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Let's Play Make Believe

by Jon Mundy

*It is certain that you will never
find satisfaction in fantasy,
so that your only hope is to
change your mind about reality.*

T-9.IV.10:1

Making and Creating

According to *A Course in Miracles*, since the separation and our choosing the ego's thought system over Oneness, the words "create" and "make" have become confused. Spirit creates. The ego makes. We have not created ourselves. Thirty-five times the Course says, "God *created* you." In fact, "God created you perfect." We did not 'create' ourselves, and we certainly did not 'create' God. Rather, we made *up* an image of God and an image of ourselves.

*God created man in his image,
and then man returned the favor.*

Russian author, Fyodor Dostoyevsky (1821-1881)

Perception's Fundamental Law

The mythic dream-image we find in the Adam and Eve story is one of an angry father who casts us out from Heaven. *Projection makes perception* and Perception's Fundamental Law is, "I see what I believe is there, and I believe it is there because I want it there" (T-25.III.1:3). The more "make-up" we use (symbolically, not literally – there is no "sin" in putting on makeup), the more distorted our frame of reference, and the greater our sense of isolation. The more we make up a "story" about ourselves that is not true, the more artificial our world becomes and the deeper our unhappiness. We wonder why life seems meaningless, while we are the ones who deprived life of its meaning. Metaphorically speaking, we are the ones who cast ourselves out from Heaven.

Lesson 97 from the Course affirms, "*I am spirit.*" Knowing my reality as spirit means knowing that, as Lesson 95 says, "*I am one Self united with my creator.*" We are each sane, whole, perfect children of God. This is also our perfectly natural, normal state. The more I *know* that "I am one Self united with my creator," the happier I am. I do not have to achieve perfect knowledge to know that this is true. What I and each of us need for increasing happiness is the awareness that, "My foot is on the path. I am growing in my awareness of God." I am happy in knowing that I am moving further and further away from that which is artificial (made-up) and deeper and deeper into awareness of the truth of my natural reality as a child of God.

To perceive yourself as perfect is ". . . the only way in which you can find happiness in the world. That is because it is the acknowledgment that you are not in this world, for the world 'is' unhappy" (T-6.II.5:6-7). We're all here to learn lessons and life becomes increasingly meaningful as we pay attention and do what God is asking us to do knowing that, someday we will graduate. We will return Home. We will attain perfect happiness.

*A sense of separation from God is the only lack you
really need correct. This sense of separation
would never have arisen if you had not
distorted your perception of truth,
and had thus perceived yourself as lacking.*

T-1.VI.2:1-2

Being Self-Made Men and Women

The Self that *God created* and the ‘self’ that *we make up* are *not* the same self. One ‘Self’ is wholly real and eternal; the other ‘self’ is a distortion of reality. We make up a world in which we think we live. The world we make up, being an artificial world, is by necessity unhappy. The more we *make up* a separate ‘self’, the more isolated we feel we are. The more desperate we become, the more disconnected we are from our brothers and sisters and the greater our loneliness and desperation.

*Sickness is a retreat from others, and a shutting off of joining.
It becomes a door that closes on a separate self,
and keeps it isolated and alone.*

W-137.1:3-4

Demythologizing and Interpreting Dreams

Everyone makes up a ‘self’ and then dreams the dream of that ‘self’. This making up of a ‘self’ is not reality. It is dreaming. In Kabbalah, this unreal self-image is called a "shell." Swiss psychologist Dr. Carl Jung (1875-1961) described this false ‘self’ as one’s “persona,” a mask designed to make an impression on others while also concealing one’s true feelings.

*Is it not strange you do not pause to ask,
as you elaborate your plans
and make your armor thicker
and your locks more tight,
what you defend, and how, and against what?*

W-135.3:5

From 1982 to 1990, I taught philosophy, religion, and psychology courses for Mercy College inside Sing-Sing Prison in Ossining, New York. Many of the men I taught adopted a “persona” — a fantasy world in the midst of others who were inventing their own fantasy worlds. They, therefore, moved ever deeper into separation, solitude, and aloneness, while surrounded by hundreds of other bodies. They adopted tough sounding nicknames. I met, “Big Lynn,” “Butch,” “Cowboy,” “Doc,” “Tiger,” and “King.” They pumped iron, developed big muscles, wore distinctive tattoos and bandanas, grew beards, and/or wore sleeveless shirts. The only things that were not permitted to enhance these tough personas were items that might become a weapon — like metal body piercing, rings, and jewelry.

