

Mind, Body, Spirit Heaven, Hell, and the World

by Jon Mundy

*You **will** undertake a journey
because you are not at home in this world.*

*And you **will** search for your home
whether you realize where it is or not.*

*If you believe it is outside you the search will be futile,
for you will be seeking it where it is not.*

T-12.IV.5:1-3

Did you ever stand, looking at your face in the mirror, and wonder how you got into this body, this figure, this form, this frame, this thing which “seems” to define us? Did you ever feel as though you would like to move beyond the body, beyond the skin and this incredible limitation in form?

*You are not limited by the body,
and thought cannot be made flesh.*

T-8.VII.14:1-2

Am I this fleshy thing which stares back from the mirror or looks back from a picture? One of the most glaring facts of what we call “life” is that it is exceedingly temporal – lasting only a moment. Like Mayflies who live just one day, each body has its moment in the sun and then falls away, back into that from which it came. Every “body” dies.

One summer, Dolores and I were vacationing in upstate New York. While driving around on some back-country roads, we came upon a Revolutionary War Cemetery with an ancient rock wall built all around. We stopped, got out of the car and began wandering about reading the tombstones, most of which dated from the last half of the 18th century. Several Revolutionary War soldiers’ tombstones had the same inscription on them.

*Remember friend,
as you pass by
as you are now,
so once was I.
As I am now,
so you must be.
Prepare yourself
to follow me.*

*The body is a tiny fence around
a little part of a glorious and complete idea.
It draws a circle, infinitely small,
around a very little segment of Heaven,
splintered from the whole,
proclaiming that within it is your kingdom,
where God can enter not.
T-18.VIII.2:5-6*

Two Uses of Mind

There are two uses of the word “mind” in the Course. Capital “M” mind, or the Mind of God, is equivalent with Love, Heaven, Truth, Eternity and more. Lower case “m” mind refers to the ego, the agent of choice in the world. Since we are free to believe what we want, we can choose to align our minds with capital “M” mind and thus, with the Holy Spirit, (the voice for God in our minds) or with the lower case “m” mind, the ego, also referred to in the Course as wrong-mindedness.

The Course draws an important distinction between what is perceived as the outside and inside: the material and the mental, the body and the mind. Mind is fundamental, the foundation of all existence. Everything is in the Mind. There is nothing outside of the Mind of God. God is Life. God is Love. God is Mind. Everyone partakes of Life, Love, and Mind. We always have and always will.

The body is a bewilderment and an often amazing maze of complications, pains, and pleasures. I received a letter from an 87 year-old subscriber to *Miracles*. In her letter she mused, “Why am I still here, in a body which no longer works very well? What purpose does this body serve?”

The body is, the Course says, *a thought of separation* projected by the mind into form. Because it is something *separate*, it cannot be who we are. Since the body is the ego's chosen home, the ego tries to persuade the mind that the body is more real than the mind. Another way to say this is that, in truth, the body is in the mind, the mind is not in the body. The body is a choice we all make. It is also a delimitation, or seeming restriction, in form.

The body is *a symbol* of who we think we are and a witness to the seeming reality of the “outside.” The body is also *a belief to be undone* so that what we really are (the Christ) can be revealed to us. The body is also *a limit on love*.

***The body is a limit imposed on the universal communication
that is an eternal property of mind.***

***But the communication is internal. Mind reaches to itself
It is “not” made up of different parts, which reach each other.***

It does not go out.

Within itself it has no limits, and there is nothing outside it.

*It encompasses everything. It encompasses you entirely;
you within it and it within you.*

There is nothing else, anywhere or ever.
T-18.VI.8:3-10

***Can you who see yourself within a body
know yourself as an idea?***

*Everything you recognize you identify
with externals, something outside itself.*

***You cannot even think of God without a body,
or in some form you think you recognize.***
T-18.VIII.1:2-7

Life is

The dictionary definition of life is (1) the condition that distinguishes organism from inorganic objects and (2) the period of animate existence of an individual. According to the Course, *Life* can in no way be limited to an individual organism. It is not the body which gives us life. Life, Mind, and Spirit are synonymous. Life is thought (W-54.2:3). Life is in the mind, and *ultimately* we, the holy Son of God, are of one Mind and Spirit.

Spirit gives life and flesh counts for nothing.
John 6:63

For the body is little and limited.
T-15.IX.5:5

Every religion defines God as Love. God is also Mind and Life. *Life* comes as a preface to the body. Life does not begin with the birth of a body, nor does it end with the death of a body.

