



Freedom Inside

A National Newsletter For Prisoners
Based on the CwG Material
Issue # 23 September 2005

Sorry, It's Not So Easy After All

Freedom Inside
B.P. 315
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I owe you all an apology. In my article The Rage Inside Me in June's issue of this newsletter, I wrote that all it took for me to find deep inner peace was to let go of my rage. I wrote that I had "thought it would take a while for me to learn and practice this letting go. I thought I would have to feel the rage many more times before I was able to identify it with my ego, with my body, and know it had nothing to do with my Self."

Well, it turns out I was right. It hasn't been that easy. The wounds my ego carries with such pride and righteousness are many and varied. I heal one and it seems two more take its place.

Does this mean it's hopeless, that I won't ever be able to reach total peace? Of course not. It just means that the road I've chosen is one of many steps.

Are these steps arduous, an uphill battle making me sweat, huffing-and-puffing all the way? I sometimes choose to see it that way, to feel victimized by my life and circumstances, to feel under

"It hasn't been that easy. The wounds my ego carries with such pride and righteousness are many and varied. I heal one and it seems two more take its place."

me closer to the person I can be.

It is my choice if I see any part of my life as being 'difficult' or 'painful'. It is my choice if I interpret people's actions as being aimed at and against me, personally. It is my choice.

There is one thing I know for sure: I am interpreting everything around me. I know for sure that I can't know anything about anything without my perspective,

my perceptions dictating my interpretation.

So if and when I feel hurt by people or circumstances around me, it is my interpretation of them that is hurting me. My rage is based solely on that and not on what 'really' happened, whatever that may be.

And that is the real question that I need to answer for myself before I can ever decide how to deal with my rage. What, if anything, is 'really' out there?

What if, as a Course In Miracles states, there is nothing out there but a projection I put there? What if it is exactly like the dreams I have at night, the only difference being I haven't woken up from this one yet?

When I dream at night, I 'see' things and people in a way I find no different from when I am

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An Answer to "My God I'm Living in an Illusion!!!!!!" (issue 22, June 2005)

Dearest Janine ,
[...]
I have not read A Course In Miracles, Indeed I've only the most basic hints as to the contents of the entire Conversations with God books. However, everything I've read from the CwG Foundation's works has closely matched my

own pre-existing ideas and experiences. I receive a great amount of comfort from seeing things I have long felt expressed in the writings and experiences of others.

"I am my mind", you write, a close echo of René Descartes' s famous, "I think, therefore I am". Indeed our perception of our life

is the only true evidence we have of our existence. And though our perceptions may err, they are still the only basis we have on which to build our lives and make our decisions. We are whom we see ourselves to be, not the expectations of others.

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Sorry, It's Not So Easy After All
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awake. In my dreams, things seem to really be happening to me, and my reactions are just as vivid as when I am awake: I feel anger, frustration, and happiness; I laugh, cry, scream in anger and in joy. I've had such realistic dreams that I've done chores in my sleep I was flabbergasted to find undone the next day.

But I do wake up and deal with the fact that it was a dream. I do the chore recognizing that although I sure had been busy in my dream, it hadn't changed anything in the 'real' world. But what if the world that I know out here is not real either? What then?

Wouldn't it be nuts if I dreamed someone hurt me and demanded an apology the next day?

Wouldn't it be crazy to carry a grudge against that pain and spend time and energy on thoughts of that hurt?

Wouldn't it be weird to choose my attitude and behavior in reaction to the pain in that dream?

What if this life is a dream that I haven't woken up from yet? What if all the rage I carry is due to things 'done to me' in a dream? What if none of it is outside of my mind?

What if all I am is a mind? What then happens to the need to forgive? What do I have to forgive but things I put out there, very much as I do when I dream?

And even for those who believe there is a 'real' world out there separate from our own minds, there is a marvellous quote from Gerald G. Jampolsky which says, "Forgiveness is letting go of all hopes for a better past."

'Hoping for a better past' sounds a like a huge waste of time and energy, doesn't it? Even if we believe that the world really does exist outside of us. Even if we

believe people have really hurt us. Why take so much of our energy to rage against what is past and cannot be changed?

I do not believe any of us can 'objectively' see the world without using our own perspective, experiences, knowledge and perceptions. I believe we can only interpret what is out there. That is why people thought for so long that the Earth was flat because they saw and interpreted the horizon.

