***The End of Illusion***

**by Jon Mundy**

*The learning of the world is built upon a concept of the self-adjusted to the world's reality.*

T-31.V.1:1

 “If the world were perfect,” said Yankee baseball player Yogi Berra, “it wouldn’t be.” Yogi got it right. The world is not perfect. Heaven is perfect. Therefore, Heaven is the only Eternal Reality. Everything else is fleeting — temporal — impermanent.

I was listening to Ken Wapnick lecturing at Fordham University in New York City in 2004 when he said, “the world is a maladaptive solution to a non-existent problem.” He smiled when he said it. It was a good line and he knew it. There was a chuckle from the audience and he smiled some more. Here are a few ways the Course talks about the world. It is, totally insane and leads to nothing.” (T-14.I.3:8)

“. . . an uncertain place, in which you walk in danger and uncertainty. (T-30.VII.7:2)

“. . . the belief that love is impossible. (T-8.IV.3:11)

“. . . meaningless in itself.

(W-12.1:4)

“. . . nothing in itself. (W-132.4:1)

It “appears as though” we live in a material world, inside bodies, subject to the passage of time and then eventual death. While we should not deny the “seeming” reality of the world, time, and the body. Our task is one of awakening from the dreaming rather than attacking the figures in our dream. We have split minds. While part of our attention is given to God, a greater part is given to the ego-self. Still, the thing we call “the ego” has no more permanence or reality than last night’s dream.

St. Augustine Bishop of Hippo in North Africa during the fifth century, expressed it very simply when he said, “Only eternity is real.” How simple is the truth? Everything else is fleeting, complex, and constantly changing. The perceived world is part of our attempt to maintain ego identification. Jesus in the Gospels says, “What does it benefit a man to gain the whole world and lose his own soul?” (Luke 9:25). We cannot

lose our soul but we can get lost in a dream in which the ego seems very real. The more caught we are in “the dreaming of the world,”

*You see the world that you have made,*

*but you do not see yourself as the image maker.*

*You cannot be saved from the world, but you can escape from its cause. This is what salvation means,*

*for where is the world you see when its cause is gone?*

W-23.4:1-3

Bengali poet, mystic, and philosopher Rabindranath Tagore  was the first non-European to win the Nobel Prize in literature. According to Tagore, “We are the determiners of the world we see.” The body, time, the world and the ego are all temporal. Perception and projection define the world and thus gives it’s seeming “reality.”

*The world one sees does not even exist.*Ramana Maharshi

If the mind is eternal and substance/form is ever changing and temporal, then there is no world because *we’re always making up the world.* What we call civilization is based on a colossal number of dreams we all share. Simply put, there is no world because it is a thought apart from God.

*If the center of the thought system is true, only truth extends from it. But if a lie is at its center, only deception proceeds from it.*

T-6.V.B.1:10-11

The world we make up is a dream — sometimes a nightmare, sometimes very ordinary. Even a happy dream — is still dreaming.

*All “things” and all sentiments are interpretations only,*

*and interpretations cannot be real in any sense.*Wei Wu Wei

Taoist Philosopher

According to Wei Wu Wei, perceiving is impersonal, and *the interpretation* that follows perception is contaminated by the prejudices of the observer. The result is that we all have a dreamlike understanding of reality. Many native cultures see the world as a dream. It is true for the Australian Aborigines and the native tribes in Venezuela.

**Domestication**

Our families, social institutions, technology, and the omnipresent media create and Madison Avenue sustain s, an illusory world built around what is in “fashion.” In the same way, what we call “reality” is made up.

*If men can run the world,*

*why can’t they stop wearing neckties?
How intelligent is it to start the day*

 *by tying a noose around your neck?*American Journalist Linda Ellerbe in
*The Seattle Post-Intelligencer*

We're are at the mercy of the culture into which we are born, and we become domesticated in much the same way that our pets are trained through a system of rewards and punishment.  Nineteenth-century  Scottish author and historian Thomas Carlyle’s parents wanted him to become a minister. While a student at the University of Edinburgh, he realized that he had been indoctrinated by Christianity. Carlyle was a profound thinker and deeply religious. Like many mystics, he did not lose his faith. He lost his faith church politics, traditions, and dogmas. " Popular opinion,” he said, “is the greatest lie in the world.” I love Carlyle’s sayings,

*“Silence is as deep as Eternity. Speech is as shallow as Time.”*

Yet another Scotsman, psychiatrist R. D. Laing also questioned the nature of reality as given to us. According to Laing, much of what we call insanity is really an inability to adjust to an insane world and the conflicting and contradictory expectations from parents, society, the church, and more. Unable to cope with “the world,” some people *check out* mentally, leading to distress for everyone who must then care for them.