*Everything is accomplished through life,
and life is of the mind and in the mind.
The body neither lives nor dies,
because it cannot contain you who are life.*
T-6.V.A.1:3-4

When we dream at night, where is the dreamer?

There is objectivity (a perceiving subject and perceived objects) in a dream, but where does the objectivity come from? When we sleep and dream, we are both the observer and the dreamer of the dream. Likewise in near death-experiences, though there is – no experience through a body – something is seeing; something has awareness. What is going on? According to the Course, our nighttime dreams and daytime dreams have a different form – that is all. Daytime dreams “seem” real because of the “seeming reality” of the body and the world around us.

Death of the body is the result of the thought we call the ego, and Life without beginning or ending is the result of the Thought of God. We think we are alive in this world; however, we sleep and dream a dream of this world. In this dream, we think the world is real and Heaven is a fantasy. In truth, we have no Life apart from God. What we call life, *the dreaming of the world*,

is purely dreaming. Beyond the dream and the seeming imprisonment of the body, we are each still very much alive and a part of Heaven even now – dreaming we are on a journey and looking for our Home.

*You have chosen a sleep in which you have had bad dreams,
but the sleep is not real and God calls you to awake.*

T-6.IV.6:3

The Ego Body

Two of our best known contemporary mystics, A.H. Almaas (1944-present) and Eckhart Tolle (1948-present), also speak of *the ego body*. Of all of our special relationships, the most special is the one we have with our bodies. We are rarely indifferent when it comes to the topic of our bodies. We love them or we hate them. Deep inside we know that whatever the body is, it is not who we are; and, yet, we seem to be wrapped up in the fantasy of the body.

I've had two near death experiences thirty-one years apart, each one very different from the other. In both experiences, there was no "body" there. There was no "image," no face to be seen in a mirror. In both cases when I returned to the body, I spent many hours staring at my hands, amazed that I had been able to "reintegrate" back into a body.

In 2007 when I came out of a coma (brought on by encephalitis), I had to descend back through the identification process, like a baby slowly becoming aware of his hands, feet, mouth, and an external identity. We grow into our bodies and thus, slowly we come to think that the body is who we are, and yet:

*The body is merely
part of your experience in the physical world.
Its abilities can be and frequently are over evaluated.
However, it is almost impossible to deny its existence in this world.
Those who do so are engaging in
a particularly unworthy form of denial.*

T-2.IV.3:8-11

The phrase "I am not a body" appears 46 times in the Course, far more than any other phrase, since it is repeated as a workbook review. Though bodies seem quite real and though it is almost impossible to deny *their seeming reality* in this world, the fact remains that in and of themselves, bodies are *an image only*.

*The word "image" is always perception-related,
and not a part of knowledge.
Images are symbolic and stand for something else.*

T-3.V.4:6-7

*What are you who live within the world
except a picture of the Son of God in broken pieces,
each concealed within a separate and uncertain bit of clay?*

T-28.III.7:5

Bodies are often idolized, worshiped, and adored and the bodies and graves of famous people revered. In the Catholic tradition, the bones of a saint are venerated; and yet, a bone is a bone and one of no more value than another. Jesus speaking in the Course says,

*I do not want to share my body in
communion because this is to share nothing.
Would I try to share an illusion
with the most holy children of a most holy Father?*

***Yet I do want to share my mind with you
because we are of one Mind, and that Mind is ours.
See only this Mind everywhere,
because only this is everywhere and in everything.
It is everything because it encompasses all things within itself.
Blessed are you who perceive only this,
because you perceive only what is true.***

T-7.V.10:7-12

The body, the world, and time are all distractions and hiding places from God. I love it when we are reading the Course and we come across a line and we exclaim, “What?!” Here is a “what” line from the Course: “At no single instant does the body exist at all.” (T-18.VII.3:1). What? It is only through the awareness that we are “no body” that we begin to remember who we really are.

Indeed, being special, in the eyes of the world defines and limits us in space and time. Famous people often have very difficult lives not only because of the definition they have of themselves but also the definition of who they are placed on them by the world. Thus, Marilyn Monroe became a sex goddess by playing into that image, and the world played back and reinforced the image making her into something she could never be. As she said, “I am not a sex-goddess. A sex-goddess is a thing and I am not a thing. I am a person. I’m just Norma Jean.”

