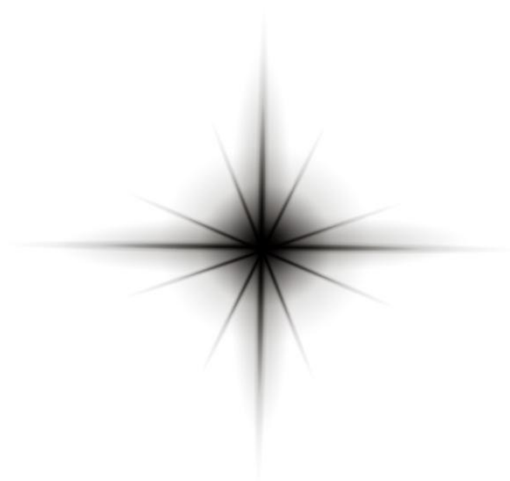


A Course in Miracles



Workbook I

Lessons 1-150



Gongarola Version

Modern English Edition with Commentary

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PREFACE

The *Workbook of A Course in Miracles* is not merely a book to read, but a path to walk. It offers 365 lessons designed to train the mind to perceive reality anew—to move from fear to peace, from confusion to clarity, and from conflict to the quiet awareness of Love’s presence. Each lesson marks a step in the undoing of the ego’s thought system, gently revealing the truth that has never ceased to be.

This edition forms part of a comprehensive six-volume work. Three volumes are devoted to the *Text*, two to the *Workbook*, and one to the *Manual for Teachers* together with its supplementary materials. The *Text* and *Manual* volumes are scheduled for publication in 2026, completing a unified presentation of *A Course in Miracles* that aspires to combine textual fidelity with clarity of understanding.

The present edition has been prepared with deep reverence for the original dictation, while addressing the linguistic and conceptual challenges that have long limited its accessibility. The earliest transcriptions—particularly *Helen’s Notes* and the *Urtext*—reveal both the brilliance and the difficulties of the source material: archaic phrasing, ambiguous pronominal references, and occasional inconsistencies of transcription. These have here been carefully examined and corrected through a methodical comparison of sources, resulting in a text that preserves the authenticity of the original while speaking with the transparency of modern English.

Accompanying the lessons is an extensive body of exegetical notes—critical, pedagogical, and contemplative in nature. These notes provide scriptural and internal cross-references, as well as literary and cultural insights, all aimed at enriching the reader’s study and deepening their practice. Yet their purpose is not merely intellectual. Written in a spirit of devotion and quiet inspiration, they are meant to accompany the student through the profound process of reversing the world’s thought system—the very transformation of perception that the *Workbook* invites.

Language is not neutral; it shapes perception. The *Course* reminds us that “words are but symbols of symbols,” and yet, when used with clarity and love, they can become transparent to the truth they signify. The goal of this work has been to refine the form so that the content—the living experience of forgiveness and unity—can shine unobstructed.

May this volume serve those who seek to hear a clearer voice within our beloved *Course*.

INTRODUCTION

1. A theoretical foundation like the Text is necessary for these exercises to be meaningful. **I**

²But it is the practice of the exercises that will make the goal of this Course attainable. **II**

³An untrained mind can accomplish nothing.

⁴The purpose of these exercises is to train the mind to think according to the principles this Course sets forth.

2. The exercises are very simple.

²They require only a few minutes, and it does not matter where or when you do them.

³They need no preparation.

⁴The lessons are numbered from 1 to 365.

⁵The training period is one year.

⁶Do not do more than one lesson a day.

3. The purpose of this Workbook is to train the mind to achieve a different perception of everything in the world. **III**

²This Workbook is divided into two sections.

³The first is to undo what you now see. **IV**

⁴And the second is to restore Vision. **V**

4. It is recommended that each exercise be repeated several times a day, preferably in a different place each time, and, if possible, in every situation in which you spend a significant amount of time.

²The aim is to train the mind to generalize the lessons, so that you understand each one is equally applicable to any situation.

³Unless otherwise noted, the exercises should be done with eyes open, for the goal is to learn how to see.

⁴The only rule that must be followed at all times is to practice the exercises exactly as instructed.

⁵Apply the daily idea to every situation in which you find yourself, and to everything you see in it.

5. These exercises are designed around a central idea.

²The practice consists in applying that idea to as many specific things as possible.

³Be sure not to decide that there are some things to which the idea of the day cannot be applied.

⁴The purpose of the exercises is always to extend the application of that central idea to everything.

INTRODUCTION

⁵This will require no effort on your part.

⁶The exercises themselves contain the conditions required for this kind of transfer. **VI**

⁷Just be sure not to make exceptions when applying the idea.

⁸That would interfere with the transfer of what you have learned. **VII**

⁹The transfer of what you learn in a state of true perception does not proceed like the transfer of what the world teaches.

¹⁰If you have reached true perception with regard to any person, situation, or event, complete transfer to all people and things is certain.

¹¹On the other hand, if you exclude even one thing from the true way of seeing, that way of seeing cannot be transferred to anything.

¹²The very nature of true perception is that it has no limits.

¹³It is the opposite of the way you see now.

6. Some of the ideas presented may be difficult for you to believe, and others may seem quite startling.

²That does not matter.

³You are merely asked to apply them to everything you see.

⁴You are not asked to judge them, or even to believe them.

⁵You are simply asked to use them.

⁶Their use is what will give them meaning for you, and will show you that they are true.

7. Just remember this:

²It is not necessary to believe the ideas presented.

³It is not necessary to accept them.

⁴And it is not necessary to welcome them.

⁵You may even actively resist some of them.

⁶None of this matters, nor does it lessen their effectiveness.

⁷But do not allow yourself to make any exceptions in applying the ideas contained in these exercises.

⁸Whatever your reactions to these ideas may be, use them.

⁹Nothing more than that is required.

I The dictation of the *Text* began on October 21, 1965, and concluded on October 10, 1968. The dictation of the *Workbook* began on May 26, 1969.

With the *Workbook*, you embark upon a structured and systematic practice of the new thought system set forth in the *Text* of *A Course in Miracles*. There the

theoretical foundations of this new way of using the mind are explained—that is, the ontological principles (what is real) and the epistemological principles (what it is to know) of this paradigm. Yet knowing and recognizing them will be of no use to you unless they become your new way of using the mind.

Perhaps the most important thing to be aware of as you begin this practice is that the process of reversing your thought system is no trivial matter. It is a feat of such magnitude that you are at present incapable even of imagining it. Therefore, before attempting it, you must understand that, in order to succeed, you will need all the humility, honesty, and perseverance you can find within yourself, and you will also need to ask for help constantly from the Holy Spirit and from Jesus. But do not be concerned. If your purpose is sincere, Their strength and Their light will always accompany you. That is Their function; yours is simply to follow Them. The Voice of God and the Brother who loves you are so intimate and so close to you that, while you may not hear Them, it is impossible to truly banish Them from your mind and heart. Count on Them, for They trust in you and rely on you. They know perfectly well who you are; They know that you are the Savior of the world.

It is also essential that you strive to follow precisely the instructions given in the Lessons. Remember that you have all the time you need to complete a Lesson well. If you wish, you may take several days with one, but do it well, do it wholeheartedly. Pay special attention to the Lessons that prove most difficult, for they point to the most ailing aspects of your mind—those that most need healing. This difficulty may show itself as aversion, discomfort, or simple forgetfulness. All these are but different strategies of the ego to keep you from changing.

Finally, you are now beginning an exceptional period in your life of limited duration. It is a practice that, if undertaken well, will place you in a mental state of lasting joy, peace, and trust. It is a training that, once completed, will become the only joyous way of being in this world, and you will never again need to struggle for anything—except to remember that you are the Son of God.

Be absolutely certain that you are most fortunate: you are about to embark on a marvelous adventure of love and freedom.

II Studying the theory is only the beginning of the learning process. There you are presented with a series of proposals on how to use the mind rightly, but it is the actual practice of those principles that will establish your mind in this new paradigm. For your mind to change, it is not enough to know these proposals; you must decide to embrace them and apply them consistently in your daily life.

This is a *Course* about the will: about the willingness to exchange your old will for a new one—the will to desire reality instead of illusions. And this is achieved only through the exercise of your new will by practicing these blessed Lessons. In the *Text* you learn what your true will is, and through the practice of the *Workbook* you

exercise it.

III But to succeed in seeing the world differently, it is essential to desire to see it so; the will to acquire a new vision is indispensable. Therefore, only those who, completely disillusioned with what the world has taught them, remain open and receptive to using their minds in a new way will attain that experience. Those who are not strongly motivated to make that change will not reach that goal.

IV The First Part of this *Workbook*, from Lesson 1 through Lesson 220, is devoted to discrediting your old thought system by dismantling the false beliefs that sustain it. Nearly all of the first 30 Lessons are distinctly negative. Yet from that point onward, the foundations of a new and far more luminous way of relating to the world begin to be introduced. The exercises that accompany them are very strict and are carried out with precise instructions that must be followed as accurately as possible, for one of their chief aims is to discipline the mind.

V The Second Part is quite different, for it deals more with aspirations than with concrete directives. The mind, now purified and trained, is devoted to seeking the mystical experience of union with God through prayer and contemplation. It is the time to gather the fruits of previous work and to lay the foundations for a new way of living in the world, one centered in God.

VI From this line onward and through the end of the paragraph, the text appears in the FIP version, but it is not found in the *Urtext* nor in *Helen's Notes*.

VII In psychology, transfer of learning refers to the ability to apply something originally learned in one context to other contexts.

LESSON 1

Nothing I see means anything.

1. Nothing I see in this room, on this street, from this window, in this place, means anything. **I**

2. Now look around slowly and apply this idea very specifically to everything you see:

²This table does not mean anything.

³This chair does not mean anything.

⁴This hand does not mean anything.

