

A Course In Miracles and Rudolf Steiner

by Harriet Sternberg

Although Rudolf Steiner made many contributions to the world in the arts (color, architecture, sculpture, painting), biodynamic farming, agriculture, nutrition, religion (the Christian Community), medicine, drama, dance, movement, economics, eurythmy, music, science, and social sciences, he probably is not personally well known by the general public, nor are his many books and lectures. Educators may know him somewhat better as the founder of the Waldorf School Movement (said to be some 800 in the world today).

Steiner was born in February, 1861, in Kraljevec, Austria-Hungary. Until the time of his passing in 1925, he produced some 35 written volumes and 4,500 to 6,000 lectures.

Although highly influenced by the Theosophists and active in that belief in the late 1890s and early 1900s, he left their society in 1912 and founded his own. He called his teachings Anthroposophy. He established headquarters in Dornach, Switzerland; still today this is the center of the world-wide Anthroposophical Society and the School of Spiritual Science.

In order to make a comparison with *A Course In Miracles*, it is important to understand the basic concepts underlying Anthroposophy as to a great extent all his writings support his primary premises:

“Anthroposophy is a path of knowledge to guide the Spiritual in the human being to the Spiritual in the universe. It arises in man as a need of the heart, of the life of feeling, and it can be justified only inasmuch as it can satisfy this inner need.”

“Anthroposophy communicates knowledge that is gained in a spiritual way. Yet it only does so because everyday life and the science founded on sense-perception and intellectual activity lead to a barrier along life’s way — a limit where this life of the soul in man would die if it could go not farther.”

Because in this writing so many of the following Steiner comments do seem to be quite in contrast, even in opposition from those in the Course, it seems important to add here that he was a definite believer in Christianity, viewing it overall as having a very positive, unifying influence for humanity. He thought Jesus’ coming into the world was the greatest appearance on the Earth “...causing a truly decisive turning point in human history.”

He spoke about Christ, giving a series of lectures (now a book title) on The Reappearance of Christ in the Etheric. Also he wrote and spoke about the Mystery of Golgotha (Jesus’ birth, death, and resurrection), the Lord’s Prayer, John’s gospel, the Sermon on the Mount, and Old Testament writings.

Now let’s look at both teachings. Obviously, there are numerous topics to deal with so only a few can be quoted here. As just mentioned, the ones selected seem to highlight more differences, rather than more likenesses. This is not meant as a criticism or in a negative way. What Helen Schucman, the “scribe” of the Course, once heard Jesus say, “Do not take another’s path as your own; but neither should you judge it” applies here. Surely the fundamental intent of both teachings is to help humanity while on the Earth plane and to lead all home to God.

Some Likenesses and Some Differences

The Separation

Both deal, although in different ways, with what seems to be man’s leaving God and Heaven and coming into a material world.

The Course: Because of a “tiny, mad idea” the Son of God “forgot to laugh” and believed he could separate from God and Heaven. This is an illusion, a dream, and never really happened.

Steiner: Since he believes in reincarnation, he sees man as coming to Earth in a definitely planned way throughout various periods of time in order to help perfect himself and help with his evolution. He often uses the expression, “In the life between death and a new birth...” Then he will explain how in this interim period man works on becoming more self-conscious or on any aspects of karma he’s incurred in a previous lifetime or lifetimes.

He believes that in each incarnation man is helped by various spiritual beings (from the Seraphim down to the Archangeloi). Whereas the Course would emphasize the role of the Holy Spirit or Jesus more in this role, Steiner stresses the saving help given over time by the Archangel Michael. He refers to this age as The Age of Michael.

He also writes about two beings, Lucifer or Satan, and Ahriman, who sometimes help, but who also try in many ways to hinder man's development.

The Nature of Man

In the world, the concept of the nature of man is spoken and written often as being a combination of mind, body, and spirit.