*God did not make the body, because it is destructible,
and therefore not of the Kingdom.
The body is the symbol of what you think you are.
It is clearly a separation device, and therefore does not exist.*

T-6.V.A.2:1-2

The Course does not say “you are more than a body.” How could anyone *be more than a body* when *nobody* is *anybody* to begin with? Jesus in the Gospels and then again in the Course is trying to awaken us to a “memory” of a “fact” of existence not as a body, which will die, but a Living part of the Mind of God, which can never die.

Heaven and Hell

I read an 18th century minister's description of Heaven. He said it was a place where we would find very fine horses and carriages. On another occasion, I attended the funeral of an 87-year-old father of one of Dolores' co-workers. The minister talked about how someday we would meet Charlie again in Heaven. He said there would be hugging, kissing, and rejoicing in our *seeing* each other.

The world's various religions hold to an amazing variety of beliefs regarding what we call the afterlife. *Afterlife* strikes me as a strange word. We should call it *afterbody*. A host of different interpretations of Heaven and Hell are projected onto the world. Mormons hold to a belief in a three-level Heaven, including an upper Celestial Kingdom, which is again broken into three different levels. Then there is a Terrestrial Kingdom reserved for those who believe in the Law of Moses; a Telestial, or lower level, for those who followed a carnal life on earth; and then, of course, Hell – a lower level that is a Spiritual Prison for those who, while on earth, failed to acknowledge Jesus as their savior.

*Perception did not exist until the separation introduced degrees,
aspects and intervals. Spirit has no levels,
and all conflict arises from the concept of levels.*

T-3.IV.1:5-6

This whole divided world arose from the idea of separation. Thus, there is no hierarchy of illusions, since they all arise equally from the thought of separation. The Tibetan Buddhist view describes both hot and cold Hells. In Islam as well, there are Hells of extreme coldness, of unbearable blizzards, ice, and snow. With few exceptions, each religion describes Hell as a place where "bodies" experience eternal fires or extreme cold – all because during one short Mayfly "Mayday of a life," they failed to make proper decisions. I like to quote my former teacher Dr. Thomas Hora, who used to say, "Ignorance is not a person." Jesus in both the Gospels and in the Course describes the Kingdom of Heaven as inside us – not in the body which will die – rather, it is found in the Mind eternal.

A Burmese Representation of Hell

*It is hard to understand what
"The Kingdom of Heaven is within you" really means.
This is because it is not understandable to the ego,
which interprets it as if something outside is inside,
and this does not mean anything.
The word "within" is unnecessary.
The Kingdom of Heaven "is" you.*

T-4.III.1:1-3

While it is perfectly possible to know the abstract (love and thinking are abstracts), the ego-body sees reality as that which is corporeal, physical, and concrete. To the ego, the main thing is how the body looks. Pick up a magazine or turn on the television. The vast majority of ads have something to do with the body: with clothes, cosmetics, jewelry, and more than anything, a host of drugs and medications.

*A little piece of glass, a speck of dust,
a body or a war are one to you.
For if you value one thing made of nothing,
you have believed that nothing can be precious,
and that you "can" learn how to make the untrue true.*

T-14.II.2:10-11

A little piece of glass, a diamond let's say, in which we place great value is just a rock and, thus, as illusionary as are our bodies. Gold, as well, is just a pretty rock on which we place a great value. Cosmologists have found a white dwarf star in the constellation Centaurus, which they have named "Lucy" after the Beetle's song "Lucy in the Sky with Diamonds." This white dwarf star is actually a diamond that weights 5 million, trillion, trillion pounds. That is, a diamond which equals 10 billion, trillion, trillion carats. I don't quite know what a billion, trillion, trillion is. What value is this diamond star? Nothing!

There is a story about a man who is very fervent in his prayers, and he keeps employing God to speak to him. Finally, one night God appears to the man in a dream, and he tells God that there is something he would like to bring with him when he gets to Heaven. God says, "No you can't bring anything. No one can bring anything to Heaven." Night after night, the man begs and pleads and pleads and begs. Finally, God gives in and says, "Okay you can bring one suitcase but that is all."

Immediately, the man goes out, sells everything he has. He buys a bunch of gold-bars and puts them in a suitcase next to his bed. Then, comes the day when the man dies and he shows up at the Pearly Gate with his suitcase. There he meets St. Peter who says, "You can't bring that suitcase in here." The man responds, "But I have permission from God; go ask him." St. Peter asks God and God answers, "Oh yes, I did make that one exception, but you must look inside the suitcase before he can bring it in." So St. Peter tells the man, "Okay, you can bring it in, but I have to see inside first. The man opens up the suitcase. St. Peter looks inside and exclaims, "You brought paving stones!"

