

Workbook Lesson Support Notes

by Allen Watson

Due to the fact that I was unable for several days this week to write, I did not create new notes on the lessons for the upcoming week. In their place, I am providing you a copy of the commentaries on these lessons from my book, *A Workbook Companion*.

Lesson 25—January 25

“I do not know what anything is for.”

PRACTICE SUMMARY

Exercise: 6 times, for 2 minutes.

- Repeat idea slowly.
- Then look about you and let your glance rest on each thing that catches your eye. Keep looking at it long enough to say quite slowly: “I do not know what this _____ is for.” Then move on to the next thing.

Remarks: Make no distinctions between things near or far, important or unimportant, human or nonhuman.

COMMENTARY

Have you noticed how the pace of recommended practice is accelerating? Yesterday we moved from five one-minute periods to five two-minute periods; today we increase to six two-minute periods. How many of us are making a serious effort to follow these instructions? Remember how the Introduction said that we aren’t asked to believe the ideas, accept them, or welcome them; even active resistance is okay. All that is asked is that we “use them” (W-pI.Int.9:4), to “apply the ideas as you are directed to do” (W-pI.Int.8:3). Nothing but that is required to make them effective. But applying them *as directed* is required, if we want them to have effect in our lives.

We don’t know what anything is for. The obvious question is, “What is it for?” This lesson answers the question. “Everything is for your own best interests” (1:5). Obviously that relates to yesterday’s lesson, “I do not perceive my own best interests.” What is for my best interests? Everything.

We don’t know that and we certainly don’t believe it. We evaluate everything “in terms of ego goals” (2:1), and since “the ego is not you” (2:2), that cannot give us any idea of what our best interests are. We are picking and choosing the things that support our ego, which is not our Self, and therefore, clearly, we are actually undermining our true Self. (The statement that “the ego is not you” is particularly important; it isn’t something we would realize without being told.)

We look at the world from the ego perspective and we literally “assign” purposes to things, purposes that will support our ego. When things don’t live up to our expectations, we get upset. All our goals involve “personal” interests. Yet, “Since you have no personal

interests, your goals are really concerned with nothing” (3:2). We don’t really have personal interests because the “person” we think of when we say those words isn’t real. We have no real goals that we do not share in common with all living things, because all living things are connected, and the sharing is what makes the goals real. Shared goals recognize the reality of who we are. Ego goals do not. This is why we are extremely confused about what things are for.

The lesson points out that, on a superficial level, we do know what things are for; we know a telephone is for talking to someone not physically present. “Yet purpose cannot be understood at these levels” (4:3). For instance, we don’t understand why we want to reach someone by phone.

We may think we understand. You might be calling the store to order a book. But why do you want the book? Why call now, at precisely this moment? There is a deeper purpose in everything that we do not understand, nor can we understand it as long as we think our conscious goals are the real ones. We have “to be willing to give up the goals [we] have established for everything” (5:1).

The entire foundation of our judgment is rotten because it rests on the idea that there are “things” outside of us that differ from us. There is nothing outside of us; everything is part of us. As long as we are coming from that false premise, our goals will be skewed and our judgments will be faulty.

I find it very helpful to remember that I don’t know what anything means and I don’t know what it is for. A phone call may bring “bad news,” but I can say, “I do not know what this phone call is for; I do not know what this situation is for, and therefore I cannot judge it.”

The Course insists on our total ignorance. “The confusion between your real creation and what you have made of yourself is so profound that it has become literally impossible for you to know anything” (T-3.V.3:2). That’s pretty definite, isn’t it? “Literally impossible.” This isn’t any figure of speech. Obviously, if you literally know nothing, judgment is impossible.

Because we’ve confused ourselves with our egos, we can’t know anything. Our belief in our identity as separate beings, located in bodies, has become an unquestioned core belief behind our every thought. We evaluate everything in terms of ego goals (W-pI.25.2:1).

Before we even begin to evaluate what anything means we have presupposed that, whatever it is and whatever it means, it is not us; it is *other*. From that premise it is literally impossible to know or understand anything because it is not *other*. It is part of us. A very young baby in its crib goes through a process of learning that its foot or hand is part of itself. To begin with, the baby does not know that. You can watch the baby, sometimes, treating the foot as if it were a foreign object.