I believe only we see what we are looking for. What we perceive is limited. We only hear a limited range of sound, see a limited range of colors, observe from a limited perspective. We don't see, hear, or feel everything, although we are rarely aware of the limits of our perceptions. Ask five witnesses to an accident to describe what they saw. Chances are you will get five different stories. We perceive and we interpret. That's how we know the world.

So if I interpret everything out there, why not just choose to give a different meaning to it? Why not take control of my thoughts and choose the ones that serve me best? What if that is what forgiveness does?

There is a lot of pain in me, in all of us. The source of the pain is long gone but I still carry it with me. I need more forgiveness in my life, in my mind, in my heart in order to live in the peace I choose.

What is forgiveness? How do I forgive and why should I work so hard at it? I've included in this issue (see page 7) a beautiful poem by Gerald G. Jampolsky that answers these questions.

Enjoy, In Joy

Janine

Does God Exist?

A man went to a barbershop to have his hair cut and his beard trimmed. As the barber began to work, they began to have a good conversation.

They talked about many things and various subjects. When they eventually touched on the subject of God, the barber said: "I don't believe that God exists."

"Why do you say that?" asked the customer.

"Well, you just have to go out in the street to realize that God doesn't exist. Tell me, if God exists, would there be so many sick people? Would there be abandoned children? If God existed, there would be neither suffering nor pain. I can't imagine a loving a God who would allow all of these things."

The customer thought for a moment, but didn't respond because he didn't want to start an argument. The barber finished his job and the customer left the shop.

Just after he left the barber-shop, he saw a man in the street with long, stringy, dirty hair and an untrimmed beard. He looked dirty and unkempt!

The customer turned back and entered the barber shop again and he said to the barber: "You know what? Barbers do not exist."

"How can you say that?" asked the surprised barber. "I am here, and I am a barber and I just worked on you!"

"No!" the customer exclaimed.

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I can look back in hindsight and recognize how I've struggled within the illusions of my incarnation and my incarceration.

I once considered, if I hadn't had to ineffectively spend such high quantities of thought and emotional energies struggling with those illusions, I would have become a more virtuous person in my interactions with myself, other people, and my environment.. Presently, I'm considering that BECAUSE of my struggles/experiences within the illusions, I'm becoming a more consciously aware person; consequently, I'm better prepared to help others and myself to create and discover meaningful relationships within these illusions.

Blessed with the considerations that I've been struggling with illusions—as opposed to some absolute imperatives—have relieved me of many burdens such as the stresses and anxieties that come with the idea that “Suppose I don't get this or that RIGHT?” or “Suppose I blow my chance to make this impression or to grasp this or that point?” or “Suppose I become impaired or even die before I can make amends or satisfy some purpose?”

On the other hand, these considerations have also accompanied a continuous flow of mysteries and wonder that has filled me with awe and curiosity; for example, where will the joyous and gracious experiences take me as I take a more transcendental view behind the mask worn by the soul-people around me and as I gather a greater impression of their souls and mine? Will I have an epiphany? Will I realize my aspirations of becoming a spiritual healer?...

CwG gave me the impression that prior to our incarnation, we were like “candles within the sun, though we had our own flaming light,

still we couldn't recognize it because the combined lights of the sun and the other candles shone so brightly.” In an effort to help us see/experience our own unique light (Who We Are), we've been privileged by incarnating into this dreamworld called Earth. Here, with the illusion of darkness, we can, in effect, recognize our individual light which is inseparable from the greater Light, God.

Now, just as the light radiates from all forms, so does the illusion of darkness. Life/God is change, according to CwG. Everything that we give our primary attention to is temporary and transitory, i.e. an illusion. The happenstances of our lives only have whatever meaning we give them and, as our perspective changes, so does those meanings.

When I first entered prison 35 years ago, I was “addicted” to being outside; I suffered a great deal because of prison's restrictions. Later, as I discovered and used prison as a part-time school and spiritual sanctuary, my perspective changed. I stopped suffering and living outside of prison became only a “preference”. Presently, as I become more mindful of the purposes and privileges of my incarnation—as well as of the joy and grace that I experience as I accept and respond more to the here and now, even my preference to live outside of prison has become an illusion. These considerations are additional principles of my Freedom Inside.

Observing,
North Carolina

H.J.

Dear H.J. Again,
you've given me something to think
about, thank you.

