently judgmental. He said earlier that perception involves *interpretation*, but he had not specifically connected it to *judgment*, although that is quite a logical step, since interpretation *requires* judgment. That is the connection he uses, in fact, later in this section (T-3.V.7:7–8 (FIP), T-3.VII.12:3–4 (CE)).

¹ T-3.VI.1:1: “Most of the abilities you now possess are only shadows of your real strengths.”

² T-3.VI.16:6-7: “I demonstrated both the powerlessness of the body and the power of the mind. By uniting my will with that of my Creator, I brought His light back into my mind, which naturally remembered the spirit and its own real purpose.”

He goes on to remind us that perception is always uncertain (1:4). Then, referring to the previous section of the chapter, he reminds us that the resurrection (not the crucifixion) is “the means for return to knowledge” (1:5). He has not previously connected the resurrection and knowledge. Finally, he states that this return to knowledge “was accomplished by the union of my will with the Father’s” (1:5). That was a point he made in the previous section as well (T-3.VI.16:6-7), and seems to refer not just to his willingness to go through the crucifixion if necessary, but to the general recognition that he wanted only what God wanted in all things.

What do all these random points have to do with one another? It may not be clear just yet. By laying this groundwork, he can establish a distinction that will clarify some later statements. In other words, he is about to make use of these various points to support another point, a distinction he feels will make what he has to say easier for us to understand. That distinction, as he will state in the next paragraph, is the one between the words “make” and “create.”

Paragraph 2

² Since the separation, the words “create” and “make” are inevitably confused. ²When you make something, you make it first out of a sense of lack or need, and second out of a something that already exists. ³Anything that is made is made for a specific purpose. ⁴It has no true generalizability. ⁵When you make something to fill a perceived lack—which is obviously why you would make anything—you are tacitly implying that you believe in the separation. ⁶Knowing does not lead to doing, as we have frequently observed already.³

Jesus says that having covered these earlier points, he can now really nail down the difference between “create” and “make,” two words that have come to mean the same thing to us, but which in reality are very different (2:1). This is by no means the first time he has made this distinction. In fact, in the sub-section, “Special Principles for Miracle Workers,” he spelled it out quite clearly, called it “essential,” and said it was the foundation of all healing!

A clear distinction between what is created and what is made is essential. All forms of healing rest on this *fundamental* correction in level perception. (T-2.V(A).12 (FIP), T-3.II.2:1–2 (CE))

Although he has stated the principle before, he has not really explained it in any depth. We might ask, “If it is essential to make a clear distinction between ‘make’ and ‘create,’ then what *is* the difference?” That is what he is setting out to tell us now.

³ T-3.V.4:5-6: “Action must occur in time. Knowledge is timeless.” T-3.V.8:8-9: “When you say you are acting on the basis of sure knowledge, you are really confusing perception and knowledge. Knowledge brings mental strength for creative thinking but not for right doing.” T-3.VI.14:6: “We have already emphasized the fact that knowing does not do anything.”

He begins by discussing “making.” First, the *breeding ground* of making is “a specific sense of lack or need” (2:2). Earlier he told us that the key difference between what we make and what we create is that lack, or need, is very apparent in everything we make, while God’s creation contains no lack whatsoever (T-1.VI.1:3–4 (FIP), T-1.I.19 (CE)). But here he is saying that making *arises from* the perception of a specific need or lack. We perceive lack someplace, and our minds make something to fill that empty space. We made perception itself to fill the lack left by the apparent absence of knowledge. We made the body because we needed a perceiver and a tool with which to perceive. We made a post-separation self because we had lost sight of our true Identity with God.

When you make something for a specific purpose, it can’t be generalized for other uses (2:3–4). If I need a hat to keep my head warm, I can’t use the hat to keep my feet warm at night. I can’t eat it to fill my hunger. I can’t use it to dig up my garden. A hat fills a specific need. While this seems obvious and, at first glance, a meaningless observation—Who cares if I can’t use my hat to hoe the garden?—it says something about the whole sphere of “things made.” Every such thing implies “that you believe in separation” (2:5), because you see one need here filled by one tool, and another—separate!—need over here, filled by another separate tool. The entire physical universe, then, and everything in it, constantly bears witness to separation as the truth.

He also adds that, secondarily, we always “make” something out of something that already exists (2:2). In other words, nothing new is created. To use a favorite word of the home makeover TV shows, an existing something is “repurposed.”

