

## LESSON 12 • JANUARY 12

“I am upset because I see a meaningless world.”

### Practice instructions

**Purpose:** To realize that you are upset because you instinctively sense that the world is content-free, a blank slate. This makes you afraid that the truth will be written on it. This exercise will help you accept that the world truly is a blank slate, erase what you have written on it, and then see what God has written on it.

**Exercise:** Three or four times, for one minute or less (stop whenever you feel strain).

- Look about slowly, shifting your glance at regular time intervals. As you look about, say, “*I think I see a fearful world, a dangerous world, a hostile world,*” and so on, using whatever descriptive terms occur to you. This includes positive ones, which imply the possibility of their opposite. They imply a world in which both positive and negative are present and battle for supremacy. This is not the world God would have you see.
- At the end add, “*But I am upset because I see a meaningless world.*”

**Remarks:** Shifting your glance at regular intervals reflects today’s idea. By giving the same amount of time and attention to each thing, you teach yourself that the things you see are all equally meaningless. This is the same thing today’s idea is trying to teach you.

### Commentary

What upsets us is an empty slate, a canvas without paint; we can’t resist, we have to paint *our* meaning on it, and when we do, what we see is frightening, sad, violent, or insane. We can’t simply accept the world as meaningless and “let the truth be written upon it for you” (5:3); instead, “you are impelled to write upon it what you would have it be” (5:4). We can’t allow God to give the world, and ourselves, our meaning; we want to make our own. The result is an upsetting view of everything.

This idea, that what I think is upsetting me is not really the cause of my upset (see Lesson 5 again), is an incredibly useful one. It can work miracles in our experience. I recall the first time this really sank in. I had just gone through a disappointing exchange with my girlfriend, one in which I realized that she didn’t want to spend time with me as much as I did with her, and she had an interest in someone else. I was feeling spit upon, put down, a second-class citizen; I was angry at her for not realizing what a prize I was and for making me spend my Saturday evening alone. I was miserable.

All of a sudden the thought came to me: “I’m doing this to myself; it isn’t her.” I thought of the song from *My Fair Lady* where Rex Harrison sings, “I was supremely independent and content before we met. Surely I could always be that way again...and yet.” I realized that I was *choosing* to see her as the cause of my upset, but it was the way *I* was thinking about the situation that was making me miserable. If I wanted to, I could still be happy. It was a major revelation to me! I wasn’t sure I liked it, to be honest, but my inner sense kept telling me, “This way lies real liberty.” That was a big beginning for me.

Let the world be meaningless to you today. Don’t be so quick to impose your meaning on it. Just let what is so be what it is, without any meaning, and let the Holy Spirit have a chance to write His meaning on it.

When your words have been erased, you will see His. That is the ultimate purpose of these exercises. (5:8–9)

There is a Workbook-like saying given in the Text that runs along the same line:

When your peace is threatened or disturbed in any way, say to yourself:

*I do not know what anything, including this, means. And so I do not know how to respond to it. And I will not use my own past learning as the light to guide me now.*

By this refusal to attempt to teach yourself what you do not know [or to write your meaning on the blank slate], the Guide Whom God has given you will speak to you. He will take His rightful place in your awareness the instant you abandon it, and offer it to Him. (T-14.XI.6:6–11)