I also find that I often, very often, struggle with everyday kind of stuff. I spend a lot of time and energy on details in my life that even I know are unimportant.

It's all an illusion, isn't it?

But then, I have to recognize that even the big stuff is an illusion, even Being Who I Really Am is an illusion because this I that I speak about is not.

What I've started to think is real is that this world is not. It is an illusion, a dream. All of it. ALL OF IT. The good as well as the bad. The virtuous as well as the vicious. All of it.

So what is real is that the separation from God never happened. We only have this dream that it did. A nightmare really where what we fear the most seem to be happening.

We are all in this nightmare together. Whether in prison or out. Scary, right? Horrible thought, don't you think?

Unless, of course, it isn't. Unless we choose differently. Unless we change our dream. Unless we choose to think as God thinks and see nothing else.

WOW! How great is that!

In peace,

Janine

The Price of Peace and Freedom

If you want to be happy, let go of your conditional thinking, such as, *If I quit my job, then I won't be able to pay my bills*, or *If I don't punish my son, then he won't learn the difference between right and wrong*. Conditional thinking usually follows the formula:

If I _____, then _____ will happen.

Start with the little things. Did your car get scratched in a parking lot? Did someone steal your wallet? Say to yourself, *This is the price paid for peace of mind, for freedom from disturbance, and nothing is without cost*. It's far better to die of hunger but free of grief and fear than to live with great wealth and anxiety.

From Epictetus's Handbook of Conscious Living, edited and interpreted by Gay Hendricks and Philip Johncock in The Book of Life, The Master-Key to Inner Peace and Relationship Harmony (2005)

An Answer to "My God I'm Living in an Illusion!!!!!!"

(Continued from page 1)

Yet we are still all interconnected, though you are whom you understand yourself to be, my own understanding of you can bring about a physical action, like writing a letter, which in turn will lead to your own physical action, reading the letter, which may contain information you may use to adjust your understanding or yourself. Way, way back, in political theory, we can read about this idea that all of us are connected through the activities of larger society. Even Thomas Hobbs saw the nation as the composite acts and minds of its entire population acting in, and sometime against, its own best interest. It is this larger society, or Body Politic, that can hold incredible sway on the information we receive throughout our lives and education. Through the customs and mores instilled on us through that education and information control, our interpretation of every bit of data received is still yet more skewed.

However, we cannot view our social order, our civilization, as some inherently evil brain-washing machine. Our civilization should, and usually does work towards providing the greatest good for the greatest number of individuals within it. Of course, what's good for which individual is a constantly evolving question, which philosophers such as Jeremy Bentham and Karl Marx have been blathering on endlessly and are to this day. For just as our own perception of ourselves may be flawed by our own modes and conditioned thinking, so also can the perception of those around us, including the governing authorities. You are whom you know yourself to be. You are not who I think you are, though I hope I'm rather close. Certainly whatever my thoughts of you are, or that of the collective whole of society, is going to be a bit in error.

It is in negotiation of the differences between who we know ourselves to be, and the hardset expectations of others of our social order, that we must seek our liveli-

hood, seek happiness, and search out peace with not only ourselves but each other. Ultimately, it returns to the fact that the only thing that we can really control, our actions, we must base on our understanding of ourselves, and of those around us, as well as the expectations of our civil order. Mistakes here are a seeming specialty of mine.

Life is, however, much more than just the confused interpretations of our own perceivable environment. Some sourpuss named Nietzsche long ago determined that nothing outside of his mind really could exist, that if a tree fell in the forest unheard, then it really hadn't fallen at all. We cannot oversimplify so much. The Nihilist philosophers soon declared God dead, and even scoffed at the possibility He ever existed at all. For if nothing exists outside our own consciousness, then there can only be a God if there is some direct experience of One. Turns out this line of thinking has been more honored in print and lectures than in actual belief. God has indeed influenced our lives, leaving his evidence in the minds of most, be it through actual miracles, the influences of the Holy Ghost, or just the unexplained grace that follows those who expect is least, divine Love, for us as human beings becomes evident to us who seek it. God will not go unfelt by anyone searching for His presence.