Deeper and more isolating was the frequent adoption of a cool, seemingly non-caring attitude and an air of toughness. Behind each mask there remained a frightened, forlorn man. A heavy secure wall surrounded the exterior of the prison; and inside, many of the men were building a dense, nearly impenetrable wall around themselves.

There is nothing deadlier than the religionized ego.
— American psychiatrist, Dr. David R. Hawkins (1927-2012)

Similar personas can just as easily be developed in the leading of a “good life,” maybe as chairman of the board of trustees for the local congregation, as an army officer, police officer, doctor, psychologist, professor, or “royal master” of the local masonic lodge. I attended a conference where a martial arts expert insisted on being called “Master.” There are no captains, no lieutenants, reverends, or doctors in Heaven.

*Beware of any occupation
which requires you wear special clothes.*
American Transcendentalist, Henry David Thoreau (1817-1862)

There is a story about a fellow who dies and ends up standing in front of St. Peter at the Pearly Gates. While he is being interviewed by St. Peter, he sees a little man wearing a white doctor’s smock with a stethoscope around his neck running around the Pearly Gates. The man who just died asks St. Peter, “Who is that little man running around? Is he a doctor?” “Oh no,” says St. Peter, “That’s God. He just likes to pretend that He is a doctor.”

*Do not be afraid to look within.
The ego tells you all is black with guilt within you,
and bids you not to look.
Instead, it bids you look upon your brothers, and see the guilt in them.
Yet this you cannot do without remaining blind.
For those who see their brothers in the dark,
and guilty in the dark in which they shroud them,
are too afraid to look upon the light within.*
T-13.IX.8:1-5

A Course in Miracles is a Course in *looking* at the ego. It is a Course in our becoming aware of how possessed we are by illusion. It is a Course on removing the blocks to an awareness of Love’s presence. It is a slow process of chipping away the clay to reveal the golden Buddha within. Love is there inside. Love simply needs to be uncovered because, while the masks we wear — the face we paint and show the world — may seem quite dense;

*Sometimes, only a thin veneer,
keeps our sight from being clear.*

I had a friend with a rough exterior, a hard man, not easy to get to know. He had a stroke, and after the stroke, he became very childlike and emotional. Knowing perhaps that death was near,

he cried often and told everyone how much he loved them. His love was there all along, merely covered over by a mask.

I had a heart attack in February 2010. There was no major damage to my heart. I did not, however, respond well to all the drugs; and thinking I might die, all I could do for days thereafter was to tell my wife, Dolores, how much I loved her. When we get down to it, love is the only thing that matters — the only thing that lasts when all else is gone. When the shell breaks, when Love is uncovered, it sometimes comes forth like a flowing fountain.

In the *Star Wars* episode, Darth Vader, devoid of love, is half robot, half man, with no visible eyes, and a machine-like voice that issues forth from a frozen, menacing mask. Darth Vader is symbolic of someone who loses his or her identity in a fantasy-world. If you wear a mask for too long, you run into the danger of forgetting who is beneath it. Fantasies, like dreams, are projections. They are distortions of reality. They are attempts to control reality according to false needs. Reality is then lost through usurpation. Reality is satisfying and fulfilling, while fantasies are deficient and lacking in gratification. Fantasies are private, fleeting, and temporal. Fortunately, fantasies become unnecessary as the wholly satisfying and perfect nature of reality becomes apparent.

One of the things that keep us from the truth of our Being is the fear we have that the annihilation or loss of our ego's thought system will mean the loss of our individual self. Nothing could be further from the truth. Those who have made the greatest contributions to humanity are those who have been most willing to turn total direction over to God. Englishman William Booth (1829-1912), the founder of the Salvation Army, one of the most successful humanitarian organizations of all time said, "I told God He could have all there was of William Booth."

