

THE UNIVERSAL EXPERIENCE

While attending a seminar recently it prompted me to think about the teachings of “A Course In Miracles (ACIM)”. I thought it might be interesting to attempt to put things in perspective for myself, kind of getting back to the basics. In the preface of ACIM it introduces us to the universal experience as well as the nature of reality.

In the Preface of ACIM under “What It Is” it states,

“It (ACIM) specifically states that “a universal theology is impossible, but a universal experience is not only possible but necessary” (Manual, p.77). Although Christian in statement, the Course deals with universal spiritual themes. It emphasizes that it is but one version of the universal curriculum. There are many others, this one differing from them only in form. They all lead to God in the end.”

The message at the weekend event mentioned above was that we, as ACIM students, are miracle workers and that it is our function to be miracle workers every day. It ended with the message that we are love and should teach only the love that we are. One could ask, is this a job for all of mankind or just ACIM students? Could it be a glimpse at our true nature as human beings? If we teach by our every thought, word and deed, do we focus on loving thereby teaching the love that we are? Is this a reflection of the true nature of the human species?

When we look at our planet; the animals, plants and other living things seem to act in a manner consistent with their nature. That is, their behaviors seem to be hardwired or instinctive. But does man share this characteristic? What **is** his nature, and are his actions consistent with that nature? What we have failed to do in any consistent way is to define, and/or agree upon the true nature of man. If we could do this then we could determine how man would act in order to be consistent with his true nature. We accept that mankind, the human species, is different from animals, we tend to think man is at the apex of the evolutionary scale on this planet and all other beings are less highly evolved.

There was a time when I thought man was an animal with an intellect and that the intellect is what differentiated man from all other animals. I believed that man had a moral obligation to use this intelligence to be a good steward of the planet. This belief was reinforced by all the groups with their own contribution to stewardship, be it human rights, war, climate change, human suffering, animal cruelty, ad infinitum.

But then there were discoveries that other living things have intelligence and so man was not unique in this respect. Humans may appear to have more intelligence or be more highly evolved but this is not what makes them unique. Intelligence could still guide our stewardship of the planet but it was not *only* intelligence that defined our nature. So if it is not only intelligence what else makes up the true nature of man? There seems no clear, universally accepted definition for the true nature of man. We each seem to use our intellects to pick and choose our beliefs. And each one of us wants to be different from our brothers in some things but the same in others. We are left to our own devices to

navigate our experience in this realm. No wonder the history of mankind is so chaotic with incomprehensible acts of violence amid calls for peace, love and understanding. As a species we really don't seem to know what we are and what our role on this planet is.

For eons humans have asked: Who am I? Why am I here? and Where am I going? What is the evolutionary path of the human race? These questions have resulted in numerous views on our purpose for existence, ranging from the view that - we are just another animal on earth and we are born, live and die and that is it; to - we are spiritual beings and we are on a path to return to a purely spiritual experience. Discussion and debate continues today, yet, there is no one firm, conclusive, unquestionable understanding. I do get the feeling that the desire to discover our true nature and purpose is increasing and that more and more people are opening their minds to new possibilities.

A Course in Miracles tells us that we are love because we were created by love (God). If true, then being (manifesting) love would seem to be our true nature. After years of trying to figure out my own life and the larger meaning of life the only thing that made sense was unconditional love – i.e., that we are love and that loving unconditionally is our function which is beyond the intellect. Therefore, we are more than intellect since intellectual attributes of mankind seem to fall short of universal application.

Due to some life changing events, I came to a place where all I wanted in life was peace of mind in all circumstances. Once I realized this, I was drawn to a number of spiritual experiences and books and eventually to A Course in Miracles. There I learned of the universal curriculum, the universal experience and love or God. The goal of ACIM is peace of mind and that fit my perceived needs.

The Course teaches that we are love manifested as mind or spirit. That we are one with all things and that recognition of this oneness is our way of forgiving the world we experience. Most of the human race seems to think we are human beings (bodies) who may occasionally have a spiritual experience rather than thinking we are spiritual beings (spirit) having a human experience. The way we choose to see ourselves has a dramatic effect on our lives and how we live them. The awakening process may be nothing more than being willing to remember that we are spiritual beings (spirit) and that we have the willingness to be directed by the awakened spiritual Self rather than the earthly and body-bound ego self .

I believe it is up to the individual to choose the path and teachers that work best for them. There is no absolute way to do it, even within one path. Obviously if one path seems too constraining one can always choose a different path and the amount of mind healing over time, i.e. the experience of peace, love and joy, will reflect the accuracy of his or her choices. For me, sticking with one path for a period of time seems to have brought the quickest results.

Once we have chosen a path we may find that within that path there are numerous teachers, formal and informal, that help the student understand the content of the teachings of that path. Informal teachers are everyone and everything we perceive as

separate from us and formal teachers are normally, authors and speakers that appear to have more in-depth knowledge and experience of the path than we do at present. You might say that the informal teachers tend to press our “hot buttons” whereas formal teachers explain the philosophy of the path and its application in our daily activities. One of the things I love about ACIM, that Helen states very clearly in the preface of the book, is that one should learn to rely on one’s Internal Teacher.

“The Course makes no claim to finality, nor are the Workbook lessons intended to bring the student’s learning to completion. At the end, the reader is left in the hands of his or her own Internal Teacher, Who will direct all subsequent learning as He sees fit.” (Preface, What It Is. 6)

This is again reinforced by Jesus throughout the Course where the Internal Teacher is referred to as the Voice for God, the Holy Spirit or Jesus. I have found this to be of great help because I can, and do, avail myself of all teachers and choose the things that resonate with me and reject the rest. We do not have to choose one teacher and then feel we must defend our approach to the truth to those that choose a different teacher. It does take a while to discern whether we are listening to our Internal Teacher (the Voice for God) or to our ego but over time one develops this ability and it is very freeing when one does. We will make mistakes regardless of the teacher we choose. When this happens we need to forgive ourselves and move on.

So regardless of the teachers in our lives, be they external or internal, formal or informal, remember that the path we are following leads us to the “universal experience” that in the words of the Course “is not only possible but necessary.” (Manual, p.77)

Peace, love and joy, Richard of the Lake in Lake St Louis, Missouri.