The Course later (T-4.IV, although the FIP includes it in this paragraph) broadens the scope of “things made” from physical objects to *thought systems*; it says we have invented many ingenious thought systems to fill perceived lacks. We have developed many schools of psychology, philosophy, and even science in an attempt to explain the universe, to make sense of our place in the scheme of things, or just to cope and get by without going nuts while still leaving God out of the picture. That is what I think Jesus is referring to. Some of these thought systems are quite ingenious, but none of them is creative, and no matter how ingenious they may be, in the end they are wasted effort. That is quite a harsh judgment on what many people consider to be their life work! Yet, if this world is actually an illusion that will simply cease to exist when all minds return to Christ, it must be true. These thought systems are huge, complex, ingenious efforts to explain and to control something which, in the final analysis, does not really exist at all. No effort could possibly be more wasted than that. And that is what all of our “making” is, in the end—wasted effort, attempts to “fill a perceived lack” (2:5) when no lack exists anywhere in God’s creation.

Sometimes we may feel in awe of mankind’s inventiveness and ingenuity to “make” things. I know I sometimes feel that way, even in looking at things like the George Washington Bridge, the Manhattan skyline, the Internet, jet air travel, or doctors who reattach severed arms. But this level of inventiveness and ingenuity is *nothing* compared to “the abstract creativity of God’s creations” (T-4.IV.13:4 (CE)). In other words (here’s

one of those earlier principles), our present abilities are only shadows of our real strength. Creation is *far beyond* any of these things.

Paragraph 3

3 Earlier, the miracle was associated with perception and not with knowing.⁴ ²However, we also noted that prayer is the medium of miracles and also the natural communication of the Creator and the created.⁵ ³At root, prayer is always an affirmation of knowledge, not of accurate perception. ⁴That is why unless perception has entered into it, it calls on revelation.

Now Jesus draws in a second principle he established earlier: the miracle is associated with perception and not with knowing (3:1). Prayer, however, *is* associated with miracles. It is “the medium of miracles and also the natural communication of the Creator and created” (3:2). Prayer, then, “is always an affirmation of knowledge” (3:3). This supports the whole idea of affirmative prayer as it is taught in New Thought. I affirmative prayer, instead of asking God to intervene in our lives, we affirm the truth about ourselves and God. Such prayer “calls on revelation” (3:4). If our perception rather than revelation is what prompts our prayers, they will be entreating rather than affirming the truth.

Paragraph 4

4 The confusion between your own creation and what you make is so profound that it has literally become impossible to know anything, because knowledge is always stable. ²It is quite evident that you are not. ³Nevertheless, you are perfectly stable as God created you. ⁴In this sense, when your behavior is unstable, you are obviously disagreeing with God’s idea of the creation. ⁵This is a fundamental right of yours, although not one you would care to exercise if you were in your right mind.

We are profoundly confused about ourselves as God created us and what we have made (4:1). The most significant thing we have made, every one of us, is our post-separation self, or what we have *made of ourselves*. Our self-image is constantly changing⁶; what God creates, knowledge, is entirely stable. The self we have made and then identified with is a self that is incompatible with knowledge. What keeps us from knowledge is that unstable self (4:2); what will restore knowledge is abandoning the self we have made and re-identifying with the Self God created (the Christ), which *is* compatible with knowledge (4:3). That abandonment of the made self and the assumption of the created Self is what was depicted in Jesus’ death and resurrection. Thus, the word

⁴ T-3.V.3:6: “The miracle is a way of perceiving, not a way of knowing.”

⁵ T-1.11.1:1-3: “Prayer is the medium of miracles. Prayer is the natural communication between the created and the Creator. Through prayer love is received, and through miracles love is expressed.”

⁶ See W-pl.186.8:3-5 (FIP) and W-pl.152.5:1-3 (FIP).

resurrection in the Course means the mind's reawakening in transcending the ego and identifying with the Christ (T-6.I.7:1–2 (FIP), (T-6.I.13:1–2 (CE); T-11.VI.1:6 (FIP), (T-11.VII.1:6 (CE)) and it is this that secures our return to knowledge (1:3). In Unity's *Metaphysical Bible Dictionary*, Charles Fillmore wrote, "The resurrection is the lifting up of the whole man into the [Christ consciousness](#)," which is saying much the same thing, although Fillmore includes the body as part of what is lifted up and made immortal.

What follows in this and the next couple of paragraphs is a series of contrasts between knowledge and the "made self" we imagine we are, showing how completely incompatible they are. First, the stability of knowledge is contrasted with the instability of our self, and our unstable behavior (4:2–4). Therefore, as long as we identify with this unstable self, we cannot truly know anything.

