

Raj/ACIM Study Group – August 17, 2003

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Section – THE EGO-BODY ILLUSION
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RAJ: Okay. Good afternoon.

AUDIENCE: Good afternoon.

RAJ: And good afternoon to everyone who is joining us on the internet as well. Today we will continue with my reading from the transcript as prepared by Bill Thetford and the section begins, the subject of the section today is:

RAJ READING: *The Ego-Body Illusion*

RAJ: And before we even begin reading, let's just take a look at those words, "The Ego-Body Illusion." It's so commonplace for students of the *Course* to call the body and the world illusion, but the reason we have this subject is to pinpoint the fact that a relationship between the ego and the body is illusory. The relationship between the ego and the body is illusory.

I will begin.

RAJ READING: *ALL things work together for good. There are NO exceptions except in the ego's judgment. Control is a central factor in what the ego permits into consciousness,...*

RAJ: Again.

RAJ READING: *Control is a central factor in what the ego permits into consciousness, and one to which it devotes its maximum vigilance. This is NOT the way a balanced mind holds together.*

RAJ: And now we have an interesting, a very interesting sentence.

RAJ READING: *ITS control is unconscious.*

RAJ: A balanced mind's control is unconscious. Hmmm. A balanced mind, one which is in equilibrium, is one which is not maintaining a sense of itself as separate, independent, self-authoritative. A balanced mind is a mind which has joined with, yielded to, and moves in harmony with God. When one is being in this manner, control is not consciously exercised. Why?

Because self-protection is uncalled for and control is only employed as a means of self-protection.

A balanced mind joined with the Father, in other words, you being from that Place of Excellence within yourself, not having to exercise control, and yielding to the Father, will find yourself being and doing, acting, behaving just as Paul is at this moment, without conscious ego-minded direction or authority. You find yourself simply being appropriate. And mind you, being appropriate doesn't mean everyone holding *A Course In Miracles* study groups as we are doing right now. Being appropriate is coming from that Place of Excellence while you're grocery shopping, or preparing dinner, or bowling, or gardening. Did you ever think of gardening with God? That sounds like the title of a new book. Or vacuuming with God? I'm not meaning to be funny here. I'm very serious.

So, repeating.

RAJ READING: *This...*

RAJ: Meaning control being a central factor.

RAJ READING: *...is NOT the way a balanced mind holds together. ITS control is unconscious. The ego is further off balance by keeping its primary MOTIVATION unconscious, and raising control rather than sensible judgment to predominance. The ego has every reason to do this, according to the thought system which gave rise to it, and which it serves.*

RAJ: And what is the ego's thought system? Self-preservation, because it's not real. And the only way it has half a chance of being considered real is by joining with another and creating a mutual agreement about itself, and then spending eternity reconfirming the mutual agreement.

Continuing.

RAJ READING: *Sane judgment would inevitably judge AGAINST the ego, and must be obliterated BY the ego in the interest of its self-preservation.*

A major source of the ego's off-balanced state is its lack of discrimination between impulses from God and from the body. Any thought system which makes this confusion MUST be insane. Yet this demented state is ESSENTIAL to the ego, which judges only in terms of threat or non-threat TO ITSELF. In one sense the ego's fear of the idea of God is at least logical, since this idea DOES dispel the ego.

RAJ: Now why does the *Idea* of God dispel the ego? Because the *Idea* of God draws one's attention to a Source beyond whatever mutually-agreed definitions egos have come to. The *Idea* of God involves, we'll say, a

dimension beyond the highly coveted state of independence that is essential to the ego's existence. So just the *Idea* of God interferes with the... hmmm, I'm going to say structural integrity of the mutually-agreed-upon definitions which are intended to hold together and make real something that doesn't exist—an ego.

Continuing.

RAJ READING: *Fear of dissolution from the Higher Source, then, makes SOME sense in ego-terms. But fear of the body, with which the ego identifies so closely, is more blatantly senseless.*

RAJ: And here we come to an interesting statement.