⁵This foot does not mean anything.

⁶This pen does not mean anything.

3. Then look a little farther away and apply the idea to a wider range of things:

²That door does not mean anything.

³That body does not mean anything.

⁴That lamp does not mean anything.

⁵That sign does not mean anything.

⁶That shadow does not mean anything.

4. Notice that these statements are not in any specific order and do not consider differences in the kinds of things to which they are applied.

²That is exactly the purpose of the exercise.

³The statement is simply applied to everything you see.

⁴When you practice today's idea, do so in a completely indiscriminate way.

⁵Do not try to include everything you see, because these exercises are not meant to become rituals.

⁶Just be sure not to deliberately leave anything out.

⁷One thing is just like another when it comes to applying the idea.

5. None of the first three lessons should be practiced more than twice a day, preferably once in the morning and once in the evening.

²They also should not last more than a minute, unless that feels uncomfortably rushed.

³It is essential to keep a sense of ease throughout. **II**

I In this Lesson you declare that the things of this world—what we call “reality”—in themselves have no meaning. In later Lessons you will see why; for now, you do not know that. Here you are asked to look at anything around you and declare that it means nothing. It is very important that you understand you are not being asked in any way to believe what you are saying. If you did believe it, you would have no need for this practice. Simply look and declare that what you behold means nothing. That is all. You can and should do this exercise in a state of perfect ease and mental freedom.

Jesus will never, ever demand anything of you, nor will He ever, ever blame you for anything. He knows you as well as He knows Himself, and that is why He loves you. He knows that you are as free and innocent as He is, for you are His brother, the Son of the Same Father. He only wants to free you from a confusion that has made you forget your true identity and has sickened your mind. He has remembered Who He is, and He wants to share that joyous discovery with you.

“Nothing I see means anything” is a declaration that carries an honesty of which, for now, you are incapable. Do not be concerned. This practice will be what leads you to attain it.

Once again: do not force yourself to believe the postulates of these first Lessons, above all. Acknowledge honestly that what is said here is utterly foreign and strange to what you now believe. Do not impose a new truth upon yourself by force. Instead, practice the Lessons exactly as you are asked to, and ask yourself: “Could this be true?” Do not try to answer that question; simply let it rest in your mind as a prayer lifted upward, and trust that, at some moment, the Truth will answer you and Light will dawn in your mind. And when that happens, you will understand that this Truth, this Light you were seeking, is precisely what you are.

II This paragraph does not appear in the Notes or in the *Urtext*, but it does appear in the Criswell/FIP version. It is likely that it comes from a later dictation of Jesus to Helen at the time of editing.

LESSON 2

I have given everything all the meaning it has for me.

1. I have given everything I see in this room, on this street, from this window, in this place, all the meaning that it has for me. ¹

2. The exercises to be done with this idea are the same as those for the first lesson.

²Begin with the things that are near you and apply the idea to anything your eyes happen to rest on.

³Then widen your scope.

⁴Turn your head to include what is on either side.

⁵If possible, turn around and apply the idea to what is behind you.

⁶Remain as evenhanded as possible in selecting the objects.

⁷Do not concentrate on anything in particular, and do not attempt to include everything you see in a given area, as that would cause strain.

3. Simply glance around you with a quiet, relaxed gaze, trying not to select objects based on their size, brightness, color, material, or the importance they have to you.

²Practice with whatever you see.

³Try to apply the exercise with equal ease to a body or a button, a fly or the floor, an arm or an apple.

⁴The only criterion for applying the idea to anything is simply that your eyes have rested on it.

⁵Do not try to include anything in particular, but be sure not to exclude anything deliberately.

¹ The only meaning that the things of the world have for you is the meaning you have given them; in themselves, the things of this world have no meaning. The proof of this is that the same thing can have different meanings for different subjects. For example, this chair means something entirely different to you than it does to your dog.

Although thoughts are always subjective—since a “subject” is what conceives them—the personal mind has a pronounced tendency to “objectify” its own thoughts, to regard them as true, and to believe that what it thinks is universally true. Obviously, everything the personal mind conceives is subjective, yet the mind itself forgets this and elevates it to the status of an “established fact.”

This Lesson urges you to recognize that, in truth, you are the one who has given meaning to everything you behold, whether because the world taught you so or by your own judgment. In any case, ultimately it is you who has deemed that judgment to be true.

Be aware also that this applies equally to what you claim to know and to what you assert you do not know. For that which you call unknown or unknowable also bears a label of your own making—one that reads: “I do not know what that means.” Thus you “catalog” even that which you believe you do not know.

Today you must learn to become conscious that you always relate to everything you perceive on your own terms.

LESSON 3

I do not understand anything I see.

1. I do not understand anything I see in this room, on this street, from this window, in this place. **I**

2. Apply this idea in the same manner as in the previous lessons, making no distinctions of any kind.

²Anything you see becomes a suitable subject for applying the idea.

³Be sure not to question whether something is appropriate or not for the exercise.

⁴These exercises are not about judging anything. **II**

⁵Anything is appropriate simply because you see it.

⁶Some of the objects you see may have emotional meaning for you.

⁷Try to set those feelings aside and apply the idea to them exactly as you would to anything else.

3. The aim of these exercises is to help you clear your mind of all the associations you have made in the past, to see things exactly as they appear to you now, and to realize how little you really understand them. **III**

²Therefore, it is essential to keep a perfectly open mind in selecting the things to which the idea of the day will be applied, unhindered by your judgments.

³To this end, everything is the same as everything else; equally suitable and, therefore, equally useful.

I Whatever you say, in truth and in the final analysis, if you are absolutely honest with yourself you must admit that you do not understand any of what you perceive, although you have persuaded yourself otherwise by telling stories you have invented or have been told about the things of the world.

Notice how greatly the idea you have of yourself conditions how you interpret what you perceive. If you are a musician, you will see your hands as instruments of your art; if you are a physician, you may attend to their state of health. A biologist might consider their functioning at the cellular level, and a physicist will likely think of them as an aggregate of atoms. You perceive the reflection of the idea you hold of your own identity projected onto an imagined external realm, which, ultimately, is nothing more than a story you tell yourself.

Acknowledge it: in truth, you do not understand what you perceive.

You may find it helpful to understand that, in these early Lessons, you are learning to question the ontological and epistemological principles of your thought system — that is, what reality is to you and how you know it.

II These are not exercises for you to give your opinion about anything. This is not about what you think, but about what is occurring in your mind when you perceive something.

III It will be explained later why.

LESSON 4

These thoughts do not mean anything.

1. These thoughts do not mean anything; they are like the things I see in this room, on this street, from this window, in this place. **I**

2. Unlike the previous exercises, these do not begin with the idea for the day.

²In today's practice, begin by observing the thoughts that pass through your mind for about one minute.

³Then apply the idea to them.

⁴If you are experiencing unhappy thoughts, use them with this idea.

⁵But do not choose only the thoughts you consider to be "bad."

⁶If you train yourself to look at your thoughts, you will see that they are such a mixture that, in a real sense, none of them can truly be called either "good" or "bad."

⁷That is why they do not mean anything.

3. In selecting the thoughts to which you will apply today's idea, it is necessary to be very specific, as always.

²Do not be afraid to use both "good" and "bad" thoughts.

³Neither of them are your real thoughts, which are being covered up precisely by the ones you now believe you have. **II**

⁴The "good" thoughts you are aware of are only shadows of what lies beyond, and shadows always obscure Vision.

⁵The "bad" thoughts, on the other hand, are blocks to Vision and make it impossible.

⁶That is why you do not want them either.

4. This is an important exercise and will be repeated from time to time in a slightly different form. **III**

²The goal of this lesson is to train you in the first steps toward the aim of distinguishing between the meaningless and the meaningful.

³It is a first attempt at the long-range goal of learning to see the meaningless as outside you, and the meaningful as within. **IV**

⁴It is also the beginning of training your mind to recognize what is the same and what is different.

5. When using your thoughts as subjects for applying today's idea, identify each one by the central figure or event it contains. For example:

*²This thought about _____ does not mean anything.
³It is like the things I see in this room (on this street, etc.).*

6. You may also use the idea for a specific thought that you recognize as harmful.

²This kind of application is useful, but it should not replace the random selection process to be followed in the exercises. **V**

³However, do not examine your mind for more than a minute or so.

⁴You are not yet sufficiently experienced to avoid a tendency to become needlessly preoccupied.

⁵Also, since these exercises are the first of their kind, it is quite likely that you will find it especially difficult not to judge your thoughts.

⁶Do not repeat these exercises more than three or four times today.

⁷We will return to them again.

I Pay close attention to this Lesson, for it is one of the most liberating in this *Workbook*. To recognize that your own thoughts mean nothing is the epitome of humility and the purest expression of the Socratic truth: “I know only that I know nothing.” The sincere practice of this Lesson heals the mind instantly, for it prevents it from clinging to ideas that are not true but arbitrary.

The thoughts that arise in your mind are the manifestation of egoic dynamics born of fear and desire, the inevitable consequence of harboring a spurious idea of your own identity. Your thoughts are whimsical stories constructed around your longings and fears.

Try to realize that what you think is not in any sense “yours.” Certainly you are the “witness” of these thoughts, but you are not their cause. Notice that you have done nothing to think the way you think; there is no volitional participation on your part prior to the “fact” of thinking. Your thoughts occur in the mind, and you carelessly endorse them and call them “yours.”

You may rightly call these thoughts “the voice of the ego,” and you can—and must—dismiss them with complete calm. In fact, that is what you will learn to do throughout this mental training you have just begun.

Try to understand well what follows, for on it depends your grasp of what is happening in your mind when you say you “think.” What you call “my thoughts” are narratives: stories you tell yourself about things or circumstances that your mind considers after fragmenting Reality into discrete elements.