Our Self as created by God is "perfectly stable," however (4:3). We may choose to behave unstably, but doing so implicitly denies God's idea of our creation (4:4). Unstable behavior would be impossible if we accepted ourselves as perfectly stable! It might be useful to remember this the next time you catch yourself behaving in any unstable way. "This does not reflect the reality of my being as God created me."

As God created us we have "a fundamental right" to disagree with God's idea of creation. God does not force anything on us. He gave us free will, and that is what enabled us to make an illusion of separation from God. If that choice were *impossible* for us, we would not have free will. If we were in our right minds, however, this choice would never be one we would make (4:5). This is why Jesus says:

"If you want to be like me, I will help you, knowing that we *are* alike. If you want to be different, I will wait until you change your mind. I can teach you, but only you can choose to listen to my teaching" (T-8.III.10:1–3 (CE)).

Paragraph 5

5 The problem that is bothering you most is the fundamental question which you continually ask of yourself, but which cannot properly be directed to yourself at all. ²You keep on asking yourself what you are. ³This implies that the answer is not only one which you know, but one which is up to you. ⁴The first part of this statement is perfectly true, but the second part is not. ⁵We have frequently commented on the absolute necessity of correcting all fallacious thinking which associates you in any way with your own creation.⁷

⁷ T-1.48.3:6: "You were *not* created by your own free will." T-2.II.10:1: "Fourth, the idea has entered that since you can create yourself, the direction of your own creation is up to you." T-2.XI.22:1: "One of the chief ways in which you can correct your own magic-miracle confusion is to remember that you did not create yourself." T-2.XIII.8:1: "Your own final judgment cannot be directed toward yourself, because you are not your own creation."

We keep asking, “What am I?” (5:2). The problem is that we are asking in the wrong place (5:1). We ask this question of ourselves. (Here, I think Jesus means that we are asking our “little self” or our “post-separation self” because he depicts this self trying to perceive who we are, and perception is a post-separation ability.) We ask ourselves as if we knew the answer and were responsible for supplying it (5:3). In fact, we *do* know the answer, yet the content of that answer is not up to us (5:4). What we are was given by God, not by us, something the Course has “frequently commented on” (5:5).

Paragraph 6

6 You *cannot* perceive yourself correctly. ²You have no image at all. ³The word “image” is always perception-related and is not a product of knowing. ⁴Images are symbolic, and stand for something else. ⁵The current emphasis on “changing your image” is a good description of the power of perception, but it implies that there is nothing to *know*.

While we actually do know the answer, we’re still off base because we are trying to find it by means of perception, something that never leads to knowledge (6:1). We cannot perceive our true Self, because that Self has “no image at all” that can be perceived (6:2). Images are all that perception sees. They are symbols that stand for something else. The Self lies beyond perception, beyond symbols (6:3–4). Therefore, when we ask our “self” this question, we are not asking for the answer in the right place (5:1). In fact, we don’t need to ask the question at all!

To even ask the question, “What am I?” implies a changeable self. People talk all the time about changing their image, improving how people see them. Perception has that power, but it implies that there is nothing stable and unchangeable about the Self (6:5). So the correction for the mistake we are making isn’t to ask our question in the right place, or of the right source; the answer is to *stop asking the question*, and to simply *know* who we are. It isn’t a matter of changing our self-image, which implies a non-stable self, which is inconsistent with the reality of God’s creation (6:5)). The solution entails transcending the changing, questioning self entirely, and awakening to the Self that knows Itself.

If this does not seem very clear to you, I apologize. It is very hard to make clear, even when you’ve had a taste of what it is talking about. There have been moments—regretfully, fairly few and fairly brief—when I simply *knew* Who I was. I was suffused with joy, even with laughter at the usual snarl of my anguished thoughts. And in those moments of startling clarity, I knew that what I was experiencing was always the truth and had always been the truth; there had never been an instant when I was not this holy Son of God. I did not *attain* this knowledge. In those moments of clarity I have known that I always have this knowledge; I always know it but, outside of those moments of clarity, I block this knowledge from awareness. Still, it is always there.

We are not, therefore, seeking knowledge we do not have. We are attempting to turn away from the false perception of what we are, so that the reality of our Self can arise and become known again. It is a “return to” knowledge, not a new discovery.