*The real world is all that the Holy Spirit has saved for you*

*out of what you have made,*

*and to perceive only this is salvation because*

*it is the recognition that reality is only what is true.*

T-11.VII.4:9

*The real world*, said Greek-Armenia spiritual teacher Gurdjieff, *is governed by cosmic laws, not*  *egos laws.* The world is contaminated by hubris, arrogance and a multitude of ego needs. In such a world, the archaic law of “an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth” still rules. *Man is caught*, said Gurdjieff, *in a fearful dream and thus prone to psychosis and mindless fits of fury.* We see thisexemplified in a never-ending desire for war. Our job is one of loving the world, rather than looking to condemn it or transform it.

*Reason will tell you that the only way to escape from misery*

*is to recognize it “and go the other way.”*

T-22.II.4:1

*Do you not think the world needs peace as much as you do?*

*Do you not want to give it to the world as much as you want to receive it? For unless you do, you will not receive it.*

*If you want to have it of me, you must give it.*

T-8.IV.4:1-4

In the first chapter of his book *The Four Agreements*, contemporary Mexican author Don Miguel Ruiz says that *Dreaming is the main function of the mind* and we are constantly dreaming. Our night-time dreams and our daytime dreams have a different form — that is all.

What Ruiz calls *dreaming*, Eckhart Tolle calls *compulsive thinking* and Freudians call *unconscious thinking*. Society then is “the dreaming of the planet”— a collection of billions of small dreams carried out according to a wide variety of cultural values and mores. Everywhere, games are played out in politics, religions, and business.

*Dreams are perceptual temper tantrums, in which you literally scream, "I want it thus!" And thus, it seems to be.*

T-18.II.4:1

According to Ruiz, we see what we want to see; we hear what we want to hear, and our belief systems are mirrors in which we perceive what we project.  In solitude, we have our dreams to ourselves, and in society we dream our dreams in concert. In this way, the world is “word” (or thought) built. We use language to think and to understand what is going on in ourselves and the world around us. American author Michael Talbot, in *Mysticism and the New Physics* says, “Reality largely constructed by cultural beliefs. What we believe to be true becomes true. What we call reality is learned.”

Early 20th century English author William Somerset Maugham was early on one of my favorite authors. In his last novel, *The Razors Edge,* the main character, Larry Darrell a disillusioned veteran of World War I, abandons his wealthy friends, lover, and lifestyle to go to India in search of enlightenment. Eventually, he decides not to become a monk but to live in the world and embrace the world fully by simply loving it.

The story’s themes of Eastern mysticism and war-weariness struck a chord with readers just after World War II. According to Maugham, “Man always sacrifices truth to vanity, comfort and advantage. We live,” said Maugham, not by truth but by make-believe.” What is right and what is wrong are different interpretations, and we kill each other over interpretations.

*The individual has always had to struggle to keep from being overwhelmed by the tribe.*

*If you try it, you will be lonely often, and sometimes frightened,*

*but no price is too high to pay*

*for the privilege of owning yourself.*Frederick Nietzsche

Nineteen century, Irish playwright, novelist and poet Oscar Wilde was a contemporary of Nietzsche. He was also one of the most successful playwrights of Victorian London, well known for his outlandish lifestyle and his witty sayings such as,

*The terror of society, which is the basis of morals,
the terror of God, which is the secret of religion
—these are the two things that govern us.*

Remember the phrase from the movie and play *South Pacific*? “You have to be carefully taught. You must be taught to hate and fear. You have to be carefully taught.” From the time that we can understand words, we are told what the world is. This teaching is persistent until we perceive the prescribed world.

After a while, we no longer have to be trained. We want to please others. We want to act appropriately. Domestication is so strong that we even punish ourselves if we think our action is inappropriate or we "get out of line."

*The mystic has the most disturbing awareness that
something is not quite right.*

*The social order,
with its world of thought, sentiments, speech and
religion and its entire cultural network, determines
our thoughts and actions to such an extent that it is
hard to see or accept any alternative.*Carmelite priest and mystical researcher Bruno Borchert

**Worlds Within Worlds**

We can speak of the worlds of the Babylonians, the Spanish conquistadors, Napoleonic France, or Nazi Germany — as though they represent certain states of mind or attitudes that existed once upon a time but exist no more. Castaneda said to his teacher Don Juan, “Are you trying to show me the real world?” “No,” replied Don Juan I’m not trying to show you the real world; I’m trying to show you that the world you see is just a view.”