RAJ READING: *The body is the ego's home by its own election.*

RAJ: Like the ego went on a shopping trip with a realtor to find a new home and it elected this one. How could the ego have elected a home that didn't exist before it started looking for a home? I keep saying over and over again that the Body is the Visibility and Tangibility of your Individuality. And your Individuality is the Presence of God, God Expressed and Expressing Himself/Herself right there where you are. Your Body therefore is Divine and as Eternal as Its Maker and Its Intent is to identify You perfectly eternally. It is not an illusion. And this non-illusion the *ego* chose to identify as its home.

The way this happened was that when one Christ said, "But, Father, I'd rather see it my way," and imaginatively gave new definitions to everything in the Kingdom of Heaven and dissociated himself or herself from God, he/she was immediately faced with an experience of limits, of not being infinite. And in this act, all this Christ had available to itself was the *specific* identification of himself, having lost the universal experience of himself. And so it was natural to say this is where my existence is, with the body, the specific identification.

Now I want you to understand that when you are awake, all of Creation, all of the universe and all of Creation that goes beyond what you're aware of right now is your Home and is that which identifies your Being, your Body is all of Creation. But when you chose not to identify with your Father, you lost consciousness of your universality, your Universal All-Embracing Wholeness. But you couldn't lose that which specifically identifies you, and so this Conscious Awareness that had lost the Infinite View identified itself with the only thing remaining which was the specific identification. You are all Universal and Specific simultaneously, but you've lost the Universal context, the Universal Experience of Your Being.

Repeating.

RAJ READING: *The body is the ego's home by its own election.*

RAJ: Another way of saying that is that the body is the home of the Christ who has forgotten his Christhood. I want to keep reminding you that the reference to ego is not reference to some illusion behaving as though it's real. This is very confusing. You've got to remember that you've never stopped being the Christ That You Are. You've never stopped being exactly and always What God Is Being right where each one of you is. And so all there is to an ego is a Son or Daughter of God behaving as though he or she is *not* the Son or Daughter of God, but is, instead, an independent agent who has forgotten thereby his or her Divinity. So all references to the ego are references to the full-fledged Christ behaving as though he isn't and, as I've said, believing his behavior. So you could say the body is *your* home by *your* own election because you have elected to ignore the Father. You have elected to ignore your Source in favor of having this unusual, imaginative experience of independence.

Continuing.

RAJ READING: *It is the only...*

RAJ: The body.

RAJ READING: *It is the only identification with which the ego feels safe because the body's vulnerability is its own best argument that you CANNOT be of God.*

RAJ: Well, you've got to remember that the moment you lost the Infinite View, the moment you chose to look at everything independently and began behaving in an unnatural and insane way, all of your perceptions of the Kingdom of Heaven became colored by the experience of aloneness, and therefore fear, and therefore vulnerability, and therefore an experience of that which is eternal as though it were capable of posing actual threat to your existence, especially by deterioration.

Continuing.

RAJ READING: *This is the belief that the ego sponsors eagerly.*

RAJ: Mind you, as long as you're believing that you're not the Christ, you must devote yourself to maintaining the imaginative sense of yourself that you have created and maintain it at all costs. And so the ego eagerly sponsors ways of seeing that cause you to rely upon it and never reach beyond it to that which ultimately would undo it, uncover it as the illusion that it is.

Continuing.

RAJ READING: *Yet the ego hates the body because it does not accept the idea that the body is GOOD enough to be its home.*

RAJ: If the ego [laughing] were able to conceive that the body is good enough to be its home because it's *Divine*, well, that would be the end of the ego because the ego has never claimed Divinity. And that the body is a worthy residence for it would require it to embrace the Presence of God because *that* is the only thing that could make the body good enough to be its home.

So, continuing.

RAJ READING: *Here is where the mind becomes actually dazed.*

RAJ: The Mind becomes dazed. The Christ Mind becomes dazed.

RAJ READING: *Being told by the ego that it...*

RAJ: The Mind.

RAJ READING: *...is really part of the body and that the body is its protector, the mind is also constantly informed that the body can NOT protect it.*

RAJ: Why? Because the ego knows the body can't protect it. Why? Because you can't protect something that doesn't exist. And so the ego, as I've said, must constantly engage in a constant advertising blitz which puts forward out in the open the suggestion that it's real and calls for the agreement of everyone else and manipulates everyone else into agreement. It says it so much that it becomes accepted as a fact when it's not a fact at all.

Repeating.