God did not make the body or the material world. Everything that is material is also destructible. The mind belongs to Spirit, which God created and is, therefore, eternal and indestructible. There is nothing real that rusts or rots, decays or decomposes. There is nothing which turns from one form into another form that has any eternity (reality) in it. Plato (428-348 BCE), the first of the world's great Western philosophers, held that truth is an abstraction apart from the material and concrete. Indeed, we can assert that the only thing which is real and eternal is that which is formless: like ideas, love, and spirit.

*You recognize, however dimly, that God is an idea . . .
What you find difficult to accept is the fact that,
like your Father, “you” are an idea.*

T-15.VI.4:4-5

Do you know who your great-great-great-grandfather was? Maybe there is a name on a family tree with some dates after it, but who was that really? A couple of hundred years from now, it is likely that no one will know that our bodies walked around on this planet. Does it make any difference? While it may be difficult for us to step outside of the box of physicality, the Course is asking that we do just that. We are mind first and ultimately (which means now), not a body – not at all. The body is, the Course says, “a learning device,” and as long as we seem to be proprietors of a body, we must use our right-minds to help us find our way Home.

*The real world is not like this.
It has no buildings and there are no streets
where people walk alone and separate.
There are no stores where people buy
an endless list of things they do not need.
It is not lit with artificial light, and night comes not upon it.
There is no day that brightens and grows dim.
There is no loss.*

Nothing is there but shines, and shines forever.

T-13.VII.1:1-7

The Real World

One Sunday evening after dinner, I sat down with my family to watch *America’s Funniest Home Movies*. In one of the home movies, there was a camera focused from the front seat of the car onto a small boy in the back seat. Suddenly, the little boy said, “Is this a real world?” According to the Course, the real world is a state of mind in which, through total forgiveness, the illusory world of perception is released from our projections of guilt. Folks sometimes get upset when I say there is “no body” in Heaven. Remember, however, it is eternal life in the other that we love, and love does not “require” a body. True love never dies – how could it? Bodies seemingly die and separate us one from another, while Mind is eternal and unites us all through the power of Love. Only the eternal Mind is real.

*Heaven is not a place nor a condition.
It is merely an awareness of perfect Oneness,
and the knowledge that there is nothing else;
nothing outside this Oneness, and nothing else within.*

T-18.VI.1:5-6

While Anita Moorjani, who had the privilege of experiencing One-mindedness, says in her book *Dying To Be Me*,

*God isn’t a being but a state of being . . .
and I was now that state of being.*

Ultimately only One-mindedness exists. *Ultimately*, only Heaven is real. *Ultimately*, there is nothing outside of Heaven. Only within an illusory dream world, however, can we “think” it is possible to live outside of Heaven.

*Mind cannot be made physical,
but it can be made manifest **through** the physical
if it uses the body to go beyond itself.
By reaching out, the mind extends itself.
It does not stop at the body,
for if it does it is blocked in its purpose.*
T-8.VII.10:4

Where is the Mind?

When we have a dream at night and we “see” people, places, and things, where are the things that we *see*? When we are in a dream, there is a “perceiver” or an “experiencer,” but the “body” is not there. Many folks who have near-death experiences report being able to see at 360 degrees. It was true for Anita Moorjani, and it was true in my 1976 experience. There was no “back to the head.” There was no back. There was no head, and yet there was profound “seeing” and awareness. There was something that saw and knew and even now remembers.

What sees when there are no eyes? What hears when there are no ears? What *knows* when there is no ego in possession of the mind? Anita Moorjani in *Dying To Be Me* said that free of the body she was more acutely aware than ever before, and the sharpness of her perception was more intense than it would have been had she been able to use her senses.

The Course is trying to help us get our values straight. It is trying to help us get Home to God. We do that in part by letting go of our attraction to the physical, the mundane, and the valueless. If you want to get Home; if you want to return to a place you never left – bet on the Mind – bet on Spirit. Bodies always lose and die. In this world and the next, the Spirit always wins.

*It is your will to be in Heaven, where you are complete and quiet,
in such sure and loving relationships that any limit is impossible.
Would you not exchange your little relationships for this?*

*For the body “is” little and limited,
and only those whom you would see without the limits
the ego would impose on them can offer you the gift of freedom.*
T-15.IX.5:3-5

Lovingly,

Jon