Take any thought that arises, and you will see that what you are considering is not

the thing itself, but a description of it that, moreover, you take as true. You do not know the thing (or the circumstance); you know its description. You confuse the thing itself with the story you have built about it. It is as if a child, hearing his father say he needs a new car, tries to help by handing him a clumsy drawing of a car freshly painted on a sheet of paper. It is a childish confusion. Humanity is in its infancy.

To confuse what something is with its description is humanity's tragedy, and it becomes especially grave when it concerns what you are. You confuse what you are with what you tell yourself about yourself. You confuse your Being with your own opinions.

In truth, it should suffice to recognize that your shifting opinions about your reality cannot be true precisely because of their mutability. But that all-too-“human” arrogance of continually believing you are “right” prevents you from knowing your true Identity.

Do not be concerned: this *Course* you are beginning is specifically designed to heal this fateful cognitive bias. Take it very seriously, for your happiness depends on it.

II Your true thoughts as the Son of God—not as a person—are the thoughts you think with your Father and Creator. These Thoughts are unlimited, eternal, perfectly abstract, and infinitely loving; that is, they are real, and in the *Text* they are called the Creations of the Son of God. They are the opposite of what you now consider your thoughts, which are limited, fleeting, concrete, and— even the most benevolent among them—still harbor some element of fear.

III Indeed, it is. Keep this in mind at all times. It is one of the most healing ideas that exist, and you will repeat it in Lesson 10. To fully accept the lack of meaning, relevance, and importance of what you call “my thoughts” is crucial for achieving dissociation from the egoic idea of an independent, separate, exclusive, and limited identity.

IV This Lesson, in a sense, explains the preceding ones. What you believe you see outside yourself means nothing because, in reality, they are your projected thoughts, devoid of intrinsic meaning. The forms you see outside yourself are projections—effects of underlying inner causes. They are like the figures in nighttime dreams: symbols manifesting fears and desires.

Yet you are real, you do not change, you are always yourself. You are indeed “meaningful,” even though you do not yet fully know what that meaning is.

V That is to say, the rule for these early exercises is to apply the daily idea to any object or thought. This Lesson makes clear that any thought you choose loses its

emotional charge if you cease to give it importance, precisely because it has no real meaning. Its meaning is entirely personal and arbitrary, and the emotion the thought provokes comes solely from the importance you assign to it.

By now, after having studied the *Text* well, you will have realized that ceasing to give importance to what you call “my thoughts” is what true forgiveness, as this *Course* teaches, actually is. In this world, the only thing you can and must forgive are “your” own thoughts.

LESSON 5

I am never upset for the reason I think.

1. This idea, like the previous one, can be applied to any person, situation, or event you believe is causing you pain. **I**

²Apply it specifically to everything you think is making you upset, and describe the feeling you experience in whatever terms seem appropriate to you.

³The upset may seem to be fear, worry, depression, anxiety, anger, hatred, jealousy, or any other form of discomfort you perceive as different.

⁴But it is not true that they are different.

⁵However, until you learn that the form does not matter, each of them is a suitable subject for today's practice. **II**

⁶Applying the same idea to each of these forms of upset individually is the first step toward eventually recognizing that they are all the same.

2. When applying today's idea to the specific cause you believe is behind your upset, use both the name of the disturbance as you perceive it and the "cause" you attribute to it.

²For example:

³I am not angry with _____ for the reason I think.

⁴I am not afraid of _____ for the reason I think.

⁵But again, this should not replace the practice of first searching your mind for what you believe is the "cause" of the distress you are experiencing and the form in which you see it. **III**

3. In this exercise, more than in the previous ones, you may find it difficult to be impartial and to avoid giving greater importance to some subjects than to others.

²It may help to begin the practice by saying:

³There are no small upsets.

*⁴They all equally disturb my peace of mind. **IV***

⁵Then search your mind for anything that is troubling you, regardless of how much or how little you believe it is affecting you.

4. You may also be less willing to apply today's idea to certain causes of upset than to others.

²If this is so, think first of this:

³I cannot keep this form of upset and let go of the others.

⁴For the purpose of this exercise, I will regard them all as the same.

⁵Then examine your mind for about a minute and try to identify the different forms of upset that are disturbing you, regardless of the degree of importance you assign to them.

⁶Apply today's idea to each one, naming both the perceived cause of the upset and the emotion you feel.

⁷Other examples might be:

⁸I am not worried about _____ for the reason I think.

⁹I am not depressed about _____ for the reason I think.

5. It is enough to do this three or four times today.

I This Lesson is also very important. Emotions arise from our judgments. Without a prior judgment, no emotion is possible. All discomfort or distress comes from a judgment of condemnation, from something we reject because it shatters our expectations. Just as pain signals that something is wrong in the body, emotional discomfort signals that something is wrong in the mind.

If we suffer in any way, it means we are misusing the mind, for we are thinking something that is not true. In that sense, everything that is not true is the same: a falsehood. Our anger is the emotional response to a story we have told ourselves, according to which the idea we hold about ourselves—our ego—or our idea of how reality ought to be—our imagined ideal world—has been violated. Both ideas are false, arbitrary, and changeable.

II The world of forms is the symbolic language used by perception. Just as Sigmund Freud rightly described the figures of dreams as symbols of underlying emotional causes, perception is the dream of the world, and it too is an effect of deeper causes. That is why forms, in themselves, “do not matter,” for they are only effects.

III That is to say, it is not enough to declare that you are not upset for a given reason. You must look within your mind for the idea that has led you to feel distressed—the underlying cause of your discomfort.

IV Every distress or discomfort has a positive function: it is a reminder urging you to regain peace of mind. We must remember that our peace has been disturbed by a prior thought which, as the previous Lesson indicates, “means nothing,” yet which we have regarded as true and important.

In a certain sense, the ego could be described as “that which” thinks what it imagines is true and important. That “being” does not exist; it is merely a whimsical “stance” of the mind.

LESSON 6

I am upset because I see something that is not there.

1. The exercises you will do with this idea are very similar to the previous ones.

²In this exercise as well, it is necessary to name very specifically both the form the disturbance takes—anger, fear, worry, depression, and so on—and the cause you believe is responsible for it.

³For example:

⁴I am angry with _____ because I see what is not there. ¹

⁵I am worried about _____ because I see what is not there.

2. You can apply today's idea to anything that seems to upset you, and it can be used helpfully throughout the day for that purpose.

²However, the three or four practice periods required today should be preceded by about one minute of mind searching, as in the previous exercises, and then apply the idea to each disturbing thought you uncover in the search.

3. Again, if you find yourself resisting the idea when it comes to certain thoughts that seem to disturb you more than others, remind yourself of the two cautions from the previous lesson:

²There are no small upsets.

³They all equally disturb my peace of mind.

And then say:

⁴I cannot keep this form of upset and let go of the others.

⁵For the purpose of this exercise, I will regard them all as the same.

¹What upsets you is not out there; it is in your mind. It is in your mind where the discomfort lies, along with its cause and the very idea that all of it is outside you.

Indeed, what provokes your distress is not something present before you, for, as you have already seen, what you believe you see out there has no meaning in itself. Your anger, in reality, comes from a story you have told yourself, from a particular

interpretation of “reality.”

What disturbs you is not what you perceive, for what you see in itself means nothing (W-1). What disturbs you is the interpretation you give it because you believe it frustrates your expectations, and now you say it is wrong without pausing to consider that perhaps your expectations were misguided. Once you have set yourself up as judge of reality, it becomes difficult to recognize the arrogance involved in passing judgment on what you perceive from your own exclusive and peculiar frame of reference.

To see this clearly is no trivial task; it requires great honesty. In truth, it is such a feat that, once you achieve it, it will bring you enormous release and the ability to master your states of mind.

This exercise is an invitation to reflect, and you must keep it in mind whenever anything or any circumstance seems to disturb you in any way. In reality, what makes you suffer is only an illusion of your own making.

But be on guard, for you will discover that, the very moment you question the cause of your distress, the ego will immediately begin to supply you automatically with countless “reasons” to justify your annoyance. Judgments of condemnation are always “justified,” and that is precisely the “voice of the ego”: a perfectly consistent ecosystem of insane “reasons” you have assumed to be true.

Although this is but one of the 365 exercises in this *Workbook*, you can and must use it from now on whenever something seems to upset you. Consider that today is the day you learn that the cause of your disturbances lies in you, not out there. You are responsible for all your suffering. And although this idea is certainly disturbing, realize that it also contains the key to your liberation, for it places in your hands the control of all your mental states.

Take these exercises very seriously, for they are extraordinarily powerful tools that will enable you to regain control of your mind. You had lost it, and had not even realized it.

LESSON 7

I see only the past.¹

1. This idea is particularly difficult to believe at first.

²But it is the fundamental reason behind all the previous ones.

³It is the reason why nothing you see means anything.

⁴It is the reason why you have given everything you see all the meaning that it has for you.

⁵It is the reason why you do not understand anything you see.

⁶It is the reason why your thoughts do not mean anything, and why they are like the things you see.

⁷It is the reason why you are never upset for the reason you think.

⁸And it is the reason why you are upset because you see something that is not there.

2. Changing your old notion of time is very difficult for you, because everything you believe is rooted in time, and your continued belief in it depends on not learning these new ideas.

²But that is exactly why you need new ideas about time.

³This new idea is not really as strange as it may seem at first.

3. Look, for example, at a cup.

²Are you really seeing that cup, or are you simply reviewing your past experiences of picking up a cup, being thirsty, drinking from it, feeling the rim against your lips, having breakfast, and so on?

³And are your aesthetic responses to that cup also based on past experiences?

⁴How else would you know whether this kind of cup would break if you dropped it?

⁵What do you know about that cup except what you learned about it in the past?

⁶If it were not for the past, you would have no idea what this cup is.