RAJ READING: *Here is where the mind becomes actually dazed. Being told by the ego that it is...*

RAJ: The Mind is.

RAJ READING: *...really part of the body and that the body is its protector, the mind is also constantly informed...*

RAJ: By whom? The ego.

RAJ READING: *...that the body can NOT protect it. This, of course, is not only accurate but perfectly obvious.*

RAJ: Now it isn't that the body can't protect the ego because the body isn't real, the body is an illusion. It is that the body cannot protect the ego because the ego *is* an illusion and an illusion can't be protected.

Continuing.

RAJ READING: *Therefore the mind asks, "Where can I go for protection?"...*

RAJ: In other words, the unconscious Christ That You Are at the moment that you are experiencing yourself as asks, "Where can I go for protection?"

RAJ READING: *...to which the ego replies, "Turn to me." The mind, and not without cause, reminds the ego that it has itself insisted that it...*

RAJ: The ego.

RAJ READING: *...IS identified with the body, so there is no point in turning to it for protection. The ego has no real answer to this because there IS none, but it DOES have a typical solution.*

RAJ: One that I know you're all familiar with.

RAJ READING: *It obliterates the QUESTION from the mind's awareness.*

RAJ: So when the Christ of you has this niggling awareness that there is no safety in all the places it has been looking for safety and it asks, "Where can I go for protection?", that's when a wavering of allegiance to the mutually-agreed-upon definitions occurs. And there is an opportunity to reach beyond each one's own best judgments, which necessarily places your attention in a larger sphere than the separated sense of yourself.

So the ego obliterates the question from the Mind's awareness. And I will tell you that it does this by distracting you from the question.

Continuing.

RAJ READING: *Once unconscious, the question can and does produce uneasiness, ...*

RAJ: And I referred to that uneasiness as your Divine Sanity saying to you, "You're out of your mind. You're trying to function in a way you cannot function. It's time to come back into your Right Mind."

RAJ READING: *Once unconscious, the question can and does produce uneasiness, but it cannot be answered because it cannot be ASKED. This is the question which MUST be asked: "Where am I to go for protection?"*

RAJ: In other words, that needs to be a very real and serious question each of you needs to ask. It is your Birthright not to be experiencing fear,

vulnerability, debilitation, sin, sickness, death. And so you need to ask the question, “Where am I to go in order not to experience these things?”

Continuing.

RAJ READING: *Even the insane ask it unconsciously, but it requires real sanity to ask it consciously.*

RAJ: Well, you know, you hear a... oh, in fact each one of you at times has been a whimperer. “Oh, what am I to do? What can I do?” But it’s a rhetorical question rather than a serious question. You’re not asking it because you know there’s an answer and you expect the answer to be revealed to you if you keep your attention on the desire to know the answer. Your question is a complaint! It’s a *whine* that’s supposed to be a means to an end in itself. It’s a statement of your dilemma. “Oooohh.” Which means it’s not a request for the answer that will resolve the dilemma.

Continuing.

RAJ READING: *When the Bible says, “Seek and ye shall find,” it does not mean that you should seek blindly and desperately for something you would not recognize. Meaningful seeking is consciously undertaken, consciously organized, and consciously directed. The goal must be formulated clearly...*

RAJ: And this is key.

RAJ READING: *...AND KEPT IN MIND. As a teacher with some experience, let me remind you that learning and WANTING to learn are inseparable. All learners learn best when they believe that what they are trying to learn is of VALUE to them. However, values in this world...*

RAJ: Meaning within the scope of the ego’s mutually-agreed-upon definitions.

RAJ READING: *...are hierarchical, and not everything you may want to learn has lasting value.*

Indeed, many of the things you want to learn...

RAJ: Or shall I say, think you want to learn.

RAJ READING: *...are chosen BECAUSE their value will not last.*

RAJ: Commerce even capitalizes on that. It gets you to want something that’s going to be updated in six months or improved in a year. That’s the way the economy keeps going, by always getting that which won’t last or that which won’t forever be good enough.

Continuing.

RAJ READING: *The ego thinks it is an advantage not to commit itself to ANYTHING that is eternal because the eternal MUST come from God. Eternalness is the one function which the ego has tried to develop, but has systematically failed. It may surprise you to learn that had the ego wished to do so it could have made the eternal because, as a product of the mind,...*

RAJ: And mind you, it doesn't say as a product of the ego.

