

The Difference Between ACIM and Science of Mind and Why It Doesn't Matter!

by Kenneth Davis

There are several reasons that I am writing this article. First, there are many who mistakenly think that the teachings of Science of Mind (SOM) and *A Course in Miracles* (ACIM) are the same. Still others realize that there must be a difference, are not sure what it is, and are a little uncomfortable without knowing why! This discomfort becomes a small disturbance, like a minor troubling noise under the hood of a car. For Course students within the SOM community, the teachings of the Course could possibly become unclear.

My purpose is to:

- 1) Clarify this difference in the teachings, and in doing so,
- 2) Clarify a difficult teaching in the Course; and finally,
- 3) Clarify the meaningless of this difference for students of ACIM.

To begin with, there are remarkable similarities between the thought system of ACIM and that of SOM. The most important of which is the focus on our minds. This idea was considered a revolutionary idea when the New Thought movement re-introduced it!

The difference between these two is very simple and is a key factor for properly understanding both. The important difference between the metaphysics of ACIM and the SOM is simply this.

SOM teaches that the world is real and is a manifestation of, and the Body of God!

ACIM teaches that the world cannot be real and is made up by you, and not God, to justify the idea of separation from God.

OK! That's it. Thanks for your time! Have a great day! Thanks, again! Just kidding, everyone! Before I go on, I think it only fair that I show where this came from! There are MANY direct and indirect references in the written record to show my point. Here are just two:

From SOM:

"WHAT IS THE BODY? Body is a concrete idea, existing in time and space, for the purpose of furnishing a vehicle through which Life may express Itself. The physical universe is the Body of God; it is a manifestation of the Mind of God, in form. It is that Creation which, while It may have beginnings and ends, of Itself neither begins nor ends. The Manifestation of Spirit is necessary if Spirit is to come into Self-Realization; hence, Body."

The Science of Mind
(ERNEST S. HOLMES)

From ACIM:

“The world you see is an illusion of a world. God did not create it, for what He creates must be eternal as Himself. Yet there is nothing in the world you see that will endure forever.”

ACIM Clarification of Terms Section 4, Paragraph 1
(C-4.1:1)

I am not saying that this is the only difference. I am saying that this is the essential difference and MOST of the other differences can be explained by this one. If you are participating in the SOM community and you are not clear about this difference, you might begin to think that the Course is saying something that it is not saying. It is easy to fall into the habitual assumption that God made this world/universe. To struggle with this concept and integrate it into your thinking, can be a steep hill and fraught with fear. We would not want to delay your opportunity to join this struggle, now would we?

Well, just HOW important is this idea anyway. According to the Course, it is not important! Not only is the Course one of thousands of spiritual paths, but even those that have chosen the Course, struggle with this concept! Yet the illusory nature of this world is a foundational teaching, for Course students! Ken Wapnick recalls an incident with Helen Schuman:

“I remember on one occasion that Helen and I were with someone who was prominently associated with the Course, but did not really know what it said. Helen said to him that he would never understand this course unless he recognized that this world is an illusion.

She was very emphatic:

This world is an illusion. God had nothing to do with it, and you will not understand this course that way.

“Again, no one understood this course better than Helen.”

ACIM Manuscript History (Kenneth Wapnick)

Accepting the illusory nature of the world makes the Course clearer but also clarifies what others say about the Course. But the real key to comprehending the Course is the understanding that it is a completely Non-Dual Thought system. This is the underlying principal behind the illusory nature of the world!

Perhaps I will discuss the idea in more detail in another article. For now, a brief outline of Non-Dual Thought will do:

- This Reality has no parts that make it up
- This Reality has no opposite
- This Reality is the only existent Truth or Actuality

From these principals, it is easy to understand that the world is just a “seeming,” a dream, an illusion! The World of our perceptions cannot be God’s reality as it is made entirely of parts. This world also cannot really be “inside” God. This would require that all the parts of this world be included as God’s reality.

“We” dream! This dream, as any dream, is a real experience, but of something that never happened! You surely will agree that this dreaming is quite compelling! Pinch me, somebody! That’s the trouble isn’t it? In this world curriculum of learning, a good “pinch,” just seems to be evidence that the dream is real!