⁷So, are you really seeing it? ■

4. Look around you.

²This is equally true of anything you look at.

³Acknowledge this by applying today's idea indiscriminately to whatever catches your eye.

⁴For example:

⁵I only see the past in this pencil.

6I only see the past in this shoe.

7I only see the past in this hand.

8I only see the past in that body.

9I only see the past in that face.

¹⁰Do not linger on any one thing in particular, but be sure not to leave anything out deliberately.

¹¹Glance briefly at each object, and then move on to the next.

¹²Three or four practice periods, each lasting about one minute, will be sufficient. **III**

I You see only the past because the meaning of everything you perceive was assigned by you in the past, and because, in truth, you do not relate to things themselves but to what they mean to you. The meanings of things are like labels you yourself attached to them in the past. Written on that label is what that thing represents for you, and this applies not only to objects but also—and even more clearly—to the people with whom you relate.

When you say you know something or someone, what you really mean is that you have already judged it in the past, and to issue that judgment you once relied on what you had learned in an even earlier past.

This *Course* gives enormous importance to this idea, not only here but also in the *Text*. For example, three sections of Chapter 13, from “The Function of Time” (T-13.IV) through “The Eternal Present” (T-13.VI), address the notion of time and the fact that “...for the ego, the past is important, for in fact it believes it is the ONLY aspect that has any meaning at all” (T-13.IV.4:2).

It speaks of the shadowy figures of the past, based on illusions, which obstruct the vision of present reality. It says: “To be born again is to let the past go, and look without condemnation upon the present” (T-13.VI.3:5).

“...everything you believe is rooted in the past, and maintaining it depends on not learning these new ideas” (T-13.IV.2:1). Everything we have learned we learned from the past—this cannot be disputed. Therefore, everything we think we know is based on the past. We look at the present through the filter of our prior learning.

To train the mind in a new way of beholding reality, it is essential first to undo what has been learned and accepted as true in the past. This is why the *Course* insists so strongly that what you learned in the past must not be the light that guides you now.

Instead, it urges you to turn to the Holy Spirit at every moment, asking Him to teach you His vision of the present, because the present is the opportunity to assign

new meanings to what you perceive. And that is precisely what it means to be “born again” or “reborn.”

II This paragraph is an epistemological argument that questions the very nature of the act of knowing. Here “seeing” is equated with “assigning memories,” and the question arises: is that truly valid? Do you believe that is really knowing?

III This line appears in the FIP version, but it is not found in the *Urtext* nor in *Helen’s Notes*.

LESSON 8

My mind is preoccupied with past thoughts.^I

1. This idea is, of course, the reason why you only see the past.

²In truth, no one sees anything.

³What you see are only your own thoughts projected outward. **II**

⁴The fact that your mind is preoccupied with past thoughts is the cause of the completely distorted perception of time from which your seeing suffers.

⁵Your mind cannot grasp the present, which is the only time there is. **III**

⁶That is why it cannot understand time, and that is why, in fact, it cannot understand anything. **IV**

2. The only completely true thought one can hold about the past is that it is not here.

²Therefore, thinking about the past is always thinking about illusions. **V**

³Very few minds have realized what it truly means to picture the past or anticipate the future. **VI**

⁴In fact, the mind is actually blank when it does this, because it is not really thinking about anything.

3. The purpose of today's exercises is to begin training your mind to recognize when it is not really thinking at all.

²If your mind is engaged in meaningless ideas, it is blocked to the truth.

³The first step in opening the way to Vision is to recognize that your mind has simply been blank, rather than believing it is filled with real ideas. **VII**

4. Today's exercises should be done with eyes closed.

²This is because you really cannot see anything, and it is easier to recognize that, no matter how vividly you may picture a thought, you are not seeing anything. **VIII**

³Search your mind casually for about a minute, simply noting the thoughts you find there.

⁴Identify each of them by the central figure or theme it contains, and then move on to the next.

⁵Begin the practice by saying:

⁶It seems that I am thinking about ____.

⁷Then name each of your thoughts specifically.

⁸For example:

*⁹It seems that I am thinking about...
 ... the name of a person,
 ... the name of an object,
 ... the name of an event,
 ... the name of an emotion,
 ... or whatever it may be.*

¹⁰Conclude the mind-search with:

¹¹But my mind is preoccupied with past thoughts.

5. This can be done four or five times today, unless you notice it causes irritation.

²If you find it uncomfortable, three or four times will suffice.

³Even so, it may be helpful to include your own irritation in the mind-search, or any other emotion the idea for today may provoke.

I Ordinarily, our mind is not thinking at all; it is merely absorbed in gazing at images of the past projected onto a blank screen. They are empty illusions (3:2), because “these thoughts do not mean anything” (Lesson 4). The mind is in a state of stupefaction, absorbed in contemplating the story that arises from an uncontrollable inner dialogue: the ego’s narrative, built around fears, desires, and lacks, vindicating the ego’s idea of itself, always tainted with specialness and grandiosity. You call this “thinking,” when in truth it is nothing more than witnessing the ego’s madness and claiming it as your own.

The mind is addicted to the stories it tells itself because, as seen in the *Text*, it feels guilty for having separated from God and is afraid to look within and find the “sin” of having attacked God by stealing an exclusive identity. That is why it always looks outside itself for the love, peace, and security it believes it has lost.

In reality, since there is nothing outside itself, the mind projects an imaginary space, fills it with symbols of its fears and desires, and calls it “world.” This “reality” it now perceives is false, and thus it must sustain it with an incessant inner dialogue meant to prove its veracity and keep it from recognizing its true identity.

II The mind is abstract, and as such it relates only to abstract things—that is, to ideas. What happens is that the mind calls some of those ideas “things,” simply because the content of the idea is to be a “concrete thing.” In this way, the mind deceives itself twice.

The first time is when it conceives and projects an idea without recognizing that this is what it has done. The second is when it confuses that idea with its content, and so it believes it is relating to something material and external to itself. This is the same mechanism that makes nighttime dreams seem to be real events while we sleep.

The world the mind thinks it knows does not exist outside the mind that conceives it; ideas do not leave their source. This is the basis of forgiveness: the reason we forgive is simply that what we believe we see outside is not real, it does not exist.

III To behold the present as it truly is, this *Course* calls experiencing the “holy instant”—a timeless moment of happiness in which one experiences great peace, deep love, and perfect awareness of one’s innocence, as well as that of all one perceives.

IV Anchored in the apparent reality of space and time, the egoic mind cannot understand anything; it merely dreams its own projections of desires and fears.

V This is an obvious truth that is usually overlooked: the only thing present in the mind when it is absorbed in past thoughts is a distorted memory of what is believed to have happened. Thus the present has been turned into the memory of a fictitious story you tell yourself. Meanwhile, you waste a flawless, immaculate present that slips away as you devote your mind to recalling a past that no longer exists.

The questions you must ask yourself are: Is that not an excessive price to pay for an irrelevant gratification in fantasies? What is the return on such an investment? Has it ever brought you any real benefit? Are you aware of what you are missing by doing this?

It is of the utmost importance to realize that all memories appear in your mind in the present entirely voluntarily—that is, because you want to bring them there. The reason for this addiction to recalling past events, especially the most painful ones, is explained in the section “The Obstacles to Peace” (T-19.IV).

Nothing from the past can torment you in the present unless you evoke it and grant it that power. To acknowledge this requires great honesty, but the reward is immense, for it places you—and you alone—as responsible for your emotions and also for your release.

VI To visualize the past or foresee the future is to “imagine”—that is, to project and contemplate images on the screen of consciousness. It is to occupy the mind with a sterile activity whose sole purpose is to satisfy the demands of the ego.

The script of the “movie” the ego projects in your mind is predictable; in fact, it follows the same patterns as commercial films, where a hero—the ego—embarks on adventures that simultaneously vindicate its sense of grandiosity and its

vulnerability.

The false idea you held of yourself in the past—your ego—felt offended because something occurred that thwarted its expectations, and now you recall those events in the present to torture yourself and compensate for those offenses by avenging yourself in fantasies.

VII That is to say, your goal today is simply to “become aware” of what is occurring in your holy mind throughout most of the day. It is not a matter of changing anything now; it is only a matter of becoming conscious of what is taking place. You cannot, by yourself, bring about the changes your mind needs to abandon that hypnotic state.

VIII You are not seeing anything “real”; you are merely gazing at an illusion of reality, a kind of movie.

LESSON 9

I see nothing as it is now.

1. This idea is, obviously, the logical conclusion of the two previous ones.

²But although you may accept it intellectually, it is unlikely to mean anything to you at this point. **I**

³In any case, it is not necessary that you understand it now.

⁴In fact, recognizing that you do not understand is a prerequisite for undoing your false ideas.

⁵These exercises focus on practice, not understanding.

⁶For you do not need to practice what you truly understand.

⁷Certainly, it would make no sense to try to understand something while assuming you already understand it. **II**

2. It is difficult for an untrained mind to believe that what it once thought it saw is not there.

²This idea may be quite disturbing and provoke strong resistance, which can take many forms.

³However, that should not prevent you from applying it.

⁴All that is required for this or any other exercise is that you apply the idea that is being presented. **III**

⁵Each small step will clear away a little more of the darkness, and understanding will finally come to illuminate every corner of the mind that has been cleared of the debris that darkened it.

3. Three or four practice sessions are sufficient for today's exercises.

²You need only look around you and apply today's idea to everything you see.

³Remember to apply the idea indiscriminately, and to follow the essential rule of not excluding anything deliberately.

⁴For example:

⁵I do not see this typewriter as it is now.

⁶I do not see this key as it is now.

⁷I do not see this telephone as it is now.

⁸Begin with the things nearest to you, and then look farther away.

⁹I do not see that coat rack as it is now.

¹⁰I do not see that face as it is now.