RAJ READING: *...as a product of the mind, it IS endowed with the power of its own creator.*

RAJ: Remember that the ego is the Christ pretending not to be the Christ and believing its behavior, but not ceasing to be the Christ. It still *can* make the eternal. An important point.

Continuing.

RAJ READING: *However, the DECISION to do this, rather than the ability to do it, is what the ego cannot tolerate. That is because the decision, from which the ability would naturally develop, would necessarily involve accurate perception, a state of clarity which the ego, fearful of being judged truly, MUST avoid.*

RAJ: You see, if you as an independent authorizer actually decided to create that which is eternal, you would have to embrace your Source. You would, if you were going to exercise a God-given ability, have to be acknowledging God in the act of exercising that ability, wouldn't you? You see? And that would undo the ego.

And that is why the Christ, choosing to behave and act as an independent authorizer, will not choose to create something Real. That's why *you* won't choose to create something Real. Because it would spoil the fun and the thrill of a constant ongoing experience of threat, which as I said yesterday, can't ever really overcome you or destroy you, and which, therefore you... hmmm... delight in having the most scary experience of, that you can evolve for yourself without actually driving you back Home into the Father's arms.

Smile everyone. Smile. It's funny. It's not serious. It's a joke. Living this way, being this way is a joke. Don't take it so seriously. Lighten up and realize that maybe this isn't what you want to do. [laughing] Maybe this, even though it's exciting, isn't holding for you the Fullness, the Wholeness, the Satisfaction, the Joy, the Awe, that it's your Birthright to be experiencing. You see?

Why can't you be punished for being such awful children? Because you're not doing anything. You're not succeeding at doing anything naughty. You can't be punished for having a fantasy in your own mind and suffering from it and yet getting pleasure out of it because it stimulates in you a great desire to overcome the suffering and continue the excitement. And all the time it's just fantasy.

So, you're not sinners. You're not sinners by default. You're not sinners at all. You're Christs. Each of you is the Christ ignoring your Christhood, but not affecting it in any way, and having an imaginative experience, all the time missing out on the part you're playing in the Movement of Creation. A full Conscious Experience of which will be available to you once you wake up again so that you will find you've lost nothing, no experience of the Movement of Creation that you must have been participating in because you never ever really got away from God. The experience of your participation in the Movement of Creation that you're not experiencing at this moment, will be available to you when you stop insisting on having this private experience.

So, don't be afraid to explore your Divinity. You weren't afraid to explore your insanity! Don't be afraid to begin to explore your Divinity. And don't delay it because you think that God is a wrathful God and is going to punish you, and perhaps send you into eternal damnation for having this weird little dream you've had. How ridiculous!

Repeating.

RAJ READING: *However, the DECISION...*

[Editor's Note: Raj replaces the words "to do this," as follows:]

RAJ: ...to create something eternal...

RAJ READING: *...rather than the ability to do it, is what the ego cannot tolerate. That is because the decision, from which the ability would naturally develop, would necessarily involve accurate perception, a state of clarity which the ego, fearful of being judged truly, MUST avoid.*

The results of this dilemma are peculiar, but no more so than the dilemma itself. The ego...

RAJ: Once again, the Christ That You Are pretending you're not, behaving as though you're not and believing your behavior.

RAJ READING: *...has reacted characteristically here as elsewhere because mental illness, which is ALWAYS a form of ego involvement, is not a matter of reliability as much as of validity. The ego compromises with the*

issue of the eternal, just as it does with all issues that touch on the real question in any way.

RAJ: What's the real question? "Where can I go for protection?" "Where can I go to not have an illusory, suffering experience?"

Repeating.

RAJ READING: *The ego compromises with the issue of the eternal, just as it does with all issues that touch on the real question in any way. By compromising in connection with all TANGENTIAL questions, it hopes to hide the real question AND KEEP IT OUT OF MIND.*

RAJ: A tangential question is a question that distracts you while not removing you entirely from the subject. It distracts you enough from being focused and determined to stay with the question until you get the answer.