I rather like the way Ken Wilber puts it. He says that when we wake up, the truth is “obvious”:

“Virtually everybody who has a genuine Waking Up experience feels that they are directly and profoundly connected to an eternal, absolute, all-pervading, all-inclusive Reality, which is felt not only as a Waking Up to Reality but also as a “Coming Home,” since this is where they truly belong and always have belonged. This Reality is a supreme Identity that is always already the case, timeless, ever-present, eternal. This fact hits them smack in their Original Face—and they know it.” (Wilber, Ken. *Finding Radical Wholeness: The Integral Path to Unity, Growth, and Delight* (p. 34). Shambhala. Kindle Edition.)

“You are always already enlightened, but you still have to recognize that fact.” (Wilber, Ken. *Finding Radical Wholeness: The Integral Path to Unity, Growth, and Delight* (p. 30). Shambhala. Kindle Edition.)

Paragraph 7

7 Prayer is the medium of miracles not because God created perceptions, but because God created *you*.²At the beginning of this course, we said that you are a miracle.⁸ ³Therefore, the miracle worker is a miracle not of his own creation. ⁴Unless perception rests on some knowing basis, it is so unstable that it doesn't mean anything. ⁵Knowing is not open to interpretation, because its meaning is its own. ⁶It is possible to interpret meaning, but this is always open to error because it involves the perception of meaning. ⁷All of these wholly needless complexities are the result of your attempt to regard yourself as both separated and unseparated at the same time.⁹ ⁸It is impossible to undertake a confusion as fundamental as this without engaging in further confusion.

Here again, Jesus connects prayer to creation, not perception. God did not create perception, he created *you* (7:1). Affirmative prayer recognizes the truth of God's creation. *You are the miracle* that God created (7:2–3). When the Course speaks of true perception it is referring to perception that is based upon “some knowing basis.” Short of this, perception “doesn't mean anything” (7:4).

We are used to the idea that everything we think we know is uncertain and open to interpretation or revision. When the Course talks about *knowledge* it is talking about something that is utterly unquestionable and “not open to interpretation” (7:5). As Wilber says, it is “obvious.” He adds that “the experience itself is what counts—and the experience itself is ‘not disputable.’”

⁸. T-1.23.2:1: “*You* are a miracle.”

⁹. In other words, thinking that through *interpretation* (which implies you are separated) you can arrive at real *knowing* (which implies you are unseparated) is “to regard yourself as both separated and unseparated at the same time.”

The last paragraph pointed out that the true Self cannot be perceived, and that any self we *perceive* is subject to our interpretation, changeable, and therefore, not the true Self. This paragraph expands on the negative aspects of interpretation, from which knowledge is completely free (7:5). In a return to an earlier theme of inventiveness, the gist of this paragraph's message is that ingenious thinking, used to interpret the meaning of ourselves and of our world, is *not* the path to knowledge.

All interpretations, like all perceptions, are prone to error, because interpreting the meaning of *anything* produces only a “*perception of meaning*” (7:6). When I attempt to analyze the nature of my own self, even if I try to include the concept of non-separation from God, I am doing my thinking from a separated viewpoint; I am a separate individual trying to understand non-separation. The result can only be more confusion (7:7–8). Trying to figure out the nature of the Self simply cannot work.

As many teachers of non-dualism have pointed out, the Self cannot see itself. They speak of the waking up experience as “having no head.” If you are the subject perceiving some object, you are not that object. The reality is that there is nothing outside to be seen, nothing outside your mind. Your perceptions are thoughts in your mind. *Whatever I can perceive is not me*. The Self can only be known by direct experience.

Speaking of someone who identifies as an ago, the Course says:

He always perceives this world as outside himself, for this is crucial to his adjustment. ⁷He does not realize that he makes this world, for there is no world outside him. (T-12.VI.1:6–7 (CE))

Paragraph 8

8 Methodologically, your mind has been very creative.¹⁰ ²But, as always occurs when method and content are separated, it has not been utilized for anything but an attempt to escape a fundamental and entirely inescapable impasse. ³This kind of thinking cannot result in a creative outcome, though it has resulted in considerable ingenuity. ⁴It is noteworthy, however, that this ingenuity has almost totally divorced you from knowledge. ⁵Knowledge does not require ingenuity at all. ⁶When we say “the truth shall set you free,”¹¹ we mean that all this kind of thinking is a waste of time, but that you are free of the need of engaging in it.

Our minds have been “very creative” in the sense of being clever or using “considerable ingenuity” (8:1,3). We’ve set ourselves up in a paradoxical situation, trying to teach ourselves that we are not what we are, but we are something we cannot be. Our ingenuity has been wasted on an attempt to escape from this “entirely inescapable paradox” (8:2).

¹⁰ To say that our minds have been “methodologically...very creative” means that the method or way in which we have pursued our ends has employed “considerable ingenuity” (see third sentence), but we have not devoted that ingenuity to pursuing a truly useful end.