¹¹I do not see that door as it is now.

4. It is emphasized once again that, although you should not attempt to include everything, you must avoid any specific exclusions.

²Be honest with yourself in making this distinction.

³You may be tempted to conceal this tendency from yourself.

I Jesus clearly acknowledges that there is a vast difference between accepting an idea intellectually and truly understanding and embracing it. You may accept the idea that you do not see anything as it is now, yet it may take quite some time before you begin to grasp what that really means.

Fortunately, the Lesson goes on to say that it is not necessary for you to understand it. In fact, what is essential is that you recognize that right now you do not understand. You could say that one of the things you are meant to learn from this Lesson is precisely that you do not understand it!

To recognize one's own ignorance—the humility of the student—is essential for learning, for without this acknowledgment, your false “understanding” prevents it. This Lesson invites you to disbelief, that is, to question your belief that you understand what you “see.”

II The natural vocation of the mind is to resolve, in the present, the difficulties it encounters. That is its rightful function and also its capacity, for it was created by God.

Yet the mind you now recognize and use to interpret reality is not your true mind; you have identified with a tiny part of it and reduced its infinite potential almost to nothing. That is why it is both absurd and unhelpful to try to understand what you are told now, and in many other instances of this blessed *Course*, with your defective instrument.

At present you do not understand, but surely you will. That is precisely the most important characteristic of God's teachers that you must bring to bear in these situations: trust. Do what you are told and trust, for be certain that the words of Jesus well deserve it in those moments of darkness.

III Today it may be helpful for you to review the final paragraph of the Introduction to this *Workbook*: “Remember only this: you need not believe the ideas, you need not accept them, and you need not even welcome them. Some of them you may actively resist. None of this will matter, or decrease their efficacy. But do not allow yourself to make exceptions in applying the ideas the exercises contain. Whatever your reactions to the ideas may be, use them.” (W-In.7).

Nothing more than this is required.

LESSON 10

My thoughts do not mean anything.^I

1. This idea applies to all the thoughts of which you are aware, or become aware, during the practice periods.

²The reason the idea is applicable to all of them is that they are not your real Thoughts.

³We have made this distinction before, and we will make it again. **II**

⁴You do not yet have a basis for comparison.

⁵When you do, you will have no doubt that what you once believed were your thoughts truly meant nothing.

2. This is the second time we have used this kind of idea. **III**

²The form is only slightly different.

³This time, the idea begins with “My thoughts” instead of “These thoughts,” and now no connection is made to the things around you.

⁴The emphasis is now on the unreality of what you think you think.

3. This aspect of the correction process began with the idea that the thoughts of which you are aware do not mean anything and refer to things outside rather than to anything within. **IV**

²Then it was emphasized that they refer to the past rather than the present. **V**

³Now we are highlighting the fact that the presence of these “thoughts” means that you are not really thinking at all.

⁴This is simply another way of repeating our earlier statement that your mind is truly blank.

⁵To recognize this is to recognize that when you think you see something, you are really seeing nothing. **VI**

⁶Realizing this is the prerequisite for true Vision.

4. To do today’s exercises, close your eyes and begin by repeating today’s idea to yourself slowly.

²Then add:

*³This idea will help me to release all that I now believe. **VII***

⁴These exercises, like the previous ones, consist in searching your mind for all the thoughts you can find, without selecting or judging them.

⁵Try not to classify your thoughts in any way.

⁶In fact, if it helps, you can imagine that you are watching a strangely assorted parade, which has little or no personal meaning to you.

⁷As each thought crosses your mind, say:

⁸This thought about _____ does not mean anything.

⁹That thought about _____ does not mean anything.

5. Today's idea can also, of course, be used to release you from any disturbing thought at any time.

²Five practice sessions are recommended, each involving no more than one minute of mind searching.

³It is not recommended that you extend the time, and you should reduce it to half a minute or less if you experience discomfort. **VIII**

⁴Remember, however, to repeat the idea slowly before using it specifically, and also to add:

⁵This idea will help me to release all that I now believe.

I The profoundly important idea for today is, without doubt, the starting point of every honest spiritual path. Pay close attention to it and be sure to practice it exactly as instructed. In fact, you must keep it present at all times for the rest of your apparent life in this world.

It is an idea that brings great liberation when you truly understand what it implies, and it is a fundamental principle that must always accompany you. Never forget it. What you call "my thoughts" is nothing other than the voice of the ego within you; it has no relation to you and is completely devoid of meaning.

You are merely the witness of the ego's voice; you are not its author. You do not "construct" your thoughts; rather, you find them already fully formed in your mind. You do not "do" anything in order to think; you merely bear witness to what appears in your mind and, in your confusion, call it "yours."

This is a matter on which it is impossible to place too much emphasis; it will never be enough. To believe that you are right, that what you think is meaningful, true, and of some value, is to be swept away by the madness of the ego. Yet do not be afraid. The sincere and honest practice of this *Workbook* will free you from that unhealthy habit and bring you into a prodigious state of mind.

This is the beginning of the process of mental purification that will enable you to work miracles, as mentioned in Principle 7: "Everyone has the right to miracles. But purification is necessary first."

It is crucial to understand that the purpose of this exercise is not to demean or disparage your mind in any way. Your mind is perfect and eternally united with the Mind of God. The problem is simply that you are using it wrongly.

It is not a mental problem but a problem of identity. You have identified with something you are not at all. You are not an ego, nor a person; you are the Son of God.

II “None of them are your real thoughts, which are being covered up by them” (W-4.2:3).

To think is the natural “activity” of the mind, and it is the same as creating—that is, extending the condition of Being, which is love. To think, to love, to create, to know, and to be are equivalent terms. Your true thoughts are your Creations, the Creations of the Son of God, which are as abstract, loving, and unlimited as you are.

III The first time this was said was in Lesson 4: “These thoughts do not mean anything...”

IV It is in Lessons 1, 2, and 3 that you practice with what you see around you. When you “think you think,” you entirely forget the purely mental character of the concepts that constitute this process, which is utterly intimate and abstract. The result of that forgetfulness is the “appearance” of a world... in your mind. It is not a real world; it is the illusion of a world.

There is no world outside the mind, because there is nothing apart from the mind. The “content” of a thought is the form you believe you see, but if that is the case, then what content does that form have? The form is only the illusion of a content.

V See Lessons 7, 8, and 9.

VI You are not seeing anything... that lies outside you. You are merely a spectator of an extraordinarily “realistic” movie that you yourself are projecting on the screen of your consciousness.

The events you behold follow a script you yourself have written, and this makes you see precisely what you want to see. What you call “my personal life” is something you grant yourself—which you will deny again and again for the simple reason that you do not want to acknowledge your lack of forgiveness. You still accuse yourself of too many things; you are still unable to recognize your essential innocence.

But do not be concerned: your forgiveness will rewrite that fearful script, and the movie will change.

VII Your mind, created to generate and extend creation, is now focused instead on believing. To free yourself from your beliefs is the essential requirement for truly seeing, because at this moment you do not see; you merely “imagine.” To believe is simply to assume that what you imagine is real.

VIII Undoubtedly, the time will come in your life when considering this idea will bring you deep relief and an immense sense of liberation. It may now feel disturbing or even uncomfortable, but with time, as you recognize the truth and the light it contains, your perspective will change. Have no doubt: you will understand.

LESSON 11

My meaningless thoughts are showing me a meaningless world.^I

1. This is the first idea connected to a crucial phase of the correction process: the reversal of the way the world thinks. **II**

²It seems as if the world determines what you perceive.

³Today's idea introduces the concept that it is your own thoughts that shape the world you see. **III**

⁴It will require much practice to accept this idea as true. **IV**

⁵Be sincerely glad to practice it just as it is presented here, for this idea holds the guarantee of your release. **V**

⁶In it lies the key to forgiveness. **VI**

2. Today's practice sessions should be conducted somewhat differently from the previous ones.

²Begin with your eyes closed and repeat the idea slowly to yourself.

³Then open your eyes and look around you, near and far, up and down—anywhere.

⁴For the one minute that you dedicate to practicing this idea, simply repeat it silently, making sure to do so without haste and without any sense of urgency or effort.

3. In order to gain the maximum benefit from these exercises, your gaze should move fairly rapidly from one thing to another, since it should not rest on anything in particular.

²The words, however, should be spoken without rush, even in a relaxed manner. **VII**

³Practice the idea as naturally as possible.

⁴It contains the foundation of the peace, the relaxation, and the freedom from worry that we are trying to achieve. **VIII**

⁵At the end of the practice period, close your eyes and repeat the idea slowly once more.

4. Three practice sessions today will probably be sufficient.

²However, if you experience little or no discomfort and feel inclined to do more, you may do as many as five.

³More than that is not recommended.

I The world I believe I perceive outside myself—the one I call “reality”—has no intrinsic meaning; it possesses only the meaning I have assigned to it through thoughts which, in themselves, are also meaningless. These thoughts, conceived as insubstantial “forms”—the voice of the ego—are the product of a primordial fear: the apparent separation from God, Who is Existence itself. In essence, such thoughts express the idea of separation.

The appearance of a fictitious world before the eyes of an equally fictitious character functions, in a sense, as a protective mechanism, for the idea of being separate from Reality—absolute loneliness—is terrifying and unbearable to the mind. And since nature abhors a vacuum, the mind that contemplates that idea “invents” an imaginary screen—consciousness—onto which it projects its fears and desires. In this way, the mind dreams the world it believes is real. Moreover, given that the idea of being an isolated “self,” set apart from everything, is by nature fragmentary, everything I perceive also appears fragmented and separate.

What I call “reality,” “the world,” or “matter,” and take to be something external, is nothing more than a set of meaningless ideas that have never left my mind, for they exist only within it. This world is apparently composed of ever smaller elements—organs, cells, molecules, atoms, quarks—that arise as the result of a disintegrative process culminating in the insubstantiality of quantum indeterminacy.