*I follow in the way appointed me.
I have a special place to fill; a role for me alone.
Salvation waits until I take this part as what I choose to do.
Until I make this choice,
I am the slave of time and human destiny.
W-317.1:1-3*

Think of those who have been most willing to surrender their own will, folks like Buddha, Jesus, St. Francis of Assisi, Meister Eckhart, Ramakrishna, Helen Keller, Gandhi, Albert Schweitzer, Martin Luther King, Jr., Mother Theresa, Desmond Tutu, and the Dalai Lama. Those who have been the most selfless; those who gave the most, who loved the most, lost nothing. In fact, they gained the respect of the whole world.

Private Thoughts and Perfect Communication

The Course encourages us to abandon private thoughts. Private thoughts are projections we keep secret. They are "my" thoughts related to guilt, feelings of superiority and inferiority, fantasies, and "dreaming of the world." Private thoughts are blocks to the awareness of Love's presence. Not having private thoughts simply means not creating a fantasy story. Private thoughts (secret sins and hidden hates) block perfect communication. Abandoning private

thoughts does not mean we need to go around boring the world with our thoughts. The world is not really interested. Abandoning private thoughts simply means that *there are no thoughts we need to keep hidden*. There is nothing we cannot share.

*In your open mind are your creations,
in perfect communication
born of perfect understanding.
Could you but accept one
of them you would not want anything
the world has to offer.
Everything else would be totally meaningless.*
T-9.VI.7:4-6

God is Open-Mindedness

In order to get to perfect happiness, we first need to get to perfect communication. In order to be in communication with God, we need complete open-mindedness. For example, if I buy into and create a “mythology” for myself and declare it to be true, I create a block to the awareness of Love’s presence. Perfect happiness can only come to a mind completely open and transparent. When my mind is completely open, I don’t have to think about what to say — it is “given” to me.

*As condemnation judges the Son of God as evil,
so open-mindedness permits him to be judged
by the Voice for God on His behalf.*
M-10.1:4

Complete open-mindedness, the Course says, is perhaps the last attribute the teacher of God acquires. Total open-mindedness means freedom from all judgment. Open-mindedness invites God in. Complete open-mindedness means total acceptance of the role God would have us fill. As our minds open and we give up on our fantasy stories and become progressively receptive, we come to know perfect communication. We cannot have perfect communication when we harbor our own meaningless private thoughts. The holy instant is a moment of perfect communication. Total open-mindedness enables perfect happiness.

Alonement, Depression, and Inspiration

The addition of the suffix “ment” onto a word describes a process. If I could coin a word for the ego’s sorrowful position, it might be “alonement.” “Alonement” is our *seeming* entrapment in our secret, private thoughts in time, in a dream, in a body, in a drama, in a soap opera, in history or her-story. Thinking of ourselves as separate gives rise to guilt, lack, deprivation, depression, and unhappiness.

“Alonement” is depressing. Alonement is isolation. Depression, misery, suffering, and fear of loss accompany alonement. To be depressed is to be fatigued (T-4.in.1:6). Being depressed is dispiriting. Depression and the feeling of being trapped in a body are the very opposite of *inspiration*. Inspiration is the opposite of being fatigued. When the mind is brought into alignment with the Mind of God, we are literally inspired.

Alonement is a divisive point of view and the opposite of the Atonement. As alonement furthers separation, the Atonement brings us back to Oneness. Oneness is the remembrance that we are part of God. There is no individuality in Perfect Oneness, in Totality and Wholeness. The Atonement — the undoing of error — is the only defense that works because it is the only defense that undoes error. All other defenses deepen isolation and alonement.

*To be egocentric is to be dis-spirited,
but to be Self-centered in the right sense is to be
inspired or in spirit. The truly inspired are enlightened
and cannot abide in darkness.*

T-4.in.1:7

The Thinking of the Universe

There is an interesting phrase that appears only once in the entire Course. In Lesson 52, which is a review of Lesson 10 from the Workbook, we find the following:

*I have no private thoughts.
Yet it is only private thoughts of which I am aware.
What can these thoughts mean?
They do not exist, and so they mean nothing.
Yet my mind is part of creation and part of its Creator.
**Would I not rather join the thinking of the universe
than to obscure all that is really mine
with my pitiful and meaningless "private" thoughts?***

W-52.V.2-7

The *thinking of the universe* is the Mind of God. What we call ‘thought’ is the combination of words in some sort of sequence. But the ‘Thoughts of God’ are so far beyond words and what we call thinking that we can’t even think about it. We can, however, *know* these ‘thoughts’ experientially, just as we *know* there is something called love, though we cannot define it. This *knowing* is often described as a mystical experience because it is so different from our ordinary egoistical thoughts; yet it is, in fact, the most natural thing of all.