RAJ READING: *The ego's characteristic busyness with nonessentials is for precisely that purpose.*

Consider the alchemist's age-old attempts to turn base metal into gold. The one question which the alchemist did not permit himself to ask was, "What FOR?" He could not ask this, because it would immediately become apparent that there was no sense in his efforts even if he succeeded. If gold became more plentiful its value would decrease, and his own purpose would be defeated. The ego has countenanced some strange compromises with the idea of the eternal, making many odd attempts to relate the concept to the UNimportant, in an effort to satisfy the mind without jeopardizing itself.

RAJ: In other words, to satisfy the Christ That You Are, the Mind That You Are without jeopardizing the ego. So the ego tantalizes you. It says, "Okay. We will countenance the idea of eternality and we'll countenance the idea of your Divinity and here's the way it works. The way it works is that you must understand that you are an evolving soul and that your purpose is to refine your soul. It's your purpose to involve yourself in means of education about spirituality. It's your task to read all the books you can find, and go through all the different thought systems you can find, and work on yourself. It may take lifetimes." And it chuckles behind your back, "It'll take thousands of lifetimes if he buys this. [laughing] He won't even think to look to God he's gonna be so busy refining his soul. This is great. [laughing]" You see?

So it takes something essentially Real and says, "Let's not talk about a direct Experience of Being Soul. Let's not talk about the fact that you don't have a soul but that You Are Soul. You are the Capacity to Feel the capital 'M' Meaning of What God Is Being in every little aspect of Creation. Let's

not talk about going for the Experience. No. Let's talk about you being a soul, you know, one of many souls which God has created, and each one of these souls is separate and independent from God and from each other. And you know what? Part of refining your soul so that you might finally develop into something worthy and truly Divine, so that you might experience your Eternality, is going to involve learning how to be with each other in more and more spiritual terms *while you're still independent souls.*" You see?

And it chuckles again because it says [chuckling], "That's going to triple the amount of time it's going to take, because they're never going to be able to do it as long as they think they're separate." So the ego institutes a fabulous insurance plan guaranteeing its life as long as it can distract you from asking a real question and sticking with the question until you get the answer, until you arrive at the Experience of What You Truly Are.

Where can you go for protection? You can only find protection in the Conscious Awareness of the Truth About You that dispels illusions by virtue of the fact that Truth does dispel illusions. And the Truth About You is to be found right in the middle of you in a place that very few of you access unless you have become totally worn out by the struggle to improve yourself and you actually momentarily give up the struggle.

Why do you think they say, "It's always darkest before the dawn. Every cloud has a silver lining."? Because at the very depths of the ego's despair, at the very point where that which is genuinely you no longer has a willingness to invest energy and commitment to the mutually-agreed-upon definitions that aren't working, it's only when you arrive at that point of utter failure and you *really* give up the game, the manipulation, the illusion, you always find yourself filled up by God. A revelation occurs. Not necessarily as a flow of ideas, but as a feeling of inner illumination in which in spite of the dreadfulness of what has driven you to this point of failure, you are feeling Real Peace. And you are feeling really safe. And you know that the experience is not an illusion. You know that you're experiencing something really valid.

The saying is, "Man's extremity is God's opportunity." Well, when the Christ That You Are arrives at a point where it withdraws its willingness to invest its energy in what doesn't work and lets go of what doesn't work, what hadn't been working drops away from the Christ that had been holding it so close, and it no longer obscures that Christ from Himself or Herself. And that's why dawn comes. That's why the silver lining contradicts the darkness of the cloud. And usually this is a turning point in your lives.

Okay. Repeating.

RAJ READING: *The ego has countenanced some strange compromises with the idea of the eternal, making many odd attempts to relate the concept to the UNimportant, in an effort to satisfy the mind...*

RAJ: See, as long as it can keep you reading those books and refining your soul, it satisfies the mind that something real is occurring. And thus the mind is willing to abandon going for the specific question and the specific answer only.

So:

RAJ READING: *The ego has countenanced some strange compromises with the idea of the eternal, making many odd attempts to relate the concept to the UNimportant, in an effort to satisfy the mind without jeopardizing itself. Thus, it has permitted minds to devote themselves to the possibility of perpetual MOTION, but NOT to perpetual thoughts.*

Ideational preoccupations with problems set up to be incapable of solution are also favorite ego devices for impeding the strong-willed from making real learning progress.