Have you ever wondered why nothing has ever been found that is not in perpetual change when examined closely? And if everything is constantly changing to become something else, is it not precisely that changing nature that we define as illusion?

II “...it is your thoughts that determine the world you see” (1:3) is one of the *Course’s* fundamental principles. This idea gives rise to the celebrated statement: “Therefore, do not try to change the WORLD, but rather try to change your mind ABOUT the world” (T-21.I.1:7).

The mind exists; the world, in itself, does not. We tend to believe that the world causes—or at least influences—what we think, but this *Course* teaches that the mind is the true cause of all things, whereas the world is merely the effect of an obscured mind.

III For the first time a startling idea is introduced here, one that will be repeated in various forms later on, such as: “I AM responsible for what I see” (T-21.IV.2:3). This implies that my opinions about the world are not the result of the world being a certain way; on the contrary, I am the one who makes the world I perceive out of my way of thinking. The world is not the cause of my opinions, but their effect.

This notion is a foundational pillar in the *Course’s* ontology and constitutes the basis of forgiveness. Since the world, in itself, is devoid of meaning, what I truly forgive are my own meaningless thoughts. Precisely because these thoughts are

unreal, they are what shape a guilty world that I myself have invented.

IV This line appears in *Helen's Notes*, but not in later versions, nor in the *Urtext*.

V You are not a victim of the world you think you see, but of what you tell yourself.

VI The world is not to blame for anything. The guilt I perceive in it is a projection of my own mind. If what I observe outside is the result of meaningless thoughts, then there is nothing in that seemingly external world that deserves to be "blamed." The only thing that needs to be corrected is my own thoughts.

VII Unlike the previous exercises, in this one you do not apply the idea concretely to the objects around you by naming them as you do so. Instead, the repetition of the idea and the shift in your gaze do not occur simultaneously. Both activities unfold at different tempos: the swiftness with which you direct your gaze contrasts with the slowness with which you repeat the idea.

VIII I can set my mind at ease and forgive what I perceive because it is meaningless. I only condemn and judge when I believe I am seeing something meaningful—something bad, wicked, or terrible. Yet if what I perceive has no meaning, there is no reason to condemn it.

And if my mind is the cause of what I see, how could I judge it? All I can do is acknowledge, as the *Text* states, that "I am responsible for what I see" (T-21.IV.2:3) and choose to change my own mind.

LESSON 12

I am upset because I see a meaningless world.

1. The importance of this idea lies in the fact that it corrects a major distortion in the way you perceive.

²You think that what you see is a fearful, sad, violent, or insane world.

³All these attributes you have given to it.

⁴The world itself has no meaning. **1**

2. These exercises are to be done with your eyes open.

²Look around you, this time quite slowly.

³Try to let your gaze move evenly from one thing to another, without haste.

⁴Do not vary the amount of time you spend looking at each thing; try to maintain a steady rhythm throughout the exercise.

⁵What you see does not matter.

⁶You teach yourself this by giving equal attention and equal time to everything you look at.

⁷This is an initial step in learning to give the same value to everything external.

3. As you look around, say to yourself:

²I seem to see a fearful world, a dangerous world, a hostile world, a sad world, a wicked world, a mad world...

³and so on, using any descriptive terms that occur to you.

4. If words that seem to be positive rather than negative come to mind, include them as well.

²For example, you might think of “a good world” or “a satisfying world.”

³If such terms occur to you, use them along with the others.

⁴You may not yet understand why these “pleasant” descriptions belong in these exercises, but remember that a “good world” implies a “bad” one, and a “satisfying world” implies an “unsatisfying” one.

⁵All the terms that cross your mind are suitable for today’s exercises.

⁶Their apparent quality does not matter.

5. Be sure not to vary the length of time you spend applying today’s idea to what you consider pleasant and to what you consider unpleasant.

²For the purposes of these exercises there is no difference between them.

³At the end of the practice period, add:

*⁴But I am upset because I see a world that means nothing. **II***

6. What is meaningless is neither good nor bad.

²Why, then, should a world that means nothing upset you?

³If you could accept the world as meaningless and let the Truth be written upon it, you would be filled with indescribable happiness.

⁴But because it is meaningless, you are impelled to describe it as you want it be. **III**

⁵That is what you see in it.

⁶That is what does not mean anything.

⁷Beneath your words is written the Word of God.

⁸What now upsets you is the Truth, but when your words have been erased, you will see His. **IV**

⁹That is the ultimate purpose of these exercises.

7. Practicing today's idea three or four times is sufficient.

²None of these practice periods should last more than one minute.

³Even that may prove too long.

⁴Discontinue the exercise if you experience strain.

I The meaning of anything is the content a sign or symbol conveys, and since you have built a universe of symbols bereft of love, what you perceive around you displeases you. But how could it be otherwise?

Do you think you could find satisfaction in something devoid of love, something not made of the same substance as you—the Love of God? What truly repels you is the unreality of the world you see, for, deep within, you recognize that this world is not real, since it does not resemble you.

If that world were like you, you would surely love it. But that which you have truly created, which is like you and which you love, is not called a “world.” That is real, and this *Course* calls them “the Creations of God’s Son.”

II In the *Text* there is a practice akin to this (T-14.XII.9:1-4): “And when your peace is threatened or disturbed in ANY way, say to yourself: I do not know the meaning of anything, NOT EVEN THIS. Therefore, I do NOT know HOW TO RESPOND TO IT. And I will not use what I learned on my own in the past to guide me now.”

III This, precisely, is what you dislike: the meanings you yourself have assigned to the world. Reflect for a moment on what is said here: “...you feel impelled to

describe it as you want it to be.”

Is it not surprising that you wish to see precisely a world you find distasteful? This statement is so striking that it deserves a pause to ask yourself whether it is truly so. Yet it is likely that, for now, you have not managed to develop the honesty and clarity needed to recognize things as they are.

Do not dismiss this idea, but neither feel obliged to accept it as true merely because you have been told so. Take the time you need to consider it calmly. Watch yourself; examine your mind. It may take you days, months, years... or even lifetimes. That does not matter. What matters is not to forget it, for the power of this idea to free your mind is extraordinary. When you finally understand clearly that you suffer precisely because you choose to suffer, you will have discovered the key to happiness.

IV What now repels you is the truth that the world you see has no meaning of its own.

LESSON 13

A meaningless world engenders fear.

1. Today's idea is a variation of the previous one, except that it is more specific about the emotion it arouses.

²In truth, a meaningless world is impossible.

³There is nothing that lacks meaning.

⁴However, this does not mean that you do not believe you perceive something that has no meaning.

⁵On the contrary, you are very inclined to think that you do.

2. The recognition of meaninglessness arouses intense anxiety in all who perceive themselves as separate. **I**

²It represents a situation in which God and the ego appear to “challenge” each other as to the meaning that should be assigned to the empty space that meaninglessness presents. **II**

³The ego hastens frantically to fill it with its own “ideas,” fearing that the void could be used to demonstrate its own unreality. **III**

⁴And in this alone is it correct.

3. It is essential, therefore, that you learn to recognize what is meaningless as meaningless, and to accept it without fear.

²If you are afraid, you will certainly endow the world with attributes it does not possess, and fill it with images that do not exist.

³To the ego, illusions are devices of safety, just as they must be to you, who identify with it. **IV**

4. Today's exercises, to be done three or four times for no more than a minute at most each time, should be practiced in a slightly different manner than previous ones.

²With eyes closed, state today's idea.

³Then open your eyes and look around you slowly, saying:

⁴I am looking at a world that means nothing.

⁵Repeat this statement silently as you continue to look around.

⁶Then close your eyes and conclude with:

⁷A meaningless world engenders fear because I think I am in competition with God.

5. You may find it difficult not to resist this final statement in some way.

²Whatever form the resistance may take, remind yourself that the real reason you are afraid of this idea is because of the “vengeance” of the “enemy.”

³You are not expected to believe this statement at this point, and you will probably dismiss it as preposterous.

⁴Nevertheless, take careful note of any signs of fear, whether obvious or subtle, that the idea may evoke. **V**

6. This is our first attempt at stating an explicit cause-and-effect relationship of a kind you are still very inexperienced in recognizing. **VI**

²Do not dwell on the final statement, and do not try to think about it except during the practice periods.

³That will suffice for now.

I If what I perceive in the world is devoid of meaning, then the thought within me that gave rise to it is also meaningless. And since I identify with my thoughts, this implies that I myself lack meaning—that is, that I do not exist.

Anxiety arises because, at some level, I recognize that this lack of meaning extends to my own individual, separate, egoic existence.

II This is one way of explaining what is happening in your mind, although, of course, it is not how you perceive it. Having identified with the ego, you interpret the events in your mind from its perspective.

III This somewhat grotesque figure of the ego, lunging to assign meanings, should not surprise you, for that is precisely what is happening in your mind constantly. That is what you call “thinking,” “my thoughts,” or your “inner dialogue.” It is nothing but the ego’s frenzy to confer meaning on illusions.

It is not that your mind has been possessed by the ego; that is not so. The ego is nothing, and you hold all the power. What has happened is that you have chosen to listen to that voice, which is nothing more than the effect, in your holy mind, of having accepted the idea of separation—what we might call “the ego as effect.” You are free; you always have been and always will be. Yet in your present situation, that freedom lies solely in deciding which voice you choose to listen to.

You do not generate or produce the thoughts you believe you have; you merely subscribe to them. That “thinking,” so to speak, is an automatic figuration of your mind that turns your fears and desires into “forms.” It is akin to what happens in your nightly dreams: a figurative language by which your subconscious communicates with your conscious mind—a fantasy, an illusion that you may choose to

regard as real, or not.