I want to show how the acceptance of a Non-Dual Reality is helpful for Course students. Consider the following quote:

*“Each hour that you take
your rest today, a tired mind is
suddenly made glad,
a bird with broken wings
begins to sing, a stream long dry
begins to flow again.
The world is born again each
time you rest, and hourly remember that you came to bring
the peace of God into the world, that it might take its rest along with you.”*

W.pI.109.8:1-1

These beautiful passages are part of the reason that many are attracted to the Course. This second statement seems to contradict our earlier quote about the world! It is not a contradiction if we recall that the Holy Spirit meets you where you are, and that it operates in such a way as not to increase your fears! This also has to be true of the Course!

If you are sure that the world is real and is God’s reality, the second sentence seems like proof! If you are sure of the Non-Dual Truth and the nature of your dreaming then here is proof for you also!

In both cases there is comfort! That is the real lesson! To know that there is no world, is to understand that the world I look upon is the one I made up. A peaceful mind, therefore, beholds a peaceful world! Beholding a peaceful world comes from training my mind to do so. This process is not about changing the world (not that there is one, anyway). As I fulfill my purpose, (changing my mind about the world that I made up), “The world is born again.” This does not mean that God has given me something to “do” in the world or even that this world is not an illusion! It means I am waking up and waking up is my purpose.

*“Projection makes perception.
The world you see is what you gave it, nothing more than that.
But though it is no more than that,
it is not less. Therefore,
to you it is important.*

It is the witness to your state of mind, the outside picture of an inward condition. As a man thinketh, so does he perceive.

Therefore, seek not to change the world, but choose to change your mind about the world.

Perception is a result and not a cause.

And that is why order of difficulty in miracles is meaningless.

Everything looked upon with vision is healed and holy.

Nothing perceived without it means anything.

And where there is no meaning, there is chaos.”

(ACIM T-21.In.1)

More to the point, my purpose is as follows:

The sole responsibility of the miracle worker is to accept the Atonement for himself.

(ACIM T-2.V.5:1)

If there is no world then, the Course must be about our mind and our thinking and not about our actions!

I am not saying that there is something wrong with accepting a literal reading of the passage: that you literally came to bring peace to the world! It doesn't matter. It just is not what the Course is teaching. Perhaps, believing the reality of this world is required for your curriculum right now. Perhaps it is important to your curriculum that your brother believes the world is real and you do not. Your question must always be, “Holy Spirit, what is your lesson for ME?”

The “illusory nature of the world,” idea can be a very challenging one. If we are honest, we all (or most of us) struggle with it and I don't just mean students of ACIM. For example, one very significant pitfall is the incorrect thought, that if the world is an illusion then so must I be! (Perhaps, this also shall be the subject of a future article.)

From the Helen Schucman's quote, we see that there has been difficulty with this concept from the beginning! It is evident from the writings of some of our most famous Course teachers that it remains a challenge, today! And, NO, there will be no names here! What they wrote is what they wrote!

I am suggesting that this too is merely a learning tool for the Sonship!

The Science of Mind Community is one that has provided safe harbor for a seemingly alien community whose beliefs really are not the same in form. However, one need not dig deeply to discover the commonality of content. As a community, their support is well-defined in the Course. It is the type of generosity that truly understands that giving and receiving are the same.

The Course speaks to both communities:

*Forgive your brother
all appearances that are
but ancient lessons you have
taught yourself about the
sinfulness in you.
Hear but his call for mercy
and release from all the
fearful images he holds of what
he is and of what you must be.
He is afraid to walk with you,
and thinks perhaps a bit behind,
a bit ahead would be a safer place for him to be.
Can you make progress if you think the same,
advancing only when he would
step back, and falling back
when he would go ahead?
For so do you forget the journey's goal,
which is but to decide to walk with him,
so neither leads nor follows.
Thus it is a way you go together,
not alone. And in this choice
is learning's outcome changed,
for Christ has been reborn
to both of you.*

T- 31:II.9

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