

“What Do You Want?”

“The Ego’s Use of Guilt” (T-5.VI.10-19)

The ego cannot oppose the laws of God, any more than you can. But it can interpret them according to what it wants, just as you can. That is why the question “What do you want?” must be answered. You *are* answering it every minute and every second, and each moment of decision is a judgment which is anything but ineffectual. Its effects will follow automatically until the decision is changed. (This is a redundant statement, because you have not learned it.) But again, any decision can be unmade as well as made. (T-5.VI.10)

“The ego cannot oppose the laws of God, any more than you can.”

God’s laws are like gravity—they’re unalterable (and even more so). There’s nothing you can do about them. You are subject to them, period, no matter what you think.

“But it can interpret them according to what it wants”

This means the ego can produce its own distorted perceptions of those laws according to its wants. In doing so, it essentially substitutes its own laws in their place. But those laws don’t govern existence; only God’s laws do.

“...just as you can.”

You can do that too—you can interpret God’s laws according to what *you* want. You walk around thinking you are subject to a certain set of laws, but actually being subject to another. Imagine, for instance, if you did that with gravity: “I can step out of this ten-story window and I’ll just float.” You’re doing the equivalent of that now. You’re pursuing the ego’s goals and thinking they will actually deliver happiness. Do you really *want* to do that?

“That is why the question ‘What do you want?’ must be answered.”

Do you *really* want to misinterpret the laws of God? Do you really want to be constantly stepping out of that ten-story window?

This is probably a reference to something in Chapter 2:

The means [how to incorporate the Course] are easier to clarify after the true worth of the goal itself is firmly established. Everyone defends his own treasure. You do not have to tell him to do this, because he will do so automatically. The real question still remains, *What* do you treasure and *how much* do you treasure it? Once you learn to consider these two points and bring them into all your actions as the true criteria for behavior, I will have little difficulty in clarifying the means. (T-2.IV.13:1-5)

In other words, if we can truly clarify what we treasure—what our big goal is in life—then we will automatically seek and use the means to obtain it. Therefore, we *must* be asking and answering this question consciously.

“You *are* answering it every minute and every second, and each moment of decision is a judgment which is anything but ineffectual.”

We are answering this question half-consciously every single second, and those answers make a difference. That’s why we need to consciously answer this question all day long “and bring [it] into all your actions.” Otherwise, you will not spend your seconds, minutes, days, and life serving your *real* goal. Thus, no matter how sincerely you may hold that goal somewhere in your mind, it will remain an unattained dream.

“Its effects will follow automatically until the decision is changed.”

All those unconscious answers to the question “What do I want?” not only make a difference in the moment, but they keep producing effects automatically until you change your mind.

“(This is a redundant statement, because you have not learned it.)”

He’s already made this point: “When you make a decision of purpose, then, you have made a decision about future effort, a decision which will remain in effect unless you change the decision” (T-4.VII.16:5). But he knows we haven’t learned it, so as a good teacher, he repeats it. He knows how essential it is that we understand the power and automatic effects of our decisions.

“But again, any decision can be unmade as well as made.”

The fact that decisions keep producing effects automatically is only one side of the story. The other side is that *new* decisions, in which you change your mind, can unmake those old ones. So the power works both ways—to produce the future and to undo the past.

Exercise

Ideally, write your answers down.

1. Ask yourself as sincerely and seriously as you can, “What do I want?” In other words, what is your big goal in life—or what would you *like* it to be? Ideally, it’s something in line with the Course’s goals for you.
2. How often do you remind yourself of this big goal?
3. How much do you bring it into all your actions as the true criterion of your behavior?
4. How much does it remain a distant, seemingly unattainable goal—something that sits on the shelf rather than drives your daily living?
5. How can you bring it into your actions more, to the point where there is real hope of attaining it?