We are all still infants in this sense because we don’t recognize parts of ourselves when we see them; we think they are something else. Because we think they are something else, we are unable to form judgments that make any sense. Our judgments are not simply exaggerated or inaccurate, they are so wide of the mark they’re ludicrous.

Let us remember not our own ideas of what the world is for. We do not know (T-31.I.12:2–3).

If we don’t know what anything is for, we can’t judge it! We can’t evaluate whether or not it is fulfilling its purpose because we don’t know what its purpose is.

We aren't being asked to acquire all this knowledge we lack; we are asked to become still and to remember how much we don't know (T-31.II.6:4). The Text tells us that there is no statement that the world is more afraid to hear than this:

I do not know the thing I am, and therefore do not know what I am doing,
where I am, or how to look upon the world or on myself (T-31.V.17:7).

It goes on to say that learning this is the birth of salvation. This is where learning starts: admitting how incapable of judging we are. All of these things we don't know!

Recognizing our ignorance is the birth of salvation because, until we admit we don't know, we won't ask for help. As long as we think we know, we block true knowing.

Little children recognize that they do not understand what they perceive, and so they ask what it means. Do not make the mistake of believing that you understand what you perceive, for its meaning is lost to you....Yet while you think you know its meaning, you will see no need to ask it of Him.

You do not know the meaning of anything you perceive. Not one thought you hold is wholly true. The recognition of this is your firm beginning (T-11.VIII.2:1-2,5; 3:1-3).

Lesson 26—January 26

“My attack thoughts are attacking my invulnerability.”

PRACTICE SUMMARY

Purpose: To realize that vulnerability is the result of your own attack thoughts and that invulnerability is the result of your own thoughts as well.

Exercise: 6 times, for 2 minutes (reduce to a minute if discomfort is too great).

- Repeat idea.
- Then close eyes and review the unresolved situations you are concerned about. Any unresolved problem that tends to come to mind during the day and cause any kind of negative emotion is suitable. First name the situation: “I am concerned about_____.” Then go over every possible outcome that is distressing you. For each one say: “I am afraid_____will happen,” followed by telling yourself: “That thought is an attack upon myself.”
- To conclude, repeat idea.

Remarks: Covering a few subjects thoroughly is better than covering many in a cursory fashion. If done properly, you will find at least 5 or 6 distressing possibilities per subject, maybe more. You may find that some outcomes, especially the ones that occur to you toward the end, are more distressing. Try to treat them all alike.

COMMENTARY

The American Heritage dictionary defines “invulnerable” as “immune to attack.” So to believe I can be attacked means, by definition, that I believe I am not invulnerable. That much is obvious.

There is a little bit of logic in the first paragraph that might slip by without careful reading:

You see attack as a real threat. That is because you believe that you can really attack (1:2–3).

It is my belief that *I* am capable of attack that makes me fear attack from without; if I can attack, so can everyone else. My fear of attack, therefore, comes from the projection of my own belief about myself! It comes from my belief that I am not a wholly loving being, but rather I am malicious, malign and wicked. That is what the second paragraph is all about.

“What would have effects through you must also have effects on you” (1:4). This is why, as Lesson 23 said in the last paragraph, thoughts of attacking and thoughts of being attacked are exactly the same. My belief in attack within myself, acting through me, will also have effects *on* me. “It is this law that will ultimately save you.” What that is referring to is the truth, much emphasized in the Course, that the way I find forgiveness is by giving it; the way I receive healing is to heal others. But we are “misusing” that law now, projecting guilt instead of extending love. So we need to learn how to use it for our own best interests, rather than against them (a reference to Lesson 24).

Attack thoughts weaken me in my own eyes, whether they are fearful thoughts of assault from without, or aggressive thoughts of attack on another. “The strong do not have enemies,” as it says elsewhere (T-23.In.1:5). If I can let go of attack thoughts I will

perceive my invulnerability; my “vulnerability or invulnerability is the result of [my] own thoughts” (4:1).

“Nothing except your thoughts can attack you” (4:2). That is a thought I have meditated on for years, and have proved valid in my own experience. It is particularly difficult to believe at first; that’s okay. Work with it. It is an empowering thought. (In this light you might want to read over Chapter 10’s Introduction in the Text.)