Even though we must struggle against outside expectations, along with our own Freudian egos for both survival and understanding we are not living an imagined life, for we exist not just in our own minds, and that of others, but we also exist in the Divine Mind of our Universal Father, Heavenly Parent, God. As flawed as our understanding can be, our Lord has gracefully given us the personal agency to make our own decisions to act on our understanding and faith, but more importantly, He gave us the mind and will to seek to find more perfect and happier lives, an

agency given alike to each, the happy and the sad, the wise and the slow, the educated and the illiterate. Free from the clutter of misunderstanding and outmoded mores, the search for peace and happiness is available to us all, regardless of our circumstances. Whatever label has attached to me in the past years-- student, worker, soldier, father, felon, prisoner, artist, mechanic, redneck, or whatever-- my freedom to seek to keep my sanity and pursue the happiness of my family, and my own, has remained intact.

I must thank you for your article which though I read it several weeks ago has inspired this outpouring of thoughts. Perhaps I can return some of the same blessing with my own ramblings.

Again, thanks and may God bless you with much peace and joy

EJC
Texas

*Dear EJC,
WOW!!!*

Talk about thought provoking stuff. I hope many of our readers will choose to comment on this article. Personally, I always thoroughly enjoy hearing from people who have a different perspective from mine. It helps me re-think my own ideas and opinions, refocus my mind and choose again Who I Really Am.

I cannot thank you enough, EJC, for taking the time to write your thoughts down and sending them in. I know they will impact many as they did me. Sharing ideas always multiplies them. It enriches us all.

So I thank you very, very much for your "ramblings" as I send you some of my own.

There are a few things I want to say in response to your letter. I agree with you that much of our thoughts and interpretation of the world are greatly influenced by society.

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An Answer to "My God I'm Living in an Illusion!!!!!!"

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The question I have, though, is this. "What is society?"

We often hear complaints about 'society' with its institutions, rules and regulations. We often criticize the world we live in: the politicians, the corporations, the establishment, religious organizations, organizations of all kinds.

When you say "Our civilization should, and usually does work towards providing the greatest good for the greatest number of individuals within it" I can all but hear the roar of our readers who believe that our society is very, very far from doing that.

In either case, I prefer to see 'society' not as an organization that is removed from the individuals but as a group of people, each being as individual and authentic as they feel they can.

As a body, I do not believe in 'society'. I believe in people. I believe we are all made of the same stuff and have basically the same needs: to survive, to love and be loved, to contribute, to feel important and accepted.

I believe the need for 'society' is based on fear. Fear of attack, fear of death, fear of lack, fear of a catastrophe of some kind. Because

we fear, we have invented this entity that will hopefully protect us against any danger. But what is this 'society', this thing that seems to have a life of its own, outside of its citizens?

I do not believe it would be needed if individuals lived in love and not fear. But since most of us choose to live in fear, is it so surprising that our 'society', our 'civilization' is so full of fear itself, that it is not very 'civilized'?

I believe we have come to this life in order to experience our Self in all Its glory. Reconnecting with our Self, with each other, with God is all the meaning I need to explain my life and as many other lives as I may have had and still will have. In order to achieve this glorious end I need to live more consciously. I need to choose for myself.

In your letter, you made some interesting comments about the existence of God. As you know, I believe God exists although I do not believe in the father figure that religion has always painted for me.

Nevertheless, I do not know that the existence of God can be proven by looking at any particular life. If that were the case, the proof of God's non-existence could be proven by the fact that some people seem very evil

and flourish anyway. Or would that prove the existence of the devil?

Although I believe in God, I do not know for sure that God exists, at least not in any way I have ever thought of God. I do not understand God nor can I explain what God is and what God is not.

Nothing I know is free of what you called 'clutter of misunderstanding' due, as you pointed out to my past experience and education.

Does Society exist?

Does God exist?

Which, if any, of the philosophers are correct?

Which society, which religion?

What if we are making it all up?

What if everyone is correct?

What if everyone is wrong?

What if it doesn't really matter?

What if we are living an extremely well imagined life?

What if it is all a dream?

Would you choose a beautiful dream or would you choose a nightmare?

Would you choose love or fear?

Wishing you all love in all your dreams.

Janine

Does God Exist?

(continued from page 2)

"Barbers don't exist because if they did, there would be no people with dirty long hair and untrimmed beards, like that man outside."

"Ah, but barbers DO exist! What happens is, people do not come to me."

"Exactly!" affirmed the customer. "That's the point! God, too, DOES exist! What happens, is, people don't go to Him and do not look for Him. That's why there's so much pain and

Anything you wish to share?