19th-century  Lebanese Catholic monk, mystic, and priest Saint Sharbel lived as a hermit, and his reputation for godliness compelled people to seek him out for a blessing. He wrote,

*If a man’s choices depend on his passions, or on propaganda,*

*or on current conventions, they are not free choices.
It is not the exercise of choice that makes man free, but the determination to choose the Truth.*

*Would You Be Hostage to the Ego or Host to God?*

T-11.II.7:1

There is great wisdom in taking a break from the world: from television, the internet, and newspapers. In the gospels, Jesus suggests we go into the closet and shut the door. Sit down, quiet the ego-mind (compulsive thinking), and wait! After a while, we'll have some idea of what is really going on. When Jesus says that the "Kingdom of Heaven" is inside us, he doesn't mean it's in our bodies. "The memory of God comes to the quiet mind." T-23.I.1:1). It's the quiet, peaceful mind, which connects to God. We can't see beyond this world until we stop making it up the world.

*The number of mystics beatified or canonized is much fewer*

 *than those burned at the stake.*Bruno Borchert

The mystic is not “at war” with the world. The mystic is rather, a “lover” of whatever presents itself: nature, music, or another soul. To hate the world is to make the world. Our task is to change our vision so that we see all things with love and compassion — what the Buddhists call “loving kindness.”

In my 1976 death experience, having fallen into *a vast ocean of Mind*, I lost contact with everything we might call the “outside.” There was nothing left with which I could identify as a person living in a world filled with anxieties and fears, regrets, nostalgia, and remorse or thoughts of sin, guilt, and fear.

 I saw a zigzagging line that delineated a new universe. The world disappeared through that zigzagging line, and there appeared in its place a multidimensional, multi-colored grid that is impossible to describe because it was truly of another dimension.

*There is nothing outside you.*

*That is what you must ultimately learn, for it is the realization that the Kingdom of Heaven is restored to you.*

T-18.VI.1:1-2

The ancient Hawaiians thought that they were one with a divine source, which they called *Ke Akua*, and that everything was connected. The Navaho also speak of what they call a web; the Tibetans call it a net. Modern cosmologists and astrophysicists call it the “quantum hologram.” I experienced this grid as more “real” than the world we see outside. It exists in a place I’ve been to before to which we are all now returning – to a place we already are. I was not losing reality. I was seeing it again for the first time.

**The World is Temporal. Heaven is Eternal.**

Doesn’t your childhood seem like a dream, something that happened once upon a time in a land far, far away? If you have lived long enough to go through major moves and transitions, doesn’t it seem that you’ve lived other lives that you now remember as a dream? We usually forget our nighttime dreams, even those that were vivid and *seemingly* real. We forget dreams because *they were only dreams*. This moment will soon be a memory, very much like a dream; and as time goes by, we will forget more and more of what now *seems* real.

What we call the “real world” is a place of separation, sadness, sin, sickness, and suffering. It is a house of illusion, where the ego and the body are made real and God is nearly forgotten. In God’s creation, there is no suffering, pain, loss, separation, or death because God’s creation is love itself, an eternal, changeless reality we call Heaven. Nothing in this world is eternal. In the world of form,

illusions hold sway and Heaven seems like a fantasy. For the mystic, it’s the other way around. Heaven is reality, and this world is an illusion. To be free of the world, we must forgive the world for all the condemnation we have placed upon it.  To forgive the world means forgiving ourselves for the insanity we have created – the insanity which keeps us from love.

God did not kick Adam and Eve out of Heaven. We (symbolized by Adam and Eve) we left by our own volition. In that sense, we are all prodigal sons and daughters. We have split ourselves off from our Source. At any instant, our Source is ready to provide us with guidance that will help us return home to the eternal reality of God’s love. It does not matter what we did or think we have done. God is simply waiting for us to let go of dreams and open our eyes. Like Dorothy from the *Wizard of OZ,* we’re already Home. In fact, we never left.

*It is hard to understand what “The Kingdom of Heaven*

*is within you” really means. The word “within” is unnecessary.*

*The Kingdom of Heaven is you.*T-4.III.1:1-4

The body is temporal and will die. The Kingdom of Heaven is eternally alive. We cannot, however, see Heaven when we look for the inside on the outside. We’ve got it flipped around backward. For this reason, the Course says, we need a reversal in thinking.

*If I find in myself a desire which no experience in this world*

*can satisfy, the most probable explanation is that I was made for another world.*C.S. Lewis

We are indeed made for another world because we are “of” another world. Heaven is not something we have to hope for or work to earn. It is not something that is going to happen *someday*. Heaven is “now” because there is no other time. Heaven in “here” because there is no other place.

A soap opera is not real; it is a melodrama. When we are living in a soap opera, we know it; we can feel something “artificial,” something is not quite right. Hell is the experience of being caught in circumstances from which, it seems, there is no escape. When we come to see, that Heaven is within;

we can see craziness and not go crazy;

we can see hatred and not hate;

we can see misery and not be miserable.