The instructions for today’s lesson are longer and quite detailed. Read them carefully. This is a real mental process we are to engage in. In thinking of a situation we are to “go over every possible outcome” (7:3), referring to it very specifically. The lesson emphasizes being thorough, and taking time with each situation.

Lesson 27—January 27

“Above all else I want to see.”

PRACTICE SUMMARY

Purpose: To bring closer the time when you will really mean the idea.

Exercise: At least every half hour (you set the interval).

Repeat idea. If you think the idea asks sacrifice of you and feel reservations about repeating it, add: “Vision has no cost to anyone.” If you still fear loss, say: “It can only bless.”

Remarks: Use it at least every half hour. You may try for every 15 to 20 minutes. It is recommended you set a definite interval for yourself as soon as possible after waking. Try to adhere to this all day. You can do this, for regardless of what is going on, you can still repeat this short sentence. You will remember today to the degree that you want the idea to be true. Do not be disturbed by the many practice periods you will probably miss. Simply try to keep to the schedule again. If only once today you repeat the idea perfectly sincerely, you will save many years of effort.

COMMENTARY

This is reminiscent of Lesson 20, “I am determined to see,” to which a subtle reference is made in the first line: “Today’s idea expresses something stronger than mere determination.” It puts the desire to see into first place, “above all else.” I want to see more than I want anything else. If we mean this, we will choose the path that leads to vision every time, no matter what other lesser goal might be tempting us.

The lesson recognizes that the idea may not be wholly true for us yet. Since desire determines vision, if it were now wholly true you would *already* see, and therefore would not need the lesson! So working with a lesson like this is not hypocritical; it is an exercise intended specifically for people for whom the idea is not yet wholly accepted, designed to move us closer to the day when it will be.

The phrase “above all else” may tempt us to think we are being asked to sacrifice. “Vision at any cost!” Therefore the lesson suggests that if we feel uneasy about unreservedly committing ourselves to vision, we should add this thought: “Vision has no cost to anyone” (2:3). If that isn’t enough, add, “It can only bless” (2:5). Put them all together: “Above all else I want to see, and vision has no cost for anyone. It can only bless.”

This hints at an idea stated clearly many times in the Course: this path does not believe in sacrifice. It says we are asked only to sacrifice illusions, and that this is in reality only an illusion of sacrifice. “Nothing real can be threatened” (T-Int.2:2).

Still, the lesson is leading us toward this kind of single-minded, unreserved determination to have true vision. We *do* need to be willing to put vision above anything that seems to compete with it. It may *seem* at times that we are being asked to give things up, and we may actually have to give them up, but when we do, we will realize we have given up nothing we truly wanted. The entire process is perfectly safe, and entails no real loss of any kind.

The practice requirements suddenly leap into high gear in this lesson: repeat the idea “at least every half hour.” That’s *at least* every half hour, “and more if possible. You might try for every fifteen or twenty minutes.” (Things will ease up again tomorrow.) Specific

structure, with a set time schedule, is recommended. All we are asked to do each of these times is to repeat the one sentence to ourselves, “Above all else I want to see.” This is not a big deal. There isn’t any reason we can’t do it, even in the middle of a conversation—if we want to, if we are willing.

The real question is, how often will you remember? How much do you want today’s idea to be true? Answer one of these questions and you have answered the other (4:1–3).

How often we remember will be the measure of how much we really want to see above all else. This will be a very revealing day!

Notice carefully how we are supposed to deal with the fact that we probably will forget and come nowhere near the ideal of every fifteen minutes. It says a lot about how the Workbook views this whole matter of “practice.” Basically it says, “Don’t let your ‘failure’ bother you; just get back on track immediately.” All that it takes to save “many years of effort” (4:6) is to, just once during the day, repeat the idea with perfect sincerity. To achieve that one time, many repetitions are needed. Simply do the best you can—but let it be the *best* you can do.

LESSON 28—January 28

“Above all else I want to see things differently.”

PRACTICE SUMMARY

Purpose: To make a series of commitments (regardless of whether you will keep them in the future) to withdrawing your preconceptions about particular things and opening your mind to truly seeing them. By committing yourself to seeing one particular thing truly, you are committing yourself to seeing everything, to seeing the purpose of the universe.

Exercise: 6 times, for 2 minutes.

- Repeat idea.
- Then apply it randomly to whatever you see about you, giving each subject equal sincerity. Let your eyes rest on each one long enough to say, slowly and thoughtfully: “Above all else I want to see this _____ differently.”