Do you have an opinion you want to share?

A poem?

A question?

Do you have a life experience you think would help others?

If so, please write to us

Hopefully we will be able to publish it

in a future issue of

Freedom Inside

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Lac-Saguy, Quebec, Canada J0W 1L0

THE POETRY CORNER

THROUGH THE DARKNESS

In the midst the darkness, I received a message
That was spoken to my heart, In the midst of many visions
I entertained thought of hope.
Only to be let down by times of rain.
Even though my words were caught in my throat
There was none to hear my silence, and question my tears.
In silence I grieved and in silence I endured
When the pain became unbearable, something from within released
A battle cry that was silenced
From the pride I collected from lessons learned
It was the darkness that became the training grounds for my spirit
And the battle grounds for my soul
My imagination carried me to distant realms,
Where my thoughts took on life and became a foothold for the enemy
As words of wisdom were passed through words of spirit carried
By the breath of angels, I acknowledged my creator
I chose to water seeds of hopelessness
That reaped deep and unspeakable things
I carried much burdens brought on by love
Tainted with anger and deception
From birth I was subject to frustration and discord
And forced to enlist into a war of good and evil
In the darkness I found a reason to seek and answer
With my loved ones I dwelt in a place of sorrow
Together we walked through doors of weakness
Into rooms with no light.
And held in a life of torment and drowning in oceans of our past
The sting of death has scarred the hearts of those I love
While those I love have scarred my heart with words filled of death
Slowly I emerge from a place where sight has no meaning
Because the eyes cannot fathom the things that are held there
I followed the voice that called me by my name
The voice of thunder that scattered the enemy with a mighty blow
The voice that comforted me as I questioned the darkness
The voice that told me I was a child of light
And an heir to mighty kingdom
The voice that belonged to the creator of all things
I have accepted the unchangeable I've even perceived the unseen
All because darkness existed
And darkness chose me
I had to walk through the darkness to discover the light
I was blessed with the gift of choice
And a Creator Who has never left my side.

-Y.R.
April 2005
Washington

Is there a better way to know the
light
Than first knowing all that the
light is not?

June 2005

Who can comprehend the words
spoken from the heart
Unless they shared in the emotion
behind them?

July 2005

Y.R.
Washington

**To forgive is the prescription
For happiness**

**To not forgive is the prescription
To suffer**

**Is it possible
All pain
Regardless of its cause
Has come component of
Unforgiveness in it?**

**To hold on to vengeful thoughts
To withhold our love and compassion
Certainly must interfere
With our health
And our immune system**

**Holding on to what we call justified anger
Interferes with our experiencing
The Peace of God**

**To forgive
Does not mean
Agreeing with the act;
It does not mean condoning
An outrageous behavior.**

**Forgiveness means
No longer living in
The fearful past**

**Forgiveness means
No longer scratching wounds
So they continue to bleed**

**Forgiveness means
Living and loving
Completely in the present
Without the shadows of the past**

**Forgiveness means
Freedom from anger
And attack thoughts**

**Forgiveness means
Not excluding
Your love from anyone**

**Forgiveness means
Healing the hole in your heart
Caused by unforgiving thoughts**

**Forgiveness means
Seeing the light of God
In everyone, regardless
Of their behavior**

**Forgiveness is not just for
The other person—but for ourselves
And the mistakes we have made,
And the guilt and shame we still hold on to.**

**Forgiveness in the deepest sense
Is forgiving ourselves
For separating ourselves from a loving God**

**Forgiveness means
Forgiving God and our
Possible misperceptions of God
That we have even been
Abandoned or left alone**

**To forgive this very instant
Means no longer being
King or Queen of the Procrastinators' Club**

**Forgiveness opens the door
For our feeling joined in Spirit
As one with everyone
And everyone with God.**

**It is never too early
To forgive
It is never too late
to forgive**

**How long does it take
to forgive?**

It depends on your belief system.

**If you believe it will never happen,
It will never happen.**

**If you believe it will take six months,
It will take six months.**

**If you believe it will take but a second,
That's all that it will take.**

**I believe with all my heart
That peace will come to the world
When each of us takes the
Responsibility of forgiving everyone,
Including ourselves, completely.**

**Gerald. G. Jampolsky, M.D.
Quoted from his book, Forgiveness (1999)**



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