The Course: The Course, however, is very specific in declaring especially that man is not a body. These statements tell clearly why not. "I am as God created me. I am his Son eternally..." This is the Self that never left Its home in God to walk the world uncertainly." And "at no single instant does the body exist at all."

Steiner: He does view man as having a body. As do some spiritual masters even, he proclaims that man's physical body has very special qualities:

- an ether or etheric body in common with the plant and animal kingdoms and the bearer of the forces of growth, reproduction, and nurture.
- An astral body, the seat of all desire, passion, and impulse
- An "I" ego body. The "I" identifies man's individual being, as does the ego, but the "I" is viewed also as God's name, as in the "I AM."

If the "I" transforms part of the astral body, this is called Spirit Self. "A man has just so much of Spirit Self as he has created by his own efforts out of his astral body."

Furthermore, he envisions the whole universe as having contributed to the building of man's overall body, Man's physical body was prepared on Saturn; on the Sun was added the etheric or life body...on the moon was added the astral body and on Earth the ego..."

The Ego

The Course is very clear and very specific in numerous comments about how to view the ego. However, in many writings in the world, the ego often seems to get credited as being both divine or spiritual and worldly, part of the human personality (brought to attention in our time particularly by the psychiatric works of Sigmund Freud). Since the ego refers to a self, it is easy to see why there could be confusion. Especially the Course but also Steiner, both do agree that the human ego, or egoism, can cause problems for mankind in the world—attacks, conflicts, clashes, disturbances, competition, pain, poverty, distress, sufferings, fears and; therefore, should be worked out of or overcome (Steiner) and not believed in, forgotten, released, reinterpreted, or corrected (the Course).

The Course: The Course interprets the ego as having some of these aspects:

- is part of a belief made about ourselves after the so-called separation
- having no knowledge and therefore no being
- regards the body as its home and uses the body for "attack, pleasure, pride."
- causes us to see ourselves as "tiny, vulnerable, afraid"
- wants us dead
- prevents us from recognizing our brother as he is in truth
- is a confusion in identity
- although logical is clearly insane
- is never satisfied
- focuses on time and the past.

Steiner: He views the human ego as being both positive and negative—having an I which has evolved over eons of time to its present stage. Rather than citing the ego as an identity itself, Steiner is more likely to speak about man's egoism as having been a negative influence causing "bad people" and even some who over time do not change to revert back to being animals Egotistical beings focus on their own self interest and neglect any contributions to serving the world or contributing to its progress.

The World

Both sources state there is another world other than the one we seem to perceive and to be in presently. In Course terms, this is referred to as the “real world” and in Steiner’s, as “a super-sensible world” to which he sees our earthly world as connected.

Both also express that there will be a future time in which there will be changes. For the Course, “The end of the world is not its destruction, but its translation into Heaven.” For Steiner, “the effects of earthly existence will unite with what happens in this other world, giving rise to the new cosmic being into which the Earth will eventually be transformed.

The Course: As with other topics, the Course is again very clear about the world which we made, adjust to, and it to us, as not being God’s world. The world we made is described as being “chaotic, insane, merciless, having no meaning, stresses, sin, believes love is impossible, tries to prove guilt is real, is one of violence and hate, and does not exist.”

Steiner: He writes about both human and cosmic evolutions occurring in the world. He views the Earth as an incarnation of an ancient planet and as having undergone prior planetary stages with intervening stages of spiritualization. He labels past, present, and future of the Earth as having Saturn, Sun, Moon, Earth, Jupiter, Venus, and Vulcan phases of evolution. Not traditional science but only spiritual science based on super-sensible perception shows us these things. Eventually, all will become love.

In closing, although this writing has highlighted some major differences, great credit should be given to the author of the Course, Jesus, and to Rudolf Steiner for the contributions they have made—and are making—towards the advancement of mankind at this time. Both offer structured lessons and exercises, as well as many illuminating ideas, to help all on the path home to God.

Harriet Sternberg, a long-time Teacher of the Course, is now co-author of two books on Archangel Raphael, and a presenter at Mind, Body, Spirit Expos.