COMMENTARY

The thought that I could gain vision from just a table, or any random thing for that matter, if I could look on it with a completely open mind, is staggering. It means that I have been surrounded all my life by people and things, any one of which could have brought me enlightenment, and I have not responded. The computer screen I look at as I write, if seen without any of my own ideas, could open up and show me “something beautiful and clean and of infinite value, full of happiness and hope” (5:2).

I still find that hard to believe. Oh, I don’t doubt it, in one sense. Somehow it makes sense to believe that an enlightened being, like Jesus for instance, would see, as the poet put it, “the universe in a grain of sand.” But I guess what I doubt is that *I* could see that. I’ve looked at so many tables in my life and none of them ever spoke to *me*. I look at my desk now and I see—a desk.

“Hidden under all your ideas about it is its real purpose, the purpose it shares with all the universe” (5:3). Ah! A clue as to what this lesson is getting at; we’re talking about a shared purpose. We’re asking to see a common purpose that binds everything as one. I think a desk is for writing on, a table is for eating on, a fork is for spearing my food, a computer is for sending messages to folks on the Internet. I see a whole bunch of different purposes, each thing with its own, separate purpose. But they all share a purpose. As does my body, the sky, the moon, everything I can see. What is that purpose? That is what I am asking to see.

That is something worth asking for.

Nothing around you but is part of you. Look on it lovingly, and see the light of Heaven in it. So will you come to understand all that is given you. In kind forgiveness will the world sparkle and shine, and everything you once thought sinful now will be reinterpreted as part of Heaven. How beautiful it is to walk, clean and redeemed and happy, through a world in bitter need of the redemption that your innocence bestows upon it! What can you value more than this? For here is your salvation and your freedom. And it must be complete if you would recognize it (T-23.Int.6).

LESSON 29—January 29

“God is in everything I see.”

PRACTICE SUMMARY

Longer: 6 times, for 2 minutes.

- Repeat idea.
- Then apply it to randomly chosen subjects around you, saying for each subject: “God is in this/that_____.”

Shorter: Once an hour (at least).

Repeat idea slowly while looking slowly about you.

COMMENTARY

The idea for today explains why you can see all purpose in everything. It explains why nothing is separate, by itself or in itself. And it explains why nothing you see means anything. In fact, it explains every idea we have used thus far, and all subsequent ones as well. Today’s idea is the whole basis for vision (1:1–5).

Clearly, today’s idea is pivotal in the Course’s thought system, and not simply a nice, sentimental idea. Nor is it mere pantheism, which teaches that nature and God are the same. Elsewhere the Course clearly teaches that “There is no world” (W-pI.132.6:2–3), so this is not saying that nature and God are identical. “Certainly God is not in a table...as you see it” (2:3).

As I see things, nothing means anything. A table is merely a table, a flat surface to eat on or play poker on. It has no eternal purpose; its purposes are all ephemeral. Seen like this, the table does not reveal God, but helps hide Him.

God is not in the physical table, but He can be seen through or by means of the table. If the table shares the purpose of the universe, it must share the purpose of the Creator of the universe. That purpose is our happiness, our joy, our completion, which is necessary to His. “Everything is for your own best interests. That is what it is for; that is its purpose; that is what it means” (W-pI.25.1:5–6).

“Purpose” is the key word in this and the last lesson. God is in everything I see because everything shares God’s purpose. My sight is a veil across the truth that shines in everything, but vision can shine through that veil if I allow it. The way I perceive, God is not in everything; in fact, He is in nothing. If mere physical sight were enough we would all have seen God long ago. We made our sight to obscure Him, but seen with the vision of Christ, everything can reveal Him.

Nothing is as it appears to you. Its holy purpose stands beyond your little range (3:4–5).

As I first read this lesson I was puzzled by the statement that the idea for the day, “God is in everything I see,” explained the earlier idea that nothing we see means anything. On the face of it, if God is in everything I see, it ought to give those things profound meaning; I would see them as sharing the purpose of the universe, the purpose of the Creator. How can I logically proceed from “God is in everything I see” to “Nothing I see means anything?”