¹¹ John 8:32 (NIV): “Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.”

This effort “cannot result in a creative outcome” (8:3). It has succeeded only in almost totally divorcing us from knowledge (8:4).

But to know the Self does not require ingenuity (8:5). Clever thinking won’t get us there. And we can actually be free of the need to engage in ingenious thinking when we become willing to let it go (8:6)). That implies that the only reason we seem to need ingenious thinking is because we *want* to engage in it. It makes us feel clever, but doesn’t really accomplish anything useful. I do not, however, think this intends to totally disparage thinking. The Course, in many places, encourages us to use our minds constructively. For instance, read W-rIII.in.5–7, where the mind is called “the Holy Spirit’s chosen means for your salvation.” What is belittled here is the *misuse* of mind, engaging it in a “futile attempt to escape” from the paradox we’ve set up. We are trying to figure out a way to have our cake and eat it, too—to hold on to the separated self, and yet to still be one with God. That is simply impossible.

Paragraph 9

9 Note again that the functions of the spirit were not referred to as abilities.¹² ²This point requires clarification, because abilities are beliefs which are based on the scarcity fallacy, since an ability does not mean anything apart from comparisons to the ability as it appears in others. ³Nobody has none of an ability, and nobody has all of it. ⁴That is, of course, why the bell curve never rests on the line. ⁵This relativity of abilities demonstrates that abilities are not functions of the spirit. ⁶The spirit’s functions are not relative. ⁷They are absolute. ⁸They are *of* God and *in* God, and therefore God-like.

Back in Paragraph 1 we read:

We said before that the abilities which you possess are only shadows of your true strengths. The spirit’s true functions are knowing, loving, and creating.

Jesus points out that the *functions* of our spiritual Self are knowing, loving, and creating. They are not “abilities” but “functions” (9:1). He wants now to make this clearer. This seems to be an effort to further distinguish any concept of self we may have from our True Self. Separated selves have abilities. Abilities “are beliefs which are *based* on the scarcity fallacy” (9:2). The evidence of this is that we can compare the ability of one person to the ability of another. The Olympics are a contest of comparison of abilities. A few people can run a mile in four minutes. That’s an ability most of us don’t have. “An ability does not mean anything apart from comparisons to the ability as it appears in others” (9:2). Some people can get a gold medal; some people cannot even *walk* a mile. Nobody has all of an ability, and no one has none of it (9:3).

Abilities are relative, which proves they are not functions of spirit (9:5). Spirit’s functions (knowing, loving, and creating) are not relative; they are absolute (9:6–7). “They are *of* God and *in* God, and therefore God-like” (9:8).

¹² In T-3.VI.1:1-2 and T-3.VII.1:1-2, they were referred to as “strengths” and “functions.”

So what's the point? I think it is that the True Self is very different from the little self. As separate beings we have abilities, more of some and less of others. As our True Self we have absolute, totally equal, God-like functions. They cannot be perceived but can be known. They cannot be *acquired* because we all have them already, in their fullness. We always have had them and we always will.

Ken Wilber talks of multiple intelligences, which are different abilities. He speaks of “cognitive intelligence, . . . emotional intelligence, moral intelligence, musical intelligence, intrapersonal intelligence, mathematical intelligence, verbal intelligence, aesthetic intelligence, and something called ‘spiritual intelligence.’” These seem like abilities to me. Clearly, some people have more cognitive ability than others. Some have more mathematical ability than others. I don't think what the Course says negates any of this. Rather, I think that as spiritual beings we possess *all* of these intelligences, and *equally*, to the max. We all have, ultimately, the musical genius of a Mozart or Beethoven. We all have the cognitive ability of an Einstein, the verbal intelligence of a Shakespeare, and so on.

Paragraph 10

10 Prayer is a way of asking for something. ²When we said that prayer is the medium of miracles, we also said that the only meaningful prayer is for forgiveness, because those who have been forgiven *have everything*.¹³
³Once forgiveness has been accepted, prayer in the usual sense becomes utterly without meaning. ⁴Essentially, a prayer for forgiveness is nothing more than a request that we may be able to recognize something we already have.

Instead of ingenious thought, we need to pray for forgiveness—which, in the marvelously idiosyncratic way the Course has of defining things, praying for forgiveness simply means to “request that you may be able to recognize what you already have” (10:4). We cease trying to figure things out or to attain to some state of knowledge currently beyond us. Instead, we ask for help in recognizing what we already are and already have. Again, Wilber has an intriguing way of saying much the same thing:

“...there is nothing you can do to achieve Waking Up, Enlightenment, or Liberation because it is always already completely present right now, and you can't achieve something that already is (attaining Enlightenment makes no more sense than attaining your lungs or acquiring your feet).”
(Wilber, Ken. *Finding Radical Wholeness: The Integral Path to Unity, Growth, and Delight* (p. 13).