The idea of being separate—the ego as cause—has no substance because it is not real. You, who are real, are not separate. Yet sustaining that idea generates in your mind a bubble of illusion that you call a personal world or personal identity—the ego as effect. You will not escape it so long as you attribute reality and meaning to it. That illusory bubble, as fragile as a soap bubble, is sustained by your credulity, and that is why you need forgiveness to dissolve it.

IV As we noted earlier in the first note to W-11, illusions are compensatory mechanisms that attempt to mitigate the *horror vacui* of a supposed existence separate from God. To acknowledge that what you behold means nothing demands impeccable honesty, yet it is within your reach and you can allow it.

Do not be afraid. You will lose nothing real by accepting this truth; you will merely leave behind the imaginary limitations with which you have constructed your insignificant identity. Do not fear the expansion of awareness that truth will bring. You were not created to be a slave to an absurd, suffering idea. Try to remember what your heart is calling you to. Lay down your fear and walk with confidence toward God, toward your true Self.

V That atavistic, deep-seated fear that disturbs your mind is, in fact, nothing more than a childish and irrelevant gesture that in no way offends your Father. From that supposed “original sin,” you have fashioned an imaginary enemy that has filled you with fear and that you have hidden in the deepest recesses of your awareness. Though it is not really there, your belief in its existence is enough for you to perceive it as real.

Now the descendants of that ancestral fear present themselves before you—the “children of the children of the children” of that fantasy you invented when you imagined you had left your home taking a few “treasures” with you. You are the prodigal son, and you surely remember how that story ends.

VI What is set before you here is nothing less than the fear of God, the last obstacle to peace. These are weighty words, and that is why Jesus counsels you not to dwell on the idea longer than necessary to do the exercise; merely keep it in mind, for it is the truth.

It is in the Second Part of this *Workbook* that you will begin to redeem this deep confusion that is, quite literally, embittering your life.

LESSON 14

God did not create a meaningless world.

1. Today's idea is, of course, the reason why a meaningless world is impossible. **I**

²What God did not create does not exist.

³And everything that does exist, exists exactly as He created it.

⁴The world you see has nothing to do with Reality.

⁵It is the product of your own making, and it does not exist. **II**

2. Today's exercises should be practiced with eyes closed throughout.

²The period of mental searching should be brief—no more than one minute.

³Do not do more than three practice sessions with today's idea unless you feel completely at ease.

⁴If you do, it is because you truly understand what the exercises are for.

3. Today's idea is another step in the process of learning to let go of the thoughts you have written onto the world, and to see instead the Word of God. **III**

²The early steps in this exchange—which can truly be called salvation—may be quite difficult, and even rather painful.

³Some of them will lead you directly into fear.

⁴But you will not be left there.

⁵You will transcend that fear and go far beyond it, for we are heading toward perfect safety and perfect Peace.

4. With eyes closed, think of all the horrors in the world that come to your mind.

²Name each one as you see it, and then deny its reality.

³God did not create that, and so it is not real.

⁴Say, for example:

*⁵God did not create that war in ____, and so it is not real. **IV***

⁶God did not create the airplane crash in ____, and so it is not real.

⁷God did not create that disaster [specify which] in ____, and so it is not real.

⁸God did not create that illness [specify which and name the person], and so it is not real.

5. Suitable subjects for applying today's idea also include anything you fear might happen to you or to anyone you care about.

²In each case, name the “disaster” very specifically.

³Do not use general terms.

⁴For example, do not say, God did not create illness, but rather, God did not create cancer, or heart attacks, or whatever specifically frightens you.

6. What you are looking at is your personal catalog of horrors.

²These things are part of the world you see.

³Some of them are shared illusions, and others belong to your private hell.

⁴That does not matter.

⁵What God did not create can only exist in your own mind, apart from His.

⁶Therefore, it has no meaning.

⁷In recognition of this fact, conclude each practice period by repeating today’s idea:

⁸God did not create a meaningless world.

7. Today’s idea may, of course, be applied to anything that upsets you during the day, apart from the practice periods.

²Be very specific in applying it.

³Say:

⁴God did not create a meaningless world.

⁵He did not create [specify the upsetting situation], and so it is not real.

I W-13.1:2 “In fact, a meaningless world is impossible.”

II Every human culture has a narrative that explains the origin of the perceived universe, known as a “cosmogony.” It may take a scientific, mythological, or religious form, but in every case it rests on the premise that what you perceive is real. In this sense, all human cosmogonies share an essential similarity—except for those of a non-dual nature, like the one this *Course* proposes. Here you are taught that the world is an illusion and that everything you perceive is unreal. In fact, this *Course* holds that perceiving is comparable to dreaming: only the mind is real, and everything you think you perceive is nothing but thoughts you conceived that have never left their source—your own mind.

The *Text* begins by stating: “Nothing real can be threatened. Nothing unreal exists.” Although the nonexistence of what is unreal may seem obvious, what is not so clear is that everything you perceive belongs to that category of unreality. The

introduction culminates with these words: “Herein lies the Peace of God.”

The Peace of God is precisely the salvation you seek in this world that so upsets you. Yet if the world is not real, why would you grieve? If you were to attain awareness of its unreality, would you not then enjoy the Peace of God?

You suffer, fear, blame, and self-blame because you believe the world you live in is true. But would God create such a world? If God did not create it, then the world does not exist; and if the world exists, then God is not real. Ultimately, there are no alternatives other than these.

Today’s *Lesson* invites you to choose between these two possibilities and, once you do, to rest and ignore any interpretation the ego’s voice may try to offer you about what you perceive. This *Course* is extremely simple, and that is its essence. This is the cornerstone on which its entire ontological system—its explanation of what is real—is built.

To adopt this approach, a profound shift in your mind will be necessary. You are only at the very beginning of that process. It is natural that, at this point, the idea that everything you think you love—as well as everything you fear and hate—is not real will be equally unsettling. From the moment you opened your eyes to the world, your mind has been conditioned to accept a certain description of reality. Everything you have been taught and everything you have repeated to yourself since then is false, and that is precisely why you think as you think and believe what you believe.

It has been explained to you—and you are aware of it—that this is a *Course* designed to train your mind in a new way of interpreting reality. You are only beginning this path. You are not expected to embrace the new proposals enthusiastically from the start, nor do you need to. You do not have to believe blindly in anything taught here, since belief by itself will not lead you to true knowledge.

Simply keep your mind open to a new possibility and begin to experience the effects for yourself. Over time, you will gain a deeper understanding of the truth, without anyone having to convince you of it.

III W-12.6:7–8 “Beneath your words is written God’s Word. The truth now is bewildering, but when your words have been erased, you will see His.”

IV Helen originally wrote “the war in Vietnam”—this was in 1969—but later changed the phrase so it would read this other way. The reference to Vietnam, however, shows you the kind of specificity asked of you in this exercise.

LESSON 15

My thoughts are images which I have made.^I

1. Because the thoughts you believe you think appear as images, you do not recognize them as nothing.

²You believe you think them, and so you believe you see them.

³This is how your “seeing” was made.

⁴This is the function you have given to the eyes of your body.

⁵This is not vision.

⁶It is image-making.

⁷And it is what has taken the place of Vision, replacing it with illusions.

2. This introductory idea about the process of image-making, which you call seeing, is likely to hold little meaning for you at the moment.

²You will begin to understand it when you have seen little edges of light around the same familiar objects you see now. **II**

³That is the beginning of true Vision.

⁴You can be certain that true Vision will soon come when this occurs.

3. As you proceed, you may experience many “light episodes.” **III**

²These may take many different forms, some of them quite unexpected.

³Do not be afraid of them.

⁴They are signs that you are finally opening your eyes.

⁵They will not last, because they merely symbolize true perception and are not related to Knowledge.

⁶These exercises will not reveal Knowledge to you.

⁷But they will prepare the way that leads to It. **IV**

4. In practicing today’s idea, repeat it silently at first, and then apply it to anything you see around you, using its name as you look at it and saying:

² This _____ is an image I have made.

³ That _____ is an image I have made.

⁴It is not necessary to include a large number of specific objects in each practice period.

⁵However, it is important to look at each one of them slowly as you repeat the idea inwardly.

⁶The idea should be repeated very slowly each time.

⁷Although you will not be able to apply the idea to many things within the recommended one-minute practice period, try to make the selection as random as possible.

5. If you begin to feel uneasy, the exercise should be discontinued before the full minute.

²Do not repeat the idea more than three times today unless you feel perfectly comfortable doing so, and do not exceed four practice periods.

³However, it may be used throughout the day as needed. ▼

I Taking responsibility for the meaning you yourself have assigned to all things is what this lesson's practice invites you to do. Most of the time, those meanings are ones you learned from others through the process the world calls "education." Yet in every case the meaning will always be profoundly personal. An object will never be exactly the same for one person as for another. The proof lies in the specific "emotional resonance" that the things of the world have for each individual.

Perhaps with this practice you will also begin to understand that every experience of which you are aware is, in essence, a mental process. The things you look at, the objects you perceive, and the places where you believe you find yourself are, in fact, ideas in your mind and possess neither meaning nor existence of their own. Without the mind, there is no world; but the mind does not need the world in order to exist. What you call "world" is nothing but an idea in your mind, configured out of a set of shadings, contrasts, and considerations. The world does not exist, yet it is enough for your mind to hold a belief that it exists for you to perceive it as something real and external to you. Still, that is only your opinion—and a mistaken one.

It is not only an error to believe in the existence of a world outside you; your idea of yourself is also completely false. In fact, the world is nothing but a reflection of that other fundamental error.

Your mind cannot hold two contradictory ideas at the same time. As long as you keep clinging enthusiastically to your old beliefs, the truth cannot manifest in your mind. For this reason, Part I of the *Workbook* is devoted to undoing your mistaken way of perceiving reality. Without this step, it would be impossible for you to open your eyes and leave behind the dream of separation that today seems so convincing.