Finally I noticed a distinction that should have been obvious from the beginning: the distinction made between “seeing” or “sight” and “vision.” The Course makes this

distinction quite consistently throughout, but because my mind still tends to think of sight and vision as the same thing, I failed to notice it here. “Sight” refers to our normal mode of seeing, our belief that what our physical eyes show us is real, instead of the result of a desire within the mind and the projection of meaning from the mind, imposed on what is seen. “Vision,” on the other hand, is another kind of sense altogether, virtually unrelated to the physical eyes.

Notice that the lesson says, “Today’s idea is the whole basis of *vision*” (1:5). “When *vision* has shown you the holiness that lights up the world, you will understand today’s idea perfectly” (3:6). It is vision that reveals God in everything; mere sight does not reveal Him. God is in everything I see, but sight does not show Him to me; that is why nothing I see means anything. “You do not see them (with vision) now” (3:2). God is there, but sight does not see Him; sight is overlooking the very thing that gives everything the meaning it has. We could therefore revise the earlier statement to say: “Nothing I see means anything, *the way I see it.*” Meaning is there but I am blind to it.

The world you see must be denied, for *sight* of it is costing you a different kind of *vision*. You cannot see both worlds, for each of them involves a different kind of seeing, and depends on what you cherish (T-13.VII.2:1–2, my emphasis).

The idea that God is in everything is “the whole basis for vision” (1:5). It is the foundation for a “different kind of seeing” (T-13.VII.2:2). In order to see with vision I have to be willing to deny, or disregard, my current mode of seeing, which is limited to the physical and reports back to me only what my ego wants to see. If I recognize that God is in everything, yet I do not see Him with my eyes, there must be a different kind of seeing, and I will be led to desire it. I will ask for vision.

The lesson speaks of the “little range” of our kind of seeing (3:4–5). Imagine, as an analogy, that God is only visible in the infrared (of course He is not visible in any physical manner at all). Our eyes simply do not see infrared radiation, so even if it is present we see nothing. The range of physical sight is very narrow; there are all kinds of “light” we cannot see: infrared, ultraviolet, heat, radiation, radio waves, microwaves, and so on. God is in everything, but He is outside the range of our physical sight; we need a different kind of vision.

I think that in a sense the lesson is trying to arouse a certain discontent within us. It provokes the disturbing question, “If God is in everything, how come I don’t see Him?” It makes us aware of the limitations of what we have believed to be “sight.” It makes us aware of its limited range, and evokes within us the desire for a new kind of vision that sees beyond this limited range, and sees the purpose of the universe in everything.

Tomorrow’s lesson will continue to instruct us in finding vision.

LESSON 30—January 30

“God is in everything I see because God is in my mind.”

PRACTICE SUMMARY

Exercise: As often as possible, for a moment or so.

- Repeat idea slowly, looking about you, and applying it to things you can see as well as to things you think of beyond your range of sight.
- For several practice periods, close eyes and apply idea to whatever subjects come to mind.

COMMENTARY

As yesterday’s lesson was the “whole basis” (W-pI.29.1:5) for vision, today’s idea is “the springboard” (1:1). That God is in everything I see forms the foundation. Knowing that this is so because “God is in my mind” is what can propel us from mere sight into vision.

From this idea will the world open up before you, and you will look upon it and see in it what you have never seen before. Nor will what you saw before be even faintly visible to you (1:2–3).

Fundamental to understanding what the Course is talking about is the fact that what we see is quite directly *caused* by what is in our mind. The commonsense idea of perception is that something outside causes an impression, through my senses, on my mind. The reality is the reverse, according to the Course. The thoughts of my mind are projected outward and cause my perceptions. “Projection makes perception,” says the Text in two different places (T-13.V.3:5; T-21.Int.1:1; compare with T-10.Int.2:7).

What this lesson attempts to teach us is “a new kind of ‘projection’” (2:1). We might call it “positive projection.” Instead of using projection to get rid of thoughts we are uncomfortable with, we are attempting to see in the world *what we want to see in our own minds*. What I want to see, for one thing, is my own innocence. Therefore I am attempting to see the world as innocent. I am choosing my thoughts and deliberately “projecting” them onto the world. I want to see myself as having God in my mind, and so I choose to see everything as having God in it.

If all things contain God, and I contain God, then we are joined. “Thus, we are trying to join with what we see, rather than keeping it apart from us. That is the fundamental difference between vision and the way you see” (2:4–5). Our kind of seeing emphasizes differences and distinctions; vision emphasizes sameness.