A miracle enables us to recognize what we already have, and “...prayer is the medium of miracles” (10:2). Prayer is the way we access miracles. We pray for the ability to recognize that which is always so. Forgiveness makes that recognition possible

¹³ T-1.11.1:1: “Prayer is the medium of miracles.” T-1.26.3:2: “The only thing you should pray for is forgiveness.” T-1.26.4:2: “When you have been forgiven, you have everything else.”

because it removes what is blocking that recognition. “Essentially, a prayer for forgiveness is nothing more than a request that we may be able to recognize something we already have” (10:4).

When I realize that there is no sin and that what I thought was sin has no consequences (W-101.6:7), I realize that I am still joined in eternal union with God. I have everything (10:2) because I have God, Who *is* everything. That totally wipes out any need for “prayer in the usual sense” (10:3) of asking for things. Why would anyone who *has* everything need to *ask for* anything?

Paragraph 11

11 In electing the ability to perceive instead of the will to know, you placed yourself in a position where you could resemble your Father only by perceiving miraculously. ²But you lost the knowledge that you *yourself* are a miracle. ³Miraculous creation was your own source, and also your own real function. ⁴“God created man in His Own image and likeness” is correct in meaning, but the words are open to considerable misinterpretation.¹⁴ ⁵This is avoided, however, if “image” is understood to mean “thought,” and “likeness” is taken as “of a like quality.” ⁶God *did* create the Son in His Own thought and of a quality like to His Own. ⁷There *is* nothing else.

When I chose to perceive instead of to know (which I chose when I chose separation (11:1), I have lost the knowledge of my true Self, a miracle of which Creation is the only Source and the only function (11:2–3). To reconnect with that knowledge, I must first *perceive* miraculously (11:1). My false perception must be taken out of the way, allowing the truth to return to me.

"Those who seek the light are merely covering their eyes. The light is in them now. Enlightenment is but a recognition, not a change at all" (W-188.1:2-4).

The Course teaches that because we rejected knowledge in favor of perception, we must change our false perception to *true* perception (which takes a miracle) before knowledge can be restored to our minds. This implies that instead of struggling and seeking to find enlightenment (direct knowledge of God), we should focus on transforming our perceptions. This is what the early lessons in the Workbook do.

Humankind was created in God's image and likeness, that is, in His Thought and of a quality like to His Own (11:4–6). Then follows the line: “There *is* nothing else.” God, and God's extension in creation, is all that exists. In creation, *everything* is “of a quality like to His Own” (11:5) and therefore perfectly equal and without any difference. It is a condition of perfect oneness.

¹⁴ Genesis 1:26 (KJV): “And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness.” Jesus' issue with the words “image” and “likeness” is they suggest that God made man in a visible form that resembled His Own. Yet Jesus has just said, “You have no image at all” (T-3.VII.6:2).

Paragraph 12

12 Perception is impossible without a belief in “more” and “less.”
²Unless perception at every level involves selectivity, it is incapable of organization. ³In all types of perception, there is a continual process of accepting and rejecting, of organizing and reorganizing, and of shifting and changing focus. ⁴Evaluation is an essential aspect of perception, because judgment *must* be made as the basis for selection. ⁵“Lack of lack” is a concept which is meaningless to a perceiver, because the ability to perceive at all *rests on* lack.

Perception, by contrast, *depends on* making distinctions. Something is “more” and something is “less” (12:1). Perception always organizes things using selectivity (12:2).

The very process of perception is one of judgment, of sorting things out and telling them apart from one another (12:3–4). When we perceive visually, for instance, our minds are sorting things out, focusing on one, making something foreground and something background, distinguishing colors, noticing boundaries and shapes—the whole process of perception *is* a series of judgments. And that entire process is completely inapplicable to the reality of creation, a realm of complete wholeness and oneness. In perception, everything is more or less than something else. Lack of some kind is essential to perception, and the very concept of “no lack” is inconceivable to it (12:5).