II These "edges of light" are halos that can be seen around objects. They are borders of light that make objects stand out from their surroundings. This experience is deeply related to your internal dialogue and occurs when you look at something and stop that incessant dialogue you keep with yourself; it happens in the absence of

ego, in the absence of “interpretation.” The “glow” you observe fluctuates according to the stress generated by that mental condition of suppressing the ego. Remember that the ego is grasping and will try to appropriate this experience in order to interpret it; however, it is not for that. For now, all you need to know is that these perceptions come from a state of mental silence.

III Ken Wapnick explains that this reference to “episodes of light” and the warning not to fear them was included by Jesus to ease the anxiety of Cal Hatcher, a colleague of Bill and Helen (*Absence from Felicity*, p. 304). According to Ken, before the *Course* began to be written down, Cal spoke with Bill about the episodes of light he had been experiencing and that terrified him. At the start of the dictation, Bill told Cal about the *Course*, and Cal showed immediate interest. As a result, they often met in Bill’s office early in the morning to go over the latest notes.

It is possible that these “episodes of light” also refer to the perception of “auras” and “chakras,” concepts common in India’s culture, or even to the way sorcerers describe human beings as “eggs of light,” as Carlos Castaneda recounts in his works. In any case, this should be neither a concern nor a requirement for the student of this *Course*. The student’s sole mission is to attain peace, extend it, and save the world in their mind through forgiveness and the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Ultimately, every perceptual experience is illusory and constitutes only a symbolic way of expressing—or translating into sensory terms—“true vision.”

IV Knowing is not a perceptual phenomenon and has nothing to do with acquiring information about something outside yourself, since that is, in fact, impossible—there is nothing outside you. To Know, to Love, and to Create are the three fundamental aspects of Being, and they are one and the same.

Do not obsess over the episodes of light, do not pursue them, and do not desire to experience them. You are not seeking “lights,” but to remember who you are, to remember your Father, and to feel His Love within you. Anything short of that is merely an “anecdote” along your spiritual path.

Remember that you always have a Guide who accompanies you. He will teach you how to interpret everything that happens to you correctly. You only need to be willing to listen to Him, and He will not communicate with you in words, but with certainty.

V This line was added later by hand. It does not appear in *Helen’s Notes*.

LESSON 16

I have no neutral thoughts.

1. Today's idea is an initial step in dispelling the belief that your thoughts have no effect.

²Everything you see is the result of your thoughts. **I**

³There are no exceptions to this.

⁴Thoughts are not big or small; powerful or weak.

⁵They are simply true or false. **II**

⁶Those that are true create in their own likeness. **III**

⁷Those that are false do so as well. **IV**

2. There is no concept more inherently self-contradictory than that of "idle thoughts."

²What gives rise to an entire world can hardly be called idle.

³Every thought you have contributes either to truth or to illusion; it either extends the truth or multiplies illusions.

⁴You can indeed multiply what is nothing, but you will not extend it by doing so. **V**

3. In addition to recognizing that thoughts are never idle, salvation also requires that you acknowledge that every thought you have will bring either peace or conflict, either love or fear.

²A neutral result is impossible, because a neutral thought is impossible.

³The temptation to dismiss fearful thoughts as unimportant, trivial, or unworthy of attention is so great that it is essential to recognize them all as equally destructive, and equally unreal. **VI**

⁴We will practice this idea in many forms before you come to truly understand it.

4. In applying today's idea, search your mind for about a minute with eyes closed, and try sincerely not to overlook any "insignificant" thought that tends to elude your search.

²This will be quite difficult for you until you learn to do it. **VII**

³You will find that it is still very hard for you not to make artificial distinctions. **VIII**

5. Every thought that occurs to you, regardless of how you may classify it, is suitable for applying today's idea.

²During the practice periods, repeat the idea first, and then, as each thought crosses your mind, hold it in awareness as you say to yourself:

³ *This thought about _____ is not a neutral thought.*

⁴ *That thought about _____ is not a neutral thought.*

6. As usual, use today's idea whenever you become aware of a specific thought that causes you discomfort.

² The following form is suggested for this purpose:

³ *This thought about _____ is not a neutral thought, because I do not have neutral thoughts.*

7. Four or five practice periods are recommended, if you find them relatively easy.

² If you experience strain, three will be enough.

³ The length of the exercise period should also be reduced if it becomes uncomfortable.

¹ You are Spirit (W-97), and the mind is the activating agent of the Spirit (G-1.1). You experience yourself in the mind and as mind. You know nothing but mind and you relate to nothing but your own thoughts, for there is nothing else. Some of the thoughts you conceive you call "opinions" and consider very "private." Others you call "things" or "circumstances," and you think they are external to you, but that belief is false, for nothing is outside you; if something were, you could neither relate to it nor know it at all. Your own body—or the idea you have of yourself—are your thoughts. The other people you think you relate to, and the world where you think that occurs, are also in your mind—where else would they be? This is why you always relate only to yourself, and the way you treat your thoughts is the way you treat yourself.

There are no neutral thoughts because every one of your thoughts has appeared in your mind for a reason—something has caused it—and that "something" is your will; you have the thoughts you invoke because you want to experience them. Both the world you see (thoughts you call "things") and the stories you fantasize about (thoughts you recognize as ideas) have arisen in your imagination for some motive that brought them to your awareness. They did not appear out of nothing or at random; rather, they are the symbolic expression of your deepest fears and desires, and all of them serve a function.

The purpose of this *Course* in mind training is precisely to learn how to manage these thoughts by choosing the ones you do want—loving ones—and by reinterpreting the others according to the guidance of the Holy Spirit so as to remove from

them their component of anger and fear, which are the same. Thus you forgive the world by ceasing to fear and attack it, and that is the beginning of living lucidly.

II All the thoughts you are relating to now are false, for you relate to them in terms of “belief,” which is the spurious way of using the mind that was created to “create” in the same way it was created. To believe is merely to assign false attributes to your thoughts and to think that what you think is true and that your thoughts are something they are not.

III Genesis 1:26: “And God said, ‘Let us make humankind in our image and likeness.’”

IV Just as true or real thoughts create reality by extending one’s very Being, false thoughts forge illusions. The former *extend* reality, and the latter shape the world in the ego mind. In every case, thoughts are never powerless, for they are causal and must necessarily have “effects.” Some are conceived within the realm of the real—what the *Course* calls “the Creations of God’s Son”—and others within the realm of illusion—illusions.

V This, obviously, is a parody of the mathematical principle of nullity resulting from multiplying any number by zero. The *Course*’s use of the verb “to extend” is very difficult to interpret ontologically, for it is always used to refer to the creation of what is real. Thus, the *Course* states: “The Son of God is an extension of God.” The human mind—the self-limited mind of God’s Son—is configured to conceive forms, illusions, not real concepts, which are perfectly abstract.

For this reason, reality’s relationship with itself gives rise to the incomprehensible verb “to extend” which, while pointing to the idea of “increase,” cannot literally be taken that way either, since increase implies change and reality is immutable. These are the limitations inherent in language, which, in the end, is an instrument for communicating concepts within the realm of duality, yet proves ineffective for describing reality, which is non-dual.

VI Salvation—the good news, the Gospel—lies precisely in the fact that fear-thoughts, lacking love, are unreal. This is why fear is unfounded. It is comparable to when we have a nightmare and find ourselves threatened in our sleep by a horrifying figure, which will always symbolize some lack of forgiveness. Upon awakening, we understand the fear was unfounded; what frightened us was an illusion.

However, one does not awaken from the dream of the world in the world. If you believe you are in the world, you cannot afford the luxury of blithely dismissing loveless false thoughts, for you will undoubtedly experience their effects in it. It is necessary to recognize the destructive nature of these thoughts and the power they have to embitter “life.”

Although the definitive solution is to awaken from the dream of the world, the

strategy is to heal the mind. First, by becoming aware of the power of your “bad” thoughts in the world; then, by asking to “see this differently” in order to remove them. This is precisely the Atonement.

VII This is an important sentence because it points to the *Course*’s sacrosanct principle of mental vigilance—the fundamental, ongoing task of the student of *A Course in Miracles*: to watch their mind at all times, to be alert, and to be aware of every thought that arises. As a rule, any thought that pops up unexpectedly is a manifestation of the ego—its grandiose aspirations or its deepest fears. It is essential to become aware of this, and this need can never be overemphasized.

Once you have become aware of such a thought, it is imperative to understand with absolute clarity that it is false and destructive and that, at best, it will only serve to waste time on idle fantasies. The compulsive flow of ego thoughts is always a sign that we find the present reality unsatisfactory and unworthy of our attention or appreciation, so we replace it with fantasies.

The sound mind, lit by the pure awareness of Being, is blissful; and what it beholds—the real world—is always wholly satisfying and evokes joy.

VIII This too is fundamental. It is essential that you become aware that you now relate to your own thoughts according to an artificial scale or yardstick you yourself have established, which classifies them by arbitrarily assigning them a value or relevance. Thus you believe there are thoughts related to certain concepts that are more “valuable” or important than others. In reality, what you are doing is ranking illusions without noticing that all of them are the same: all are false.

One idea that is especially hard for you to accept is that the Holy Spirit does not share your scale of illusory values. You believe that He will surely give you more attention and care if, through tears, you ask Him to heal a malignant, lethal cancerous tumor than if you ask Him which would be better for you, a strawberry ice cream or a lemon one. But He does not see it that way. He sees only that God’s Son is dreaming and needs to awaken. The content of the dream is irrelevant to Him. It is not irrelevant to you, however, and therein lies the problem, because that imaginary contrast among illusions is precisely what sustains your dream.

This is a radical *Course*. Its goal is not to “improve” your life in this world, but to lead you to awaken from the illusion that you are in it.