*Miracles are natural.
When they do not occur something has gone wrong.*

T-1:I.6

The ego is “self-created” and of one’s own making. Being outside of the Mind of God, the ego knows only separation and alonement. Seeing itself broken off from God, the ego believes in “private thoughts.” Private thoughts keep us from perfect communication.

*I can also call upon my real thoughts, which share everything
with everyone. As my thoughts of separation call to the separation
thoughts of others, so my real thoughts awaken the real thoughts
in them. And the world my real thoughts show me*

will dawn on their sight as well as mine.

W-54.3.(18).5-7

Politics and religion are just different ways of supporting the belief in separation. Just as there are no doctors or reverends in Heaven, there are also no Christians, Hindus, or Jews in Heaven. There is no division. The more that we project the world — the more we believe the dream is real. Thus, it is that “the thoughts we think we think, are not our real thoughts” (W-15.1.1). Our real thoughts are those we share in *the thinking of the universe*. The thinking of the universe is awareness in alignment with the Mind of God.

*You believe you can harbor thoughts you would not share,
and that salvation lies in keeping thoughts to yourself alone.
For in private thoughts, known only to yourself,
you think you find a way to keep what you would have alone, and
share what “you” would share. And then you wonder why it is that
you are not in full communication with those around you,
and with God Who surrounds all of you together.*

T-15.IV.7:3-5

What Happens When the Mask Freezes Over?

The Death of Superman

George Reeves (1914-1959), who played Superman during the 1950s, was a good actor, and he played many roles. However, once he became Superman, he was so typecast he could not get out of what he called his “damn monkey suit.” After the Superman series finished, Reeves got a role as a romantic character in “From Here to Eternity.” When the audience (children in particular) saw him on the screen, they hollered, “Hey, look that’s Superman!” The movie had to be re-cut and his part taken out. Subsequently, Reeves could not find parts in other movies. In order to earn a living, he was forced to make special appearances at children’s events dressed in his “monkey suit.” After a decade of being Superman, on June 16, 1959, George Reeves was found dead from a self-inflicted gunshot wound. Three years later, Marilyn Monroe (1926-1962) would also be found dead from a drug overdose. Two months before she died, she told an interviewer from *Look* magazine, “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.”

*If we lose control of what is happening to us
our lives become controlled by fate.*

Brazilian author Paulo Coelho (1947- present) in *The Alchemist*

A wonderful example of a famous person who refused to get trapped behind a mask is German physicist Albert Einstein (1879-1955). Einstein saw the game that society played, and he refused to play it. He was too smart for that. We’re probably all familiar with the picture of Einstein sticking out his tongue at photographers. Einstein was so well-known that he would be stopped on the street by people wanting him to explain “that theory.” In order to handle the incessant inquiries, he would reply “Pardon me, sorry! Always I am mistaken for Professor Einstein.” Einstein was just Einstein — a great mystic who said that more than anything else he wanted to know the “Mind of God.”

Yet if the mask freezes over, if we wind up playing society's game, if we get caught in the "dreaming of the world," we may not see a way out. In this world, our Self seems to be asleep, while the mind that weaves illusions appears to be awake. Caught in the dreaming of the world, reality remains elusively beyond our reach.

*Psychotherapy is necessary so that an individual
can begin to question their reality.*

P.in.1:5

Therapy works as patients begin to let go of the need to hold onto their insane stories. Enlightenment comes to every mind that begins to let go of the ego's story – the dreaming of the world. The message of the movie *The Polar Express* concerns the importance of our not losing the mystical awareness we had as children. Speaking of a bell chiming on a Christmas tree, the last line of the story of the *Polar Express* is "Though I've grown old, the bell still rings for me, as it does for all who truly believe." Does the bell still ring for you? Can you remember Home? I sometimes joke that dying may be a bit like waking up in the morning. We can then turn to our friends and say, "I just had the strangest life!"

You will awaken to your own call, for the Call to awake is within you.

T-11.VI.9:1

Amorosamente (Lovingly),

Jon