Paragraph 13

13 What happens to perceptions if there *are* no judgments, and there is nothing but perfect equality? ²Perception is automatically useless. ³Truth can only be *known*. ⁴All of it is equally true, and to know any part of it *is* to know all of it. ⁵Only perception involves partial awareness. ⁶Knowledge transcends all of the laws which govern perception. ⁷Partial knowledge is impossible. ⁸It is all one and has no separate parts (i.e., the parts have not separated). ⁹This *is* the real knowledge. ¹⁰You who are really one with it need but know yourself and your knowledge is complete. ¹¹To know God’s miracle is to know Him.

If the reality of creation is that everything is perfect equality, all of like quality with God, then judgments (which select between different things) become impossible (13:1). Since perception *depends on* judgment, then “perception becomes impossible” (13:2). Recall what we said earlier about existence without perception. We may find it hard to conceive of what it would be like to exist without perception, and may even find the thought frightening. Nevertheless, the Course is emphatic that there is a kind of awareness—here called *knowledge*—that bypasses perception entirely, and is vastly more satisfying and stable.

We can’t *perceive* truth; we can only *know* it (13:3). When we know any part of it, we know it all, because it is seamlessly one (13:4). Knowledge is not governed by any of the laws that define perception (13:6). This, too, is hard for us to grasp. I think I get a sense of it every time I notice that nearly any truth in the Course, if you think about it long

enough and carefully enough, will lead you to any other truth in the Course. Every part of it implies, and requires, every other part. “I am as God created me” implies “There is no sin.” “There is no sin” implies “I am the holy Son of God Himself.” “I am as God created me” also implies “There is no world.” Which implies “I am not a body.” And so on. But that is only a shadow, I think, of what is meant here. When we *know* any part of truth, we know it all. “It is all one and has no separate parts” (13:7–8).

Perception is like trying to describe the Grand Canyon in words. Knowledge is like opening your eyes and *being in the Grand Canyon*. And even that is a poor comparison.

Because truth is all one, if we know ourselves—or, I should say, our Self—we know God. We know everything (8:9–11). The idea that knowing God and knowing our Self are the same thing occurs more than once in the Course:

The recognition of God is the recognition of yourself. There is no separation of God and His creation (T-8.V.2:6–7 (FIP), T-8.IV.5:7–8 (CE)).

Paragraph 14

14 Forgiveness is the healing of the perception of separation. ²Correct perception of each other is necessary only because minds have willed to see themselves as separate beings. ³Each Son knows God completely. ⁴This is the miraculous power of the Son. ⁵The fact that each Son has this power completely is a fact which is entirely alien to human thinking, in which if any *one* has everything, there is nothing left. ⁶God’s miracles are as total as His thought, because they *are* His thoughts. ⁷God shines in them all with perfect light. ⁸If they recognize this light anywhere, they know it universally. ⁹Revelation cannot be explained, because it is knowledge. ¹⁰Revelation *happens*. ¹¹It is the only really natural happening, because it reflects the nature of God.

Benjamin Franklin, at the signing of the Declaration of Independence, is reported to have said, “We must indeed all hang together, or, most assuredly, we shall all hang separately.” What the Course is saying goes even deeper than *needing* to “hang together.” If forgiveness means that our perception of separation is healed (14:1), then for me to be healed, I *have to* perceive my brother as healed (14:2). If I can be healed and my brother can be *not* healed, then we are separate; and if I am seeing separation, I am not healed at all! Either we are all forgiven, or none of us is. Either we are all in God, or none of us is.

Each one of us “knows God completely” (14:3–4). Each one of us “has this power completely.” In the thinking of the world that is impossible because “if any *one* has everything, there is nothing *left*” (14:5) for the rest of us. But that isn’t how it works with God’s miracles and God’s Thoughts (14:6). They are all total. All of them include everything. Forgiveness is teaching us that we know God completely and have everything! God’s light shines in all of us (14:7). When we recognize that light anywhere—in ourselves, in a friend, in an enemy—we recognize it *universally* (14:8). It’s impossible to explain this revelation *because it is knowledge* (14:9). It simply *happens* (14:10). You don’t think your way to it. I cannot convince you of its truth. Knowledge is *revealed* to

you; it is an experience, not an explanation. And when it comes down to it, “It is the only *really* natural happening, because it reflects the nature of God” (14:11).

What a wonderful message! And how wonderful it is to share it with all of our brothers.

Let me, then, remember this the next time I encounter a situation needing forgiveness. How can I best communicate that there is no separation? How can I best impart the message to my brother and myself, the message that we both know God completely and have everything? What am I currently thinking or doing that contradicts that message? What perception must I relinquish so that knowledge of the Truth can dawn on me?