RAJ: It's interesting, many times you become strong-willed on behalf of your awakening because you are hurting, because you are dissatisfied, and because you know there must be another way.

Continuing.

RAJ READING: *The problems of squaring the circle and carrying pi to infinity are good examples. A more recent ego attempt is particularly noteworthy.*

RAJ: Grin, grin, grin.

RAJ READING: *The idea of preserving the BODY by suspension, thus giving it the kind of limited immortality which the ego can tolerate, is among its more recent appeals to the mind. It is noticeable, however, that in all these diversionary tactics, the one question which is NEVER asked by those who pursue them is, "What FOR?"*

This is the question which YOU must learn to ask, in connection with EVERYTHING your mind wishes to undertake. What is the purpose? Whatever it is, you cannot doubt that it will channelize your efforts automatically.

RAJ: Automatically, automatically it will set into motion a movement in the direction.

Continuing.

RAJ READING: *When you make a decision of purpose, then, you have made a decision about your future effort, a decision which will remain in effect unless you change the DECISION.*

RAJ: A decision is a commitment, isn't it? A decision is more than a resolution. On New Year's Day, you may resolve to lose ten pounds or you may resolve to quit smoking. But until you *decide* to lose ten pounds or you *decide* to stop smoking, you won't lose 10 pounds and you won't stop smoking.

Continuing.

RAJ READING: *Psychologists are in a good position to realize that the ego is capable of making and accepting as real some very distorted associations.*

RAJ: And again, that means that... and this isn't necessarily true of psychologists but I'll read it as it says.

RAJ READING: *Psychologists are in a good position to realize...*

RAJ: That the Christ who is unconscious of its Christhood. [Editor's Note: Raj replaced the words "*the ego*"]

RAJ READING: *...is capable of making and accepting as real some very distorted associations.*

RAJ: I insist again that you remember that every time you read the word "ego," it means a Christ who believes he is *not* the Christ, who has chosen to behave as though he is not the Christ, and is now believing his behavior. It's you. It's You The Christ unconscious of your Christhood.

If you remember this, then every time you read the word "ego," you will know that it's talking about you, You A Christ who's forgotten Who He or She Divinely Is. And in remembering that, you will be unable to talk about the ego in a third person, in a detached way as though *it* is out there. "It is not me. It's different from me, but it's controlling me. And I can't do anything about it. It's too strong for me. It's this, or it's that."

And the other thing is that in remembering that it's You The Christ being unconscious of your Christhood but with the full Authority of your Christhood creating an illusory experience of limitation, it will inevitably empower you because it involves remembering Who You Divinely Are to use your Divine Power on your behalf, instead of to your detriment. It empowers you to let go of this silly waste of time that you've been so

preoccupied with. And it makes you realize that you can't possibly be a victim.

This is where we're going to stop for today because we're going to move into a slightly different subject, and I want what has been illuminated so far to sit with you so that you abide with it in its simplicity and in its clarity.

As you go through this coming week between now and the next time we gather, I want you to watch for, with a willingness to be amused at it rather than feeling guilty for it, I want you to watch to see how often you distract yourself from a focused intent to arrive at a specific answer so that you might instead consider things relative to the primary issue and indulge in distress, because the distraction by the relative issues relative to the main question tend to confirm to you that there really isn't an answer that you will arrive at if you give focused attention to the question with an expectation of having the answer.

I want you to watch how much of your time is spent during the next seven days suffering exquisitely. Not really hurting yourself but just being stuck in a delicate... delicate, exquisite, exquisite suffering. If you see yourself doing it, and you look at it honestly so that you see what you're doing, you will be able to laugh. You really will be able to laugh at it, which will promote its leaving you almost immediately and placing you in a frame of mind within yourself where there's a remembrance of the fact that you are something more than an ego. That you are a Christ, you are the Christ behaving in a manner totally inconsistent to the Christ That You Are, but because you are feeling more clearly that there is something excellent about you, you can bring yourself back to the real question and forget about indulging in the distractions so that you can stay focused for the specific answer that wipes the question, the problem, out of your experience. So just with a light heart observe yourselves during this coming week.

And as always I will be with you watching you as well and enjoying with you your discoveries. And will I look forward to being with you in this fashion again next week. Thank you.

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