 Unaware of Heaven within, it is easy to go crazy, get angry, or sink into misery. To come to Heaven is to come to ourselves. German physicist Max Planck, the "father of quantum physics" and winner of the Nobel Prize in Physics in 1918, affirms the teaching of the mystics when he says,

***There is no material world as we know it.***

*All that we perceive to be matter is held together by a force,*

*and this force is intelligence.*

*As a man who has devoted my*

*entire life to studying the substance of which the world is made, I can firmly state that mind is the matrix of all matter.*

**Mind as the Matrix of Matter**

That there is no world is corroborated on a deeper level by the modern insights of subatomic physics. The photons that comprise light have been observed to consist of waves or particles, but not both a wave and a particle at the same time. The observer’s intent determines which one is seen (wave or particle), which is an­other way of saying that the observer’s perception creates reality. With this comes the further realization that every “thing” is a projection from our minds. It not that we “make up other people,” but we do most certainly “make up” our interpretation of everyone we see.

*The Creator of life, the Source of everything that lives,*

*the Father of the universe*

*and of the universe of universes, and of everything that lies even beyond them would you remember.*

T-IV.D.1:4

**Modern Cosmology**

There is something holding the universe together, and it’s not gravity. Gravity works within our own and other planetary and galactic systems, but it is not a force sufficient to explain why the universe is not flying apart. *Something* is keeping everything together. The physical universe, what we call “atoms,” makes up four percent of the universe. Another 23 percent is made up of *dark matter*. Although dark matter is not observable, scientists know that galaxies, clusters of galaxies, and the universe contain far more matter than that which interacts with electromagnetic radiation and can, therefore, be detected.

The remaining 73 percent of the universe is made up of what cosmologists call *dark energy*. No one is quite sure what dark energy is as we do not have any means of measuring it. There is, however, some force acting in opposition to gravity that holds everything together even though the Universe is expanding. Why don’t we call this thing that has no form, no dimension, and cannot be measured — “Mind” or “Love” or “God”? Like Mind, like God, Love has no form, no dimension, and it cannot be measured.

The main question is not, how do things work in the world of physics. The main question is how do things work on the level of mind? I read a book by Italian physicist Carlo Rovelli titled, *Reality is Not What It Seems*. Rovelli points out how, while science has opened up a tremendous technological world for us, still the more science discovers about matter, the more we realize how much we do not know.

The difference between physics and metaphysics is that in physics we are forever left with yet deeper and more complex question. In metaphysics, the mystics say we can come to know the Mind of God because we have forever been a part of that Mind. Who runs this ‘mind machine?’ Is it all a matter of domestication, fantasy and ego control? Or, is there a higher, brighter, more brilliant way of seeing free from of all external restraints? According to the mystic, there is a way –and very simply found by turning everything over to God.

Nothing matters except we make it ‘matter’ by bringing it into form physically or mentally through imagination. When distinctions created by imagination are taken to be real — especially the distinction between “subject” and “object,” “I” and “other,” “self” and “world,” “we” and “they” — we lose sight of reality’s wholeness and fall into an illusion of separation.

The mystic reaches a higher point of view, wherein there is no separation and time gracefully stops as does the world. From this perspective, there is no judgment and thus no problems. We may continue to act in the world, but we need not "worry" about the world simply because the world is ephemeral, while Spirit is eternal. Experiencing the unbounded vastness of spirit – Heaven comes into view. We can then "reflect" Heaven here and now.

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This world of time and space is often depressing and can be hellish — a feeling of being alone, isolated, cut off, and separate. This illusory world is a place of duality where we witness and experience war, sickness, depression, poverty, and powerlessness. We can easily get caught in judgment and condemnation of this world. It is, however much more fun to reflect Heaven here.

*You cannot stop with the idea the world is worthless,*

*for unless you see that there is something else to hope for,*

*you will only be depressed.*

*Our emphasis is not on giving up the world,*

*but on exchanging it for what is far more satisfying, f*

*filled with joy, and capable of offering you peace.*

W-129.1:2-3

**Reading the World Right**

It’s important not to blame our difficulties on the world. After all, it is we who create the world we see. The world is what it is. Egos can be insulted. In the truth of who you are. You cannot be insulted. Once we see this, then we can be content regardless of what comes our way. Let the world be what it is — simply love it — and it will change by being loved.

*But healing is the gift of those who are prepared to learn*

 *there is no world, and can accept the lesson now.*

*Their readiness will bring the lesson to them in some form*

*which they can understand and recognize.*

*Some see it suddenly on point of death, and rise to teach it.*

*Others find it in experience that is not of this world,*

*which shows them that the world does not exist*

*because what they behold must be the truth, and yet it clearly
contradicts the world.*

W-132.7:1-4