Paragraph 15

15 As long as perception lasts, prayer has a place. ²Since perception rests on lack, those who perceive have not totally accepted the Atonement and given over themselves to truth. ³Perception is a separated state, and the perceiver *does* need healing. ⁴Communion, not prayer, is the natural state of those who know.¹⁵ ⁵God and His miracles are inseparable.

Perception “rests on lack” (10:2). Therefore, anyone who perceives has not completely accepted the Atonement and has not totally accepted the truth—because in truth we lack nothing. If nothing else will rein in our spiritual snobbery, this teaching will! “Anyone who perceives at all needs healing” (10:3). That certainly includes most of us if not all..

Prayer is the medium of miracles, the means by which we receive healing; therefore, as long as we perceive we need healing, we need prayer (10:1). Needing prayer is not natural (10:4), but we are not in a natural state. Our natural state is one of *communion* with God and one another, as Thoughts of God, living in His light (10:5–6).

Remember that, as we have seen, proper prayer does not consist of *asking* for anything but rather *affirming* the truth of our wholeness and oneness with God and all creation. Our natural state is communion when we *know* (by direct experience, not just head knowledge) instead of *perceive*.

¹⁵ When we finally know (in Heaven), what passes away is “prayer in the usual sense” (T-3.VII.10:3), prayer as *asking*. Prayer as “communion,” however, remains. Earlier, this section clarifies that “At root, prayer is always an affirmation of knowledge, not of accurate perception. That is why unless perception has entered into it, it calls on revelation” (T-3.VII.3:3-4). In this state, in other words, we do not pray for a lack to be filled; we simply call on revelation—on the experience of communion with God.

Paragraph 16

16 All words, at best, are preparatory. ²The Word is really a thought. ³No one word is universally meaningful, because a word is a symbol. ⁴But thought is not divisible at the level of creation. ⁵The original name for “thought” and “word” was the same.¹⁶ ⁶The quotation should read, “In the beginning was the Thought, and the Thought was with God, and the Thought was God.”¹⁷

Head knowledge comes to us through words—words we hear, words we read, and perhaps words we think. This does not comprise true knowledge, but it can *prepare* us for true knowledge (16:1). The Word (with a capital W) “is really a thought” (16:2). “No one word [with a lowercase w] is universally meaningful, because a word is a symbol” (16:3). Symbols can refer to more than one thing; at the level of creation that isn’t true of thought (16:4). In Greek, the word *logos* meant both “word” and “thought” (16:5). The Anchor Bible Dictionary says this about the Greek word *logos*: “*logos* can mean the process by which both computations and explanations are produced. In this context, *logos* refers to the process of human reasoning, human rationality, and more broadly the rationality or the rational principle of the universe.” That can be summed up as “thought,” just as Jesus says. He applies it to the best-known Bible verse that contains the word, John 1:1 (16:6). The Thought (note the cap T) was with God and the Thought *was* God. This echos what the Ernest Holmes, the founder of Religious Science, says about the Self, God’s creation: “We cannot find God outside the self because we cannot go outside the self. There is no place where we begin and God leaves off. We can find God only within ourselves.”

Paragraph 17

17 How beautiful indeed are the thoughts of God, who live in His light. ²Your worth is beyond perception because it is beyond doubt. ³Do not perceive yourself in different lights. ⁴Know yourself in the One Light, where the miracle which is you is perfectly clear.

God’s thoughts—all of us who have lived in the world, or will live (W-109.11:5)—are beautiful “beyond the telling of it” (to borrow a phrase from Alan Paton’s *Cry the Beloved Country*) (17:1). In this realm of knowledge, our worth is beyond doubt (17:2). There is no judging of one another; instead, we are overtaken with constant delight at one another’s beauty! As the Workbook puts it, when we know our own worth and that of our brothers, we can “scarce refrain from kneeling at [one another’s] feet” (W-pI.161.9:3).

What lies “beyond perception,” as the title of the section reads? “Your worth” (17:2). When you go beyond perception to knowledge, what you encounter is a direct awareness

¹⁶ “Original name” here refers to the original Greek in which the Bible verse that follows was written. In Koine Greek, the word *logos* meant “word,” but had a wide range of additional meanings, one of which was “thought.”

¹⁷ John 1:1 (KJV): “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.”

of your own worth as God's creation, a worth that includes everyone and is shared by everyone. Any perception of yourself "in different lights" (17:3), as anything less than a living miracle (17:4), is a mistake which needs healing. The Course calls us constantly to *know* ourselves as we are in the One Light, as we have always been and will be forever. Anything else we may think about ourselves or about anyone is simply not true. *I look on you with eyes of love, you radiant being, you.*

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.