“Real vision is not only unlimited by space and distance, but it does not depend on the body’s eyes at all” (5:1). It is becoming clearer with each lesson that the vision being talked about has nothing at all to do with our physical sight. In the Course’s thought system, our eyes do not see at all; they are merely the means for deception. We can include in our vision things beyond the range of physical sight. This is a seeing done with our minds, not with eyes. “The mind is its only source” (5:2).

Now I recall our earlier lesson, “Above all else I want to see” (Lesson 28) with a stronger sense of purpose. I want vision; I want this other kind of seeing that sees God everywhere. I want it because somehow I instinctively know that if I can see things that way, I will also be able to see myself that way. If I can see you as a holy child of God, innocent and blameless, I will know that I am seeing a reflection of myself. I want to see myself that way, so I want to see you that way.

God is in my mind. The world mirrors what is in my mind. How, then, do I want to see the world? Am I willing to see the world with God in it? If not, it only reflects the fact that I am unwilling and afraid to see His presence in my mind.

LESSON 31—January 31

“I am not the victim of the world I see.”

PRACTICE SUMMARY

Longer: 2 times, morning and evening for 3–5 minutes.

- Repeat idea 2 or 3 times while looking slowly about you.
- Close eyes and apply idea to inner world. Let whatever thoughts that want to come arise, be considered, and then replaced by the next. Let the stream move along evenly, without investment, without establishing a hierarchy. As you watch it dispassionately, repeat idea as often as you want, with no hurry.

Shorter: As often as possible.

Repeat idea, reminding yourself you are making a declaration of release.

Response To Temptation: Repeat idea in response to any form of temptation.

COMMENTARY

As you must have noticed when you read today’s lesson, there isn’t a lot of metaphysical thought in it. In fact there is almost none, except in the lead thought quoted above. The rest of the lesson is practice instructions. So I’ll weight my comments in approximately the same way.

The one sentence that heads the lesson is plenty in itself, however. If you think about it, it is amazing how many ways we see ourselves as victims of the world. We go through life feeling like victims—of the weather; of the jerk who cuts you off in traffic or swerves into the parking space you were aiming for; of your computer disk when “it” loses your file; of your housemate who uses the last of the hot water just before your shower; of the slow service in the restaurant; the traffic that makes you late for your appointment. To say nothing of the people who may deliberately and malevolently terrorize you in our cities (or perhaps in your home).

To assert that “I am not the victim of the world I see” can be liberating and empowering. It is remarkable how these simple words can cause feelings of weakness and helplessness to wash away. Try it! You’ll like it.

Oddly enough, we also feel victimized by unseen enemies and even our own thoughts. Ever have an anxiety attack? Or find yourself feeling gouged by the IRS? A victim of an unfair “system?” Plagued by self-doubt? You are not the victim of your inner world any more than of your outer world. “You will escape from both together, for the inner is cause of the outer” (2:5).

This lesson introduces what will become the basic practice outline for most of the Workbook, and for ongoing practice for Workbook graduates.

1. Two longer practice periods, morning and evening, in which you apply the idea of the day on a sustained basis.
2. Frequent repetitions through the day, as often as possible (a study of other references to this indicates that four or five times per hour is intended).
3. Using the idea as a “response to temptation” whenever it arises.

The only element of Workbook practice not present in this lesson is specific hourly or half-hourly periods of shorter practice, in length somewhere in between #1 and #2 above. That appears as the Workbook goes along to build a habit of practice on the structure of

the clock, and then is gradually phased out as the habit (presumably) has been established. The three elements presented here in Lesson 31 are retained in recommendations for post-Workbook practice given in the Manual for Teachers (see Chapter 16, “How should the teacher of God spend his day?”).

Make a point of taking those longer, 3-to-5 minute periods morning and evening. This is the first time for them. You wouldn't practice the piano by playing only half the scales, so don't stint here, either. From this point on in the Workbook the practice is going to intensify; like me, I'm sure you'll find it more difficult to maintain and to actually carry out.

Remember:

You are merely asked to apply the ideas *as you are directed to do*. You are not asked to judge them at all. You are asked only to use them. It is their use that will give them meaning to you, and will show you that they are true (